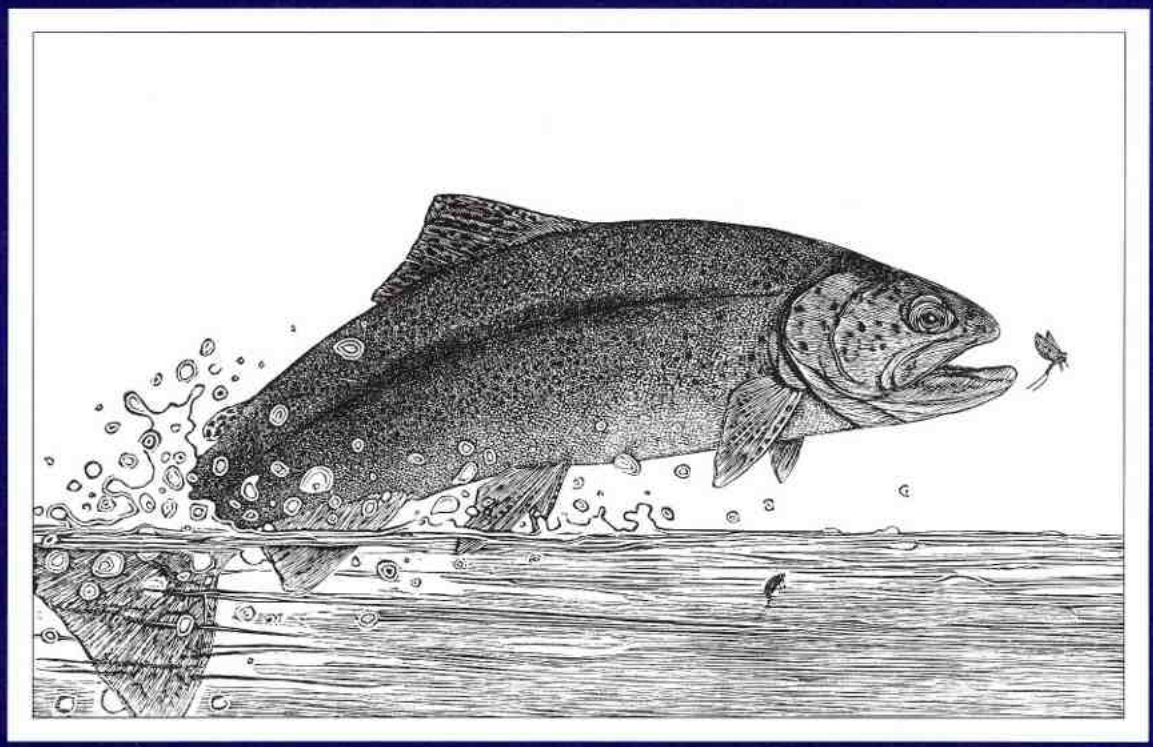


The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

WINTER 1997 VOLUME 23 NUMBER 1

The Enthusiast by T. Lane, engraved by H. Beckwith. Museum collection 73-154.1

Ice Interlude

IT IS EARLY NOVEMBER as I write this, and winter is quickly descending upon Vermont. Snow has flurried and dared to stick. The trout gear has deserted its summer residence in the Fishmobile and is wintering in the house. Vest inventory has begun. The heat is on.

Especially for those of us living in colder climes who haven't yet made an addition to the living room like that shown above, it's a good time to sit by a fire, perhaps, and do some reading. We're happy to add to your stack with the Winter 1997 issue of *The American Fly Fisher.*

This issue takes you abroad with "The French School: Messieurs de Boisset and de Chamberet and *Les mouches de la série Gallica.*" Museum staff met Alvaro Masseini, a resident of Florence, Italy, last April, when he and Alessandra Lorini stopped by to do research in our library. In this article, Masseini presents a case for the original contributions of the French school of fly fishing to the development of the sport. It is one in a series of articles about the social history of fly fishing in several countries that Masseini plans to publish in book form. We are pleased to present you with this chapter.

The journal waxes poetic this month with a collection of verse about fishing in "Piscatory Poetics." Although it has long been our policy to publish poetry from the more distant past, we decided the time was right to offer a selection from well-known twentieth-century poets. I am particularly pleased to include Ted Hughes's "Go Fishing," a favorite of mine even before my angling days. The striking wood engravings by Alan James Robinson, who will be exhibiting at the Museum May 9 to June 23, illustrate this feature. Because this is first and foremost a historical journal, I must remind readers that poetry will remain occasional—so bask in the warmth of this winter indulgence.

Finally, we hope to reintroduce book reviews to the journal on a semiregular basis. In this issue, Bill Hunter reviews *Fishing Atlantic Salmon: The Flies and the Patterns* by Col. Joseph Bates Jr. and Pamela Bates Richards. If there are recent books of historical value that you would like to see reviewed, feel free to send suggestions.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

WINTER 1997 VOLUME 23 NUMBER 1

ON THE COVER: *Wood engraving by Alan James Robinson. This illustration appeared in* Big Water: Poems by John Engels *(New York: Lyons & Burford, 1995). More of Robinson's illustrations can be found in "Piscatory Poetics," starting on page 9.*

The American Fly Fisher is published four times a year by the Museum at P.O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Publication dates are winter, spring, summer, and fall. Membership dues include the cost of the journal ($25) and are tax deductible as provided for by law. Membership rates are listed in the back of each issue. All letters, manuscripts, photographs, and materials intended for publication in the journal should be sent to the Museum. The Museum and journal are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, drawings, photographic material, or memorabilia. The Museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless postage is provided. Contributions to *The American Fly Fisher* are to be considered gratuitous and the property of the Museum unless otherwise requested by the contributor. Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

Second Class Permit postage paid at Manchester Vermont 05254 and additional offices (USPS 057410). *The American Fly Fisher* (ISSN 0884-3562)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Fly Fisher*, P.O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254.

The French School:
Messieurs de Boisset and de Chamberet and *Les mouches de la série Gallica*

by Alvaro Masseini

Fly fishing developed in Anglo-Saxon countries and cultures during the last millennium, so it is not by chance that the great majority of specialized and popular works on this sophisticated type of angling are in English. But in more recent years—between the late 1920s and the early 1950s—fly fishing as a discipline was transplanted to France where it found some passionate and clever masters who gave life to the so-called French school. Albert Petit was the first major figure of this school.

A contemporary of Frederic Halford, Petit was born in Crépy-en Valois in 1842 and made a career as a successful lawyer. Petit was responsible for making Halford's works popular among the French and was himself the author of several books in the last decade of the nineteenth century, including *La truite de rivière; peche à la mouche artificielle* (1897) and *La peche moderne; encyclopédie du pêcheur* (1899).

Although it is certainly true that Petit made a great contribution to the popularity of fly fishing in France, it was during the 1930s and 1940s that this angling technique reached its peak as the favorite pastime of the French educated upper class. Popularization of works such as *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites* by Louis de Boisset, originally published in 1939 (in an edition of only 1,750 copies), tremendously helped the development of the French school. The international success of Gerard de Chamberet's creation of artificial fly patterns named *la série Gallica,* together with Charles Ritz's book *Pris sur le vif: ombres, truites, saumons* (1953) and Pezon and Michel Company's production of excellent *bambu refendu* rods, gave further recognition to the French fly-fishing school.

In the following pages, I attempt to analyze the development of the French school based on biographical accounts, anecdotes, and memories as told in de Boisset's two major works, *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites* and *Ecrit le soir: bavardages d'un vieux pêcheur de truites* (1953).

A Partnership by Design

> A country gentleman of taste by birth, an urban dweller out of necessity, I have dedicated every single moment of my spare time—too rare, unfortunately—that Heaven has been willing to give me, to river exploration . . . From my passionate study of universal mystery I have learned a great lesson of humility. Since I still have so much to learn, I do not have, I believe, the right of pontificating. In the following pages my aim is simply putting together the achievements of my long experience.[1]

With these words almost sixty years ago, Louis de Boisset opened his *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites,* one of the most important books on the history of fly fishing. With the well-known Gerard de Chamberet, de Boisset was the inventor of the *série Gallica,* which consisted of thirty-seven highly studied and finely made dressings of ephemeral flies and caddis flies. De Boisset made a thorough selection of material, worked with the skilled and refined hand of a musician, and experimented with the new patterns on Norman rivers and in the Jura Mountains. As a result, these patterns are still tied today.

The ultimate dressings are the result of the collaboration of two entomologists, the work of a first-rate tyer, and a passionate angler's experimentation with the artificial flies. De Boisset readily acknowledged "the lucky circumstance" of meeting both Dr. George Massia (a specialist in parasitology and the inventor of artificial fly patterns named after him) and hydrobiologist M.J.A. Lestage (one of the few ephemeral fly experts in Europe), as he "greatly benefited from their suggestions and help."[2] De Boisset was also grateful "to the exquisite gentleman M. Gerard de Chamberet, who created these peerless flies which take wing in France at springtime, for his technical accuracy of tying artificial flies."[3]

Within the extraordinary variety of works on fly fishing available today—largely from the Anglo-Saxon world—one can easily find extremely fine books covering every minute detail of this technique: nymphing, wet- and dry-fly fishing, dressing, entomology, casting, and much more. However, recent works in this field tend to be either extremely sophisticated, high-level manuals or fly-fishing biographies featuring anecdotes, trips, and experiences in which little or no reference is made to technical apsects. It is rather difficult to find books combining the scientific and technical elements of fly fishing with the author's intellectual journeys and emotional life. De Boisset is one of the few authors whose books successfully combine all these aspects. In his elegant and simple style, one can find keen observation

and a lack of presumption. A witty and genial fisherman of the past, he was a middle-aged man when he wrote his *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites* in 1939.[4]

De Boisset was a magistrate whose real name was Leonce Valette. One can speculate that he wrote books on fishing under a fictitious name because he did not consider his passion for fly fishing appropriate for someone who, as an attorney, had a prestigious reputation to keep. His competence as a fly fisherman, however, is indisputable and parallels his lack of haughtiness: "Fly fishing is not an exact science . . . what is good for fishing one river is not good for another . . . circumstances vary enormously."[5] De Boisset also shows the reader his deeply human side when he describes his friend Gerard de Chamberet, with whom he met frequently for both tying and fishing. *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites* stimulates the reader to picture de Boisset, a man in his fifties, walking long distances alone—carrying a case of ephemeral flies a friend/entomologist had previously classified as well as the perfect materials he needed to tie patterns recently bought in the town store—to join his friend Chamberet at his Charette hermitage. It was there, "lost in this immense plain where at dusk and in the silent night one can only hear the murmuring of the river, we spent hours in which he revealed to my enchanted curiosity all secrets of his magic art."[6]

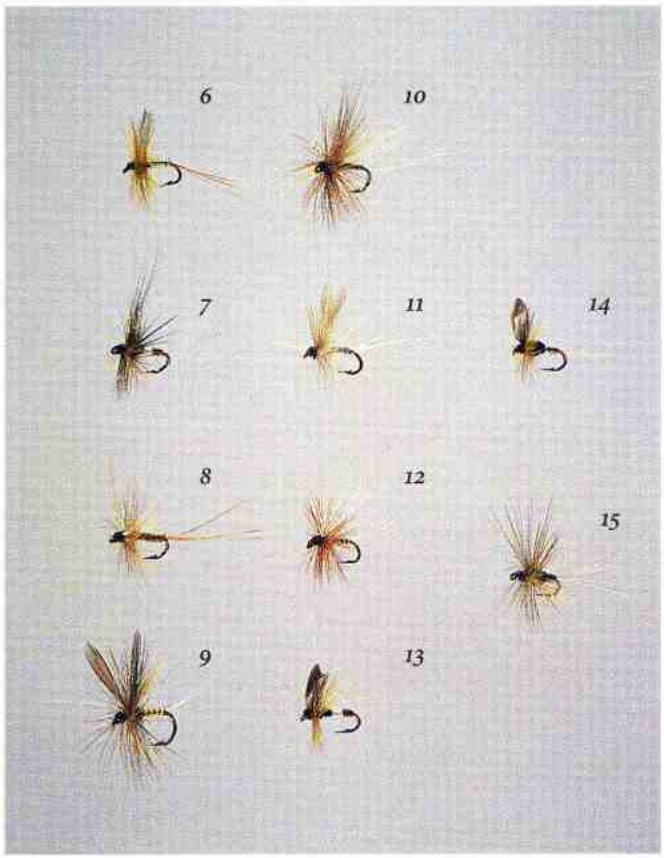
Gerard de Chamberet was the younger son of fallen aristocrats. After a happy-go-lucky youth in Paris where he spent his time at the *ateliers* of Parisian painters and musicians, de Chamberet retired to the little and secluded village of Charette "in the immense doline plain at the borders of Bresse, Borgogne and Comté."[7] Apparently, young de Chamberet had had enough of his mundane lifestyle and felt he had to flee Paris. According to de Boisset, de Chamberet used to tell his friends that he had made Charette his home because the closest town was forty kilometers at least from the village; furthermore, his passion for fishing could be released on the Doubs, a beautiful river running very close to his Charette house. De Chamberet's home, which was decorated with taste and simplicity, became an angler's point of reference in that area. "Some fishermen made a very brief stop, whereas others, who had stopped by out of curiosity, became regular callers, fellow guests, and friends."[8]

De Boisset and de Chamberet, both middle-aged men, met in Charette. By the 1920s and 1930s, de Chamberet had already become a famous figure in fly-fishing circles. The words with which de Boisset portrayed his friend de Chamberet in the 1953 volume *Ecrit le soir* are worth repeating: "As soon as we rang the bell a splendid ebony Belgian shepherd dog courteously welcomed us by a diffident sniffing. In a moment the owner showed up. His height was average, his body solid, his shoulders wide. He had a short gray mustache, beautiful blue eyes, and an attractive and calm face. He wore a cardigan over a negligently knotted tie and corduroy above-the-knee pants."[9] De Boisset and his sons, who accompanied him on that fishing trip, were introduced into de Chamberet's workshop "where we all stood, still chatting for a quarter of an hour. We realized that the person in front of us was a real lord."[10]

De Boisset and de Chamberet enjoyed a long-term work relationship and friendship. In fact, every year in late fall, when the grayling activity reached its apex on the Doubs, fly-fishing virtuosos would gather at Charette. This group included de Boisset, Auguste Lambiotte (a master of fishing and a friend of Charles Ritz's), Henri de Man, a certain Dr. Tixier, and Dr. George Massia.

The série Gallica

Photographs by Gianni Petronio



The série Gallica

Patterns Born of Observation and Classification

By the mid-1930s, de Chamberet had already begun to tie artificial flies by imitating Spanish patterns. After he experienced how inadequate, awkward, and scarcely floating these flies were, and thanks to what he learned from English fly-tying manuals and the help and advice he received from a certain Dr. Dubard and General Dawis, de Chamberet soon became a very skilled tyer. Like any other fisherman, he began to tie flies for his own needs. He made use of rooster feathers he found in the area of Limousin. When his artificial flies became popular, de Chamberet began a real business. In 1939, he was able to produce fifty dozen flies daily by employing approximately forty local women. The real commercialization, however, occurred in 1941 after a fruitful trip to Paris where he submitted his samples to major tackle shops. He exerted the most careful quality control over his artificial flies, and their fame on European markets matched English patterns. As de Boisset put it, de Chamberet

> could not tolerate carelessness as he expected perfection even in details. He himself arranged the material for reproduction. He did not give his workers a single feather which had not passed his accurate inspection, or a single hook which had not been previously tested, or any silk fiber whose color and level of resistance had not been already inspected. During the busiest season, at the end of the day when he was finally free from his chores, de Chamberet used to sit at his little table to get the material ready for the next day. Usually at cock-crow he was still working under the light of a lamp.[11]

In the long-lasting controversy between those who advocated the exactly reproduced fly pattern on one side (such as Halford and Petit) and those who advocated the overall-effect fly pattern on the other (such as Stewart and Lord Gray), de Chamberet and de Boisset kept their own views. Although they did not take any sectarian or definitive position, they firmly based their research upon deep observation and scientific classification of insects in which nothing was left to casual improvisation. The *série Gallica*, which has kept its fame throughout the years, resulted from the dedication and competence of a skilled team. Dressings are patterned after hatching flies in an attempt to closely imitate the common characteristics of ephemeral species, such as their color, shape, and size. There is no question that de Chamberet's tying follows the school of Frederic Halford, whose works Albert Petit admired and translated into French. It is not by chance that in his book de Boisset often quotes Petit, of whom he considered himself a humble disciple: "The honor of making artificial flies known in our country goes to M. Albert Petit, the president of the cabinet at the State Auditors' Department, who in 1897 published the splendid volume entitled *La truite de rivière*. This without-equal masterpiece, which unlikely will ever be surpassed, has made known among French fishermen Halford's methods and theory."[12]

De Boisset was quite aware that although thoroughly dressed, artificial flies once on the water could never look like natural ephemeral flies. Halford, the most strenuous supporter of exactly reproduced fly patterns, used to say that in spite of all efforts of a good tyer, the artificial fly "will never be alive."[13] Nevertheless, in de Boisset's view, a fisherman needed to have many types of flies with him to try on a river. Those who held that a selection of four to six artificial flies was enough to fish all year round left him rather skepti-

cal. Consequently, the *série Gallica* included thirty-seven patterns. At the time—the latter half of the 1930s—it was the largest pattern selection ever created; in fact, Halford's patterns included only thirty-three patterns.

Today, producers and tyers of artificial flies offer hundreds of patterns, the majority of which one can safely say suits commercial sophistication better than the fisherman's real needs. De Boisset gives us detailed information on how the famous *série Gallica* patterns were tied:

> As I have already mentioned, each river has a fauna of its own. You must study by thorough observation what exists in your own country. Catch the greatest number you can of living ephemera. Don't let enchantment stop you in front of one or two specimens as nothing is more difficult to be examined than these tiny and fragile insects. Only when you have seen and compared a certain number of them can you have a more accurate idea. Then, you will be able to reproduce them and make patterns suitable for the river you are interested in. All types of fish will appreciate them better than those included in the most expensive collections. This is precisely what we did with the *série Gallica* that de Chamberet created. We agreed in principle that we couldn't even dream of imitating all the living species of the area. We decided that perhaps the best thing to do was to concentrate our efforts to make the closest reproduction of one particular species, as we were convinced we could use the same imitation any time a trout would eat insects of a similar size and color.[14]

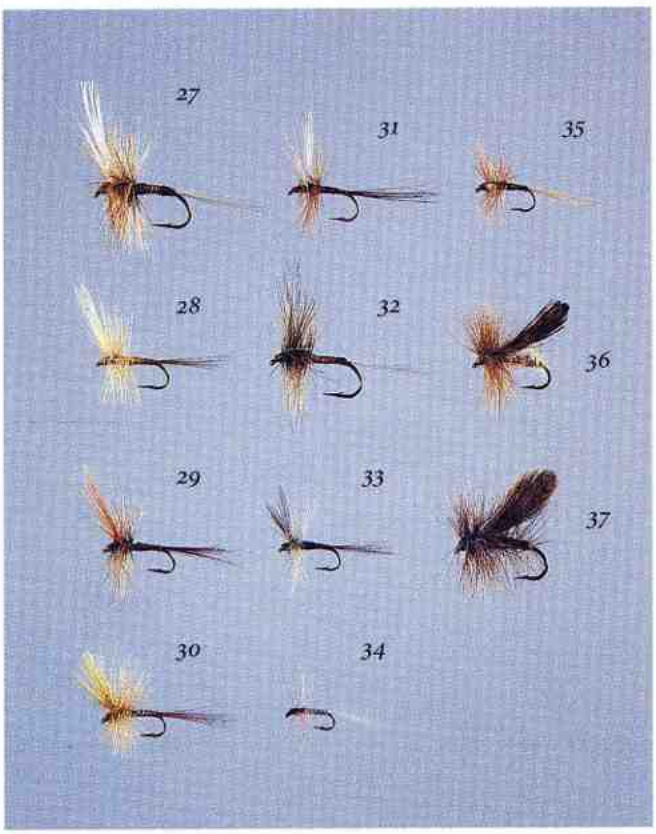
Those who want to practice fly fishing with some knowledge are aware of the importance of mastering some basic entomological notions. They are also aware that an important step forward, as Halford suggested, is the fisherman's ability to tie his own artificial fly: "Every fisherman who has thoroughly studied entomology because of his interest in tying artificial flies on his own will get the greatest accomplishment when his effort to imitate nature produces a better and more realistic pattern than any other available. There is no doubt that he will fish trusting his new pattern better than a less successful imitation. And, as it has often been said, an angler's confidence in a particular artificial fly is one of the most important aspects of successful fishing."[15] We should not think that because of their views de Boisset and de Chamberet underestimated the importance of overall-effect patterns or of specific dressings for grayling fish, which will be discussed later.

Entomological or Overall-Effect Patterns

Rightly proud of their work, the two creators of the *série Gallica* were far from considering their artificial flies universally effective. De Boisset, in fact, reminds us that "circumstances are immensely variable . . . each river has its own microfauna . . . " and, accordingly, specific artificial flies are needed.[16]

Experienced fishermen usually agree that overall-effect artificial flies (that is, those patterns including in one fly characteristics common to different species of insects) are particularly effective during hatching periods in moderately rough water. These patterns are highly recommended for resurgence and the middle stretch of a river; consequently, they are not considered to be good on extremely rough water and on streams. Some of the insects these artificial flies imitate are not easy to find in many areas. For example, most of the insects the *série Gallica* imitates do not exist in Italy. By the same token, caddis flies, very common in Italy,

The série Gallica



The série Gallica

are underrepresented in the *série Gallica*, and only two patterns are reproduced of this particular species (patterns 36 and 37). Furthermore, these two dressings are tied by using an outdated technique (their wings are placed in a vertical position on the hook). The *série Gallica* does not include stone flies and those land insects common on Italian rivers during summer. The big ephemeral flies (patterns 1 through 5) and all olive flies of the *série Gallica* are imitations of betides, a species of insect widely represented in those Italian rivers inhabited by fish of the salmon family; consequently, patterns 6 to 15 are highly recommended for fly fishing in Italy, as well as reproductions of ecdyonurus (patterns 24 to 26) and of the *Heptagenia sulphurea* (pattern 28).

In some stores one can find artificial flies labeled, in good faith, *série Gallica,* which keep the vaguest resemblance as far as color, size, and tying technique. De Chamberet died in 1951, but the last dressings of the *série Gallica*—produced under his wife's supervision before she sold the Charette laboratory in 1976 to the Pezon and Michel Company (the important French firm making the famous *bambu refendu* rods and the producer of all sorts of fly-fishing tackle)—showed the original high quality of their materials and the tyers' impressive skills.

Although de Boisset and de Chamberet's major effort in dressing artificial flies was obtaining the most faithful imitation of real insects, they were far from underestimating the importance of overall-effect flies under certain circumstances: "Frequently trout are very keen on these patterns, the outcome of an inventive fisherman's imagination," noted de Boisset.[17] Halford had a similar view and admitted that " . . . those horrible things sometimes make a catch possible."[18] This became the favorite argument of those who were not inclined to make an effort to "copy" real insects. They argued that if a trout would take an imaginative fly—something that does happen—a fisherman did not need to know entomology. In the 1930s, Petit had already discussed this matter and reached the following conclusion:

> I am sure that, with a few exceptions, so-called imaginative flies remind the trout some of its habitual prey. If we are not able to give appropriate names to these imaginative flies, it is because we do not know the large number of living creatures, mollusks, insects, shellfish, annelids, arachnids, botracius, etc., on which the fish feeds. Moreover, we cannot evaluate the impact artificial flies make on the fish's visual organs, since this particular type of bait is presented to the fish under extremely variable optical conditions that make even the most approximate evaluation impossible.[19]

De Boisset held a similar view: "After some thirty-five years of observing and studying this matter, I have come to agree, with no reservation, with A. Petit's opinion." He also added, "There is no question that anyone has the legitimate right to create an inventive pattern, whose shape and material can follow the strongest imaginative impulse. One has to see what the fish will think about it."[20] Finally, in order to make his argument more sound, de Boisset reported the following two anecdotes on the Wickham's Fancy and the Greenwell's Glory, which had already become famous overall-effect patterns. He found these two stories in an article by Amédée J. Gros included in the collection of essays entitled *La peche illustrée* (1925–1926).

> One day Amédée Gros was fishing the Ain river in the company of a Parisian fisherman when the latter wanted to have a closer look at the artificial fly Gros was using, a reproduction of ecdyonurus. Gros, who had thoroughly studied these insects, showed

the pattern to the Parisian fisherman, who exclaimed, "This is the Wickham's Fancy!" Gros protested, gave his explanations, and compared the two patterns. At the end he had to admit the extraordinary resemblance between his artificial fly and the English pattern he did not know. Thus, it seems that there was no agreement as to when an artificial fly should be taken as an imaginative pattern. For the trout it was, and it still is, a good overall-effect pattern that imitates the *Rhitrogena* family.[21]

The second anecdote recites as follows:

One evening of the year of our Lord 1852, the Reverend Chanoine William Greenwell de Durhan returned home with an empty basket after fishing at Sprautson, in the County of Roxburg. This minor incident, rather frequent today, in 1852 was taken as a disgrace, a sort of reversal of eternal laws! Chanoine was furious for wasting his time and determined to find an explanation of his failure. In order to do so, he brought back many specimens of ephemeral of the type the fish he did not catch was feeding on while rejecting his artificial flies. Most likely these insects belonged to the *Baetis* species. In those days a well-renowned tyer named James Writh lived in Sprautson. Writh took the insects Greenwell had brought him and went to his clamp to make imitations. He then gave the dressings to the Reverend who tested them the next day. It was such a success that the event was celebrated with an unplanned luncheon at Writh's atelier.[22]

This second story is another example that what was then conceptualized as an imaginative fly should more appropriately be called an overall-effect pattern. This was certainly a better definition for a reproduction of the most common characteristics of ephemeral flies. De Boisset commented upon that event, which led to a hearty meal and libation, with his usual subtle and ironic tone and his badly hidden anticlericalism: "Whether the Reverend found the Bible's logic as straight as his rod it's hard to say."[23]

By the end of the 1930s, only a few published works were available dealing with thorough descriptions of grayling, and even fewer were available on appropriate artificial flies to catch this fish. In *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites,* de Boisset makes reference to two volumes. The first one, entitled *North Country Flies* by T.E. Pritt, was published in 1886 and was impossible to find even in de Boisset's day. The other one, entitled *La peche de l'ombre dans le cours d'eau du Sud,* was published in 1901 by H.H. Rolt; rather difficult to find, it was a volume centered on fishing Yorkshire chalk streams and dealing with artificial patterns that were almost useless in the French Jura. Paul de Beaulieu's more recent publication, *La peche de l'ombre à la mouche* (1929), thoroughly examined different techniques, but its suggestions of artificial flies were rather irrelevant. According to de Boisset, the only thing to do was to put himself to work in order to find suitable artificial flies to be successfully introduced in the French context. By that time de Chamberet had already moved to his "hermitage" in Charette for good. His favorite fishing sites were near Besancon on the Ain (which had already been partially damaged by the construction of some hydroelectric dams) and on the Loue—both beautiful streams and tributaries of the Doubs River. De Boisset named his grayling artificial patterns after the Loue, a stream which is still famous for this type of fish. These patterns include twelve dressings, tied with no wings by a skilled hand and with the use of first-rate material. De Boisset guaranteed their "maximum floating."

In the fall you can often see the grayling running over a certain hatch. When you see them you should show them the perfect

The série Loue

imitation of that particular fly. But success is not granted. Perhaps while you are doing your best with a good reproduction of that very insect flying on the water, it might well happen that the fish will stubbornly dismiss your artificial flies and come near your legs to grab the real ones. In this case you should sit for a few minutes on the bank. Unless you want to do like the fisherman of whom Paul de Beaulieu tells us: Pour all your boxes of artificial flies on the water with the following notice: "Now pick whatever you like!"[24]

The tradition of the French school did not end with de Boisset and de Chamberet. In the 1960s and 1970s, Aime Devoux invented a new tying system for the dressing of patterns, building the dressings from tail to head; their high level of effectiveness and floating made them well known all over Europe, and they are still widely used. In the same period, the French artisan and fly fisherman Guy Plas produced remarkable nymphing patterns still known for their effectiveness. Thus, one can conclude that there is no doubt about the existence of a French fly-fishing school and the original contribution it gives to the development of the sport.

Once Upon a Time on the Loue or, The Loue* Seventy Years Ago

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, the streams of Pouthier were crowded with wonderful fish. Although their number constantly decreased after 1914, there were still enough to satisfy the most demanding fisherman. Trout and grayling ran with no fear on the enormous variety of ephemeral that showed up in sequence during the day. *Baetis* and ephemeral in the morning, *Heptagenia* and *Choroterper* in the early afternoon, and all sorts of golden and ruby *Ecdyonuride* at sunset. . . . The grayling swarmed at the edge of the bridge of Montgesoye, some magnificent fish not easy to be seduced by the skilled local fishermen who used artificial flies only. In the streams of Vuillafans, both up hill and down dale of the nail factory, trout were the great majority. I remember those evenings when swarms of stone flies passed through the valley with their heavy and solemn way of flying, and the river bubbled as if the trout were prey of a collective madness. It is in those very streams of Vuillafans that on 17 May 1914, Colonel Antoine Vavon (the president of the Fishing Club of France), while fishing a dry fly during a hatch of *Baetis pumilius,* was able to catch sixty-eight trout in seven hours, all of them weighing more than 250 grams and some more than 500 grams. A trout every five minutes! In that place during Easter week of 1919, he was still able to catch on a sinking fly forty-five trout in six-and-a-half hours of fishing. Needless to say, in those days anglers were not after the fish as incessantly as they are today. Besides the local people, who generally were quite careful about preserving their wealth, very few others were on the river. Evidently fishing was not free for everybody. But with courtesy and good manners, one could get any permit he wished. Since then, fishing associations have been founded everywhere. They believed to act for the good by giving daily permits to the crowds . . . and then the day came when the river saw more fishermen than fish.

From L. de Boisset, *Ecrit le soir* (Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1953), pp. 29–39.

*A tributary of the Doubs River in the French Jura, the Loue is one of the most important chalk streams in Europe and one of the most sought-after places of early French fly fishermen. Because of its rich microfauna, de Boisset and de Chamberet experimented with their new patterns on this chalk stream.

ENDNOTES

1. L. de Boisset, *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites* (Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1971; originally published in 1939), p. 13. Quotations from de Boisset's books are translated from the French original edition by the author.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
4. Another successful example of written observation and emotion is Charles Ritz's *Pris sur le vif* (1953).
5. De Boisset, *Les mouches du pêcheur de truite,* p. 15.
6. L. de Boisset, *Ecrit le soir* (Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1953), p. 116.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
10. *Ibid.*
11. De Boisset, *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites,* p. 23.
12. De Boisset, *Ecrit le soir,* p. 103.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
15. De Boisset, *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites,* p. 28.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

De Boisset, Louis. *Ecrit le soir: bavardages d'un vieux pêcheur de truites.* Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1953.

———. *Les mouches du pêcheur de truites.* Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1939.

Gros, Amédée J. "Note sur la preproduction des Ephémères." In *Annales des Sciences Naturelles: Zoologie,* série 10, VI, 1923.

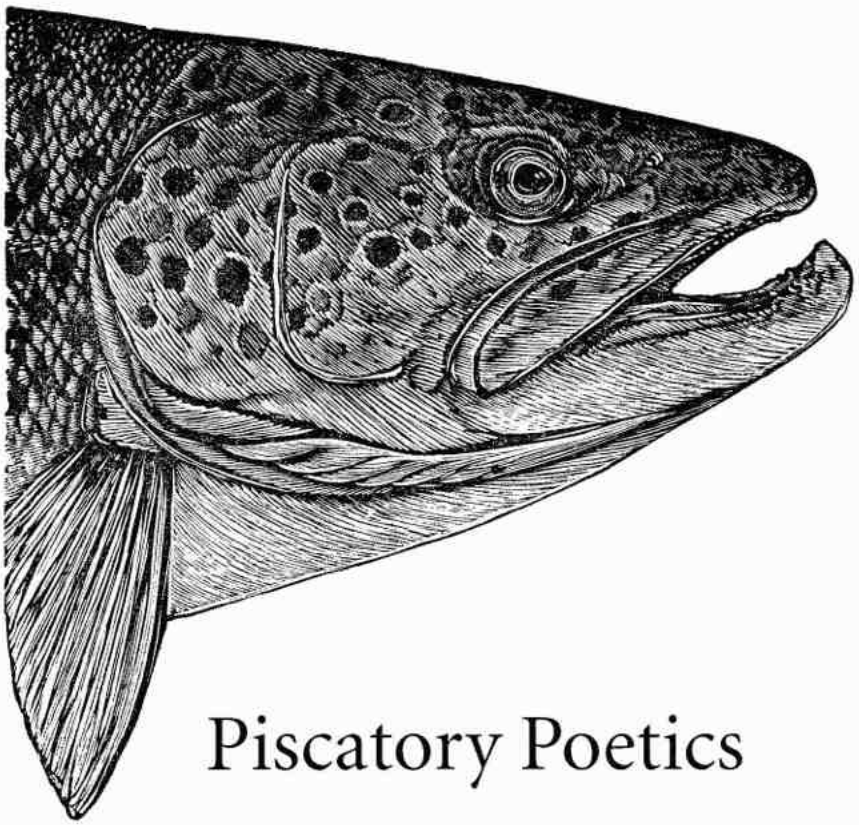
Halford, Frederic M. *Dry-fly Fishing in Theory and Practice.* London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1889.

———. *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them.* London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1886.

Petit, G. Albert. *La truite de rivière; Peche à la mouche artificielle.* Paris: Delangrave, 1897.

Ritz, Charles C. *Pris sur le vif; ombres, truites, saumons.* Paris: Librairie des Champs-Elysées, 1953.

Vavon, Antoine. *La truite.* Paris: [publisher unknown], 1927.

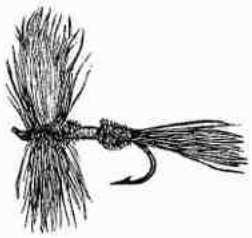


Piscatory Poetics

Being the aesthetic, contemplative, rejuvenating, challenging, frustrating, and nearly religious experience that it is, fishing has been featured in the works of poets throughout the centuries. Nature's cycles, camaraderie, self-reflection, and desire provide the undercurrent flowing through this art form. For many, fishing helps us know who we are.

Some of the finest poets of the twentieth century have addressed the experience. Here we present work by a half dozen of them, all of whom have achieved well-deserved recognition for their work. John Engels has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and has been a Frost Fellow, Guggenheim Fellow, and Fulbright Fellow. Galway Kinnell won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 and was named Vermont state poet in 1989. Ted Hughes has been poet laureate of England since 1984. In 1995, Seamus Heaney won the Nobel Prize in Literature, an honor held by fellow Irishman William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) in 1923. Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979) was named consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress in 1965 and won the 1976 Neustadt International Prize for literature.

May you find something of yourself here. Editor



Trout

Hangs, a fat gun-barrel,
deep under arched bridges
or slips like butter down
the throat of the river.

From depths smooth-skinned as plums,
his muzzle gets bull's eye;
picks off grass-seed and moths
that vanish, torpedoed.

Where water unravels
over gravel-beds he
is fired from the shallows,
white belly reporting

flat; darts like a tracer-
bullet back between stones
and is never burnt out.
A volley of cold blood

ramrodding the current.

—*Seamus Heaney*

The Fisherman

Although I can see him still,
The freckled man who goes
To a grey place on a hill
In grey Connemara clothes
At dawn to cast his flies
It's long since I began
To call up to the eyes
This wise and simple man.
All day I'd looked in the face
What I had hoped 'twould be
To write for my own race
And the reality;
The living men that I hate,
The dead man that I loved,
The craven man in his seat,
The insolent unreproved,
And no knave brought to book
Who has won a drunken cheer,
The witty man and his joke
Aimed at the commonest ear,
The clever man who cries
The catch-cries of the clown,
The beating down of the wise
And great Art beaten down.

Maybe a twelvemonth since
Suddenly I began,
In scorn of this audience,
Imagining a man,
And his sun-freckled face,
And grey Connemara cloth,
Climbing up to a place
Where stone is dark under froth,
And the down-turn of his twist
When the flies drop in the stream;
A man who does not exist,
A man who is but a dream;
And cried, 'Before I am old
I shall have written him one
Poem maybe as cold
And passionate as the dawn.'

—*William Butler Yeats*

From *The Poems of W.B. Yeats: A New Edition*, edited by Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983).

Go Fishing

Join water, wade in underbeing
Let brain mist into moist earth
Ghost loosen away downstream
Gulp river and gravity

Lose words
Cease
Be assumed into the womb of lymph
As if creation were a wound
As if this flow were all plasm healing

Be supplanted by mud and leaves and pebbles
By sudden rainbow monster-structures
That materialise in suspension gulping
And dematerialise under pressure of the eye

Be cleft by the sliding prow
Displaced by the hull of light and shadow
Dissolved in earth-wave, the soft sun-shock,
Dismembered in sun-melt

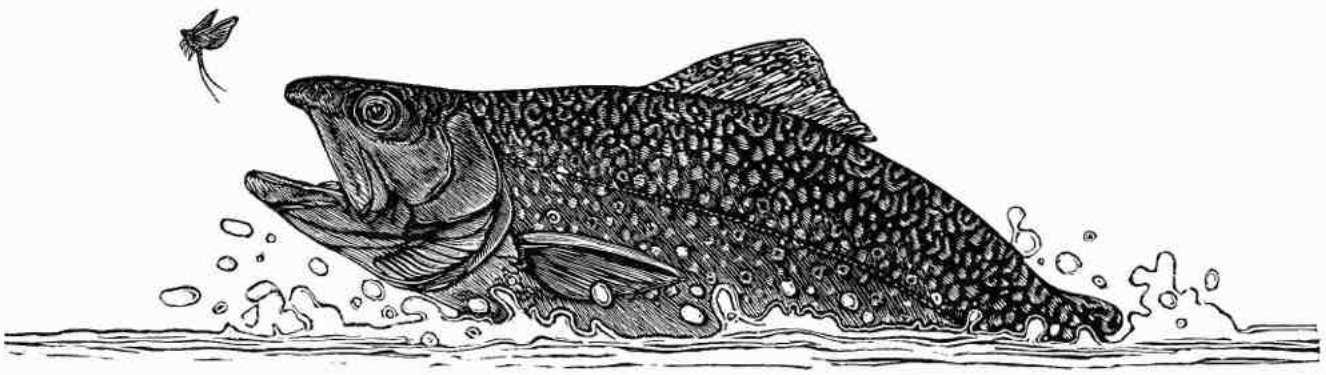
Become translucent—one untangling drift
Of water-mesh, and a weight of earth-taste light
Mangled by wing-shadows
Everything circling and flowing and hover-still

Crawl out over roots, new and nameless
Search for face, harden into limbs

Let the world come back, like a white hospital
Busy with urgency words

Try to speak and nearly succeed
Heal into time and other people

—*Ted Hughes*



October Salmon

He's lying in poor water, a yard or so depth of poor safety,
Maybe only two feet under the no-protection of an outleaning
small oak,
Half-under a tangle of brambles.

After his two thousand miles, he rests,
Breathing in that lap of easy current
In his graveyard pool.

About six pounds weight,
Four years old at most, and hardly a winter at sea—
But already a veteran,
Already a death-patched hero. So quickly it's over!

So briefly he roamed the gallery of marvels!
Such sweet months, so richly embroidered into earth's
beauty-dress,
Her life-robe—
Now worn out with her tirelessness, her insatiable quest,
Hangs in the flow, a frayed scarf—

An autumnal pod of his flower,
The mere hull of his prime, shrunk at shoulder and flank,

With the sea-going Aurora Borealis of his April power—
The primrose and violet of that first upfling in the estuary—
Ripened to muddy dregs,
The river reclaiming his sea-metals.

In the October light
He hangs there, patched with leper-cloths.
Death has already dressed him
In her clownish regimentals, her badges and decorations,
Mapping the completion of his service,
His face a ghoul-mask, a dinosaur of senility, and his whole body
A fungoid anemone of canker—

Can the caress of water ease him?
The flow will not let up for a minute.

What a change! from that covenant of Polar Light
To this shroud in a gutter!
What a death-in-life—to be his own spectre!
His living body become death's puppet,
Dolled by death in her crude paints and drapes
He haunts his own staring vigil
And suffers the subjection, and the dumbness,
And the humiliation of the role!

And that is how it is,
That is what is going on there, under the scrubby oak tree,
hour after hour,
That is what the splendour of the sea has come down to,
And the eye of ravenous joy—king of infinite liberty
In the flashing expanse, the bloom of sea-life,

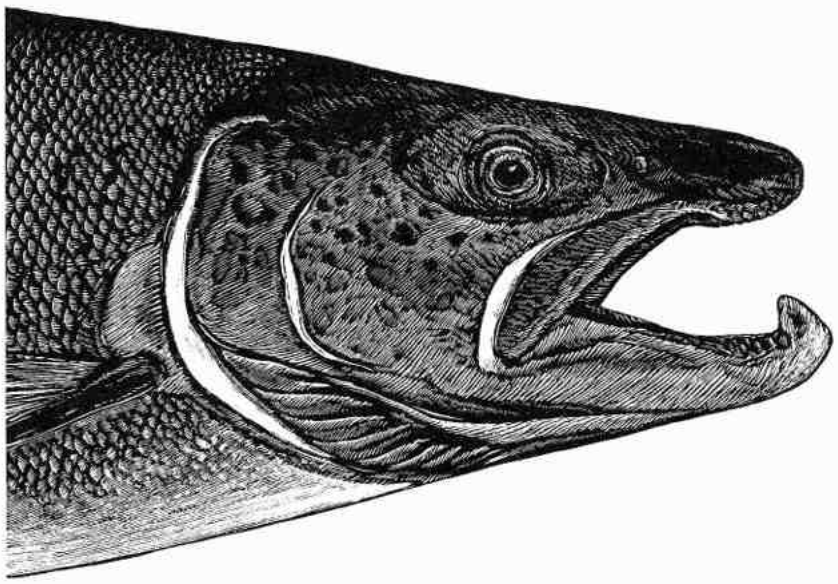
On the surge-ride of energy, weightless,
Body simply the armature of energy
In that earliest sea-freedom, the savage amazement of life,
The salt mouthful of actual existence
With strength like light—

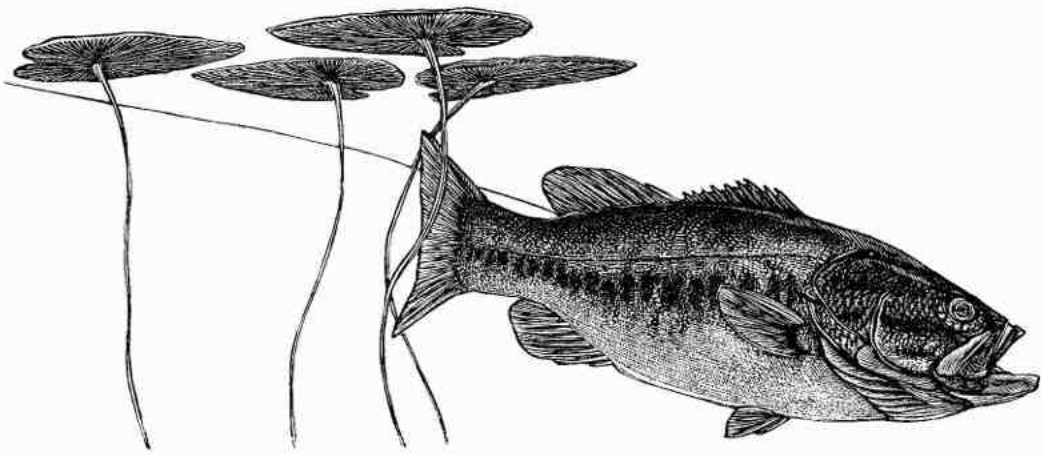
Yet this was always with him. This was inscribed in his egg.
This chamber of horrors is also home.
He was probably hatched in this very pool.

And this was the only mother he ever had, this uneasy
channel of minnows
Under the mill-wall, with bicycle wheels, car-tyres, bottles
And sunk sheets of corrugated iron.
People walking their dogs trail their evening shadows across him.
If boys see him they will try to kill him.

All this, too, is stitched into the torn richness,
The epic poise
That holds him so steady in his wounds, so loyal to his doom,
so patient
In the machinery of heaven.

—*Ted Hughes*





After Moonless Midnight

I waded, deepening, and the fish
Listened for me. They watched my each move
Through their magical skins. In the stillness
Their eyes waited, furious with gold brightness,
Their gills moved. And in their thick sides
The power waited. And in their torpedo
Concentration, their mouth-aimed intent,
Their savagery waited, and their explosion.
They waited for me. The whole river
Listened to me, and, blind,
Invisibly watched me. And held me deeper
With its blind, invisible hands.
"We've got him," it whispered, "We've got him."

—*Ted Hughes*

The Fish

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.

I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.

—*Elizabeth Bishop*

"The Fish" from *The Complete Poems 1927–1979* by Elizabeth Bishop. Copyright © 1979, 1983 by Alice Helen Methfessel. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.

Hatch

Another month
and the fly-making season
is on us, just barely time
before we're wader-deep
in May, and the Clyde runs clear again
and the bats begin to fly,
and by the end of the month

I'll be back in the meadows
where some years ago
near Decoration Day there came
a hatch of little gray flies with yellow
egg sacs, dense over
the river, and great

red-sided fishes wallowing
all around me, to which I passionately cast
all day with the right hand
until the right hand gave out, whereupon

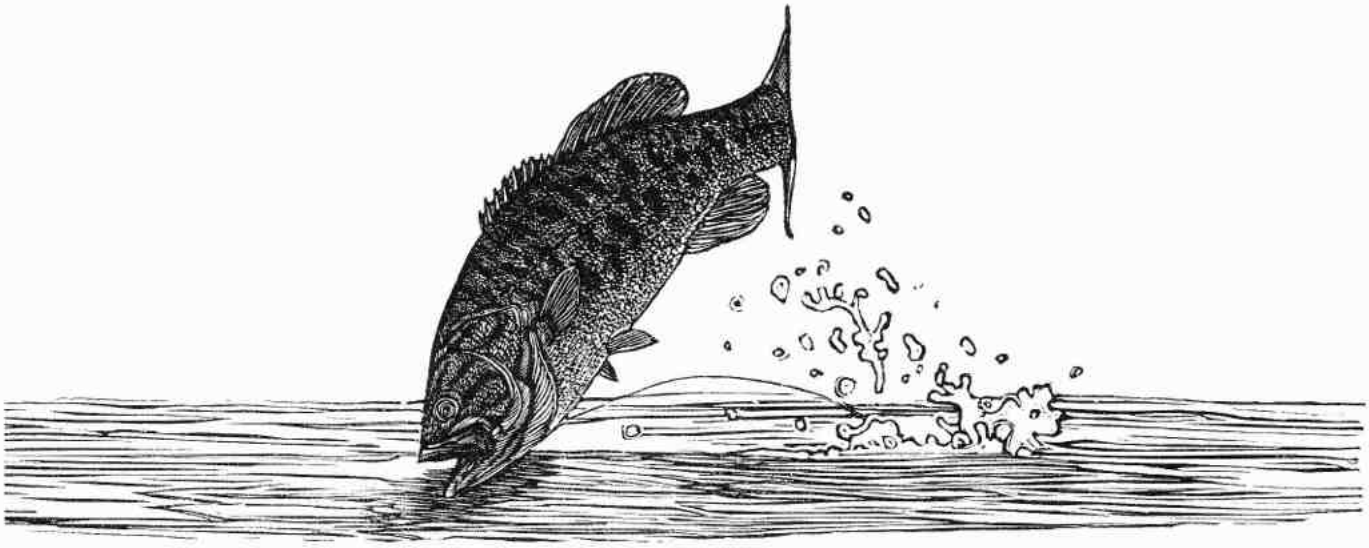
I used the left and wore that out, too,
but never struck a fish—and didn't I have
a very bad moment when at last it occurred to me
they might be suckers, and struggled down

to the riffles at the tail
of the pool, and kicked some out,
and sure enough they were, big
five-pounders, striped bloody red

as a North Branch rainbow—since when,
the end of May and that hatch on,
I travel to some quiet place
where I figure trout
must be rising to it—nevertheless
can't help myself but look
more than twice at any
surfacing red sides.

—*John Engels*

Reprinted with permission from John Engels, © 1995.



At Night on the Lake in the Eye of the Hunter

That night, drifting far out
in the center of the lake, I watched
the stars; later,
I shone my torch down into the eelgrass
of the perch beds, and saw the fish
stunned into thrills
and tremblings of fins.

I shone the torch onto my wet hands,
the wet sky-reflecting floorboards
of the boat, onto the sky itself,
the beam widening and thinning
into the white fabrics of mist. That night

I thought I rode the center of all
the widening darknesses
to the rimstones of the encircling earth.
Later, by starlight seeing
over the whole blue surface of the lake
trout feeding on mayflies, seeing the cross
and recross of rise rings, the slow
opening ripples from the bright
tiny insucks at center,

I came to think how it might be
my boat hung there in a net of fire,
but however it was, the light
had begun its long reach, even now

long afterward, still rising,
widening into the body of the sky,
through the mists into the last
huge widenesses of the last
meetings of light beyond which
I remember this or not, beyond which
even then fearing my life
I wished to burn.

—*John Engels*

Green Bay Flies

Two deep rivers ran
through the heart of town to the Bay,
and in March I watched the ice break up
and the big floes go tumbling, splintering
the piers, debarking the oaks and pines
along the banks four feet up their trunks.
In April, the first thunder
in six months, proclaiming
spring, and in July
up from the Bay, from beyond
Peet's Slough and Long Tail Point
and the marsh meadows blue
with sweet flag the hatch came,
a fly or two fluttering

to the street lights, then a few more, then
before you knew it
the mayflies of Green Bay would be swarming up
the Fox in huge rustling clouds half as wide
as the river, so many they darkened the arc lights
on the Blue Jays' field, covered
every window pane, clustered the screens, clogged
car radiators, covered your hat, your sleeves,
sometimes even brought traffic

to a halt. You could feel their wings
brushing your face with little breezes
that I swear were enough
to cool you down on a hot night, the air
adazzle with wings, and high
in the evening sky swallows
by the hundreds, cedar waxwings
darting out from the trees to meet a fly
just perfectly in mid flight, one second
this little fluttery dab of golden light,
then the flash and hover
of the bird, then

nothing,
like a flicked switch, the evening gone
minutely the darker for it.
If it had been raining
the streets and sidewalks in the morning
would be slippery with a green slime
of eggs, the flies having mistaken
the wet concrete for a surface
of live water. But nothing

like it anymore, the hatch
is over, probably
forever, the Bay a soup
of silt and sewage and sulfides
from the mills, not even clean
enough to swim in anymore. But back then,
those summer evenings—I can still
hear it, the sound
like a long train
way off in the distance,
a sort of humming rumble
wrought up by those millions,
billions, of delicate wings

that caught up every last scrap of light
left to the day in that last
half hour as night came down
and the street lamps
came on. I've never forgotten
how it was those years in July
the night stepping in, slow

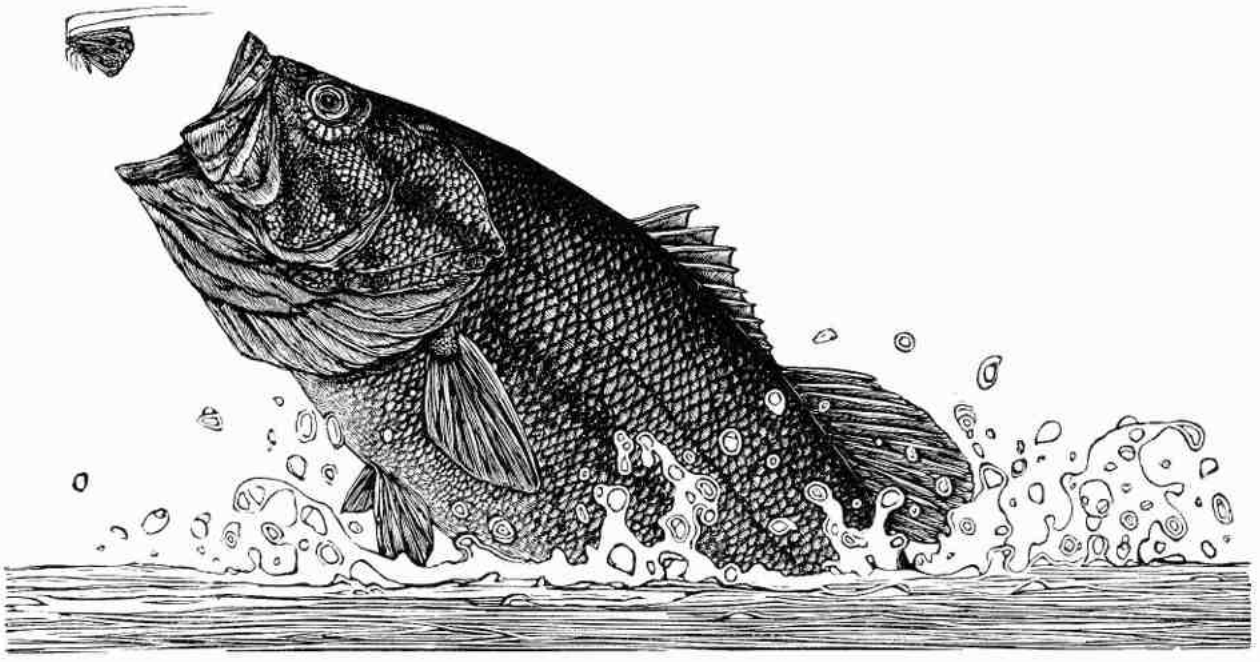
and deliberate as a heron, the sky
softly darkening like it does
even now, evenings
in late summer, a smell
of lawns and dust and the steely
scent of the Bay drifting in, the air

still hot, but a growing softness
to everything—at such a time
you could surprise
yourself, catch sight of yourself
in a shop window, if the time
was right, and the mayflies
hadn't yet swarmed the glass, and depending
on how you wanted to look to yourself,
in such a light you'd look it.

—*John Engels*

Angling, A Day

Though day is just breaking
when we fling two nightcrawlers
bunched on a hook as far out
as we can into Crystal Lake so leaden
no living thing could possibly swim through it
and let them lie on the bottom, under the water
and mist in which the doubled sun
soon shines and before long the doubled
mountains; though we drag Lake Parker
with fishing apparatus of several sorts,
catching a few yellow perch which we keep
just to have caught *something;* though
we comb with fine, and also coarse,
toothed hooks Shirley's Pond stocked
with trout famous for swallowing
any sharpened wire no matter
how expertly disguised as worm;
though we fish the fish-prowled pools
Bill Allen has divined by dip of bamboo
during all those misspent days trout-witching



Miller Run; though we cast some hours
away at the Lamoille, at the bend
behind Eastern Magnesia Talc Company's
Mill No. 4, which Hayden Carruth
says his friend John Engels says
is the best fishing around ("hernia bend,"
Engels calls it, on account of the weight
of fish you haul out of there); though we end up
fishing the Salmon Hole of the Winooski
in which twenty-inch walleyes moil—
we and a dozen others who keep faith
with earth by that little string
which ties each man to the river at twilight—
casting and, as we reel in, twitching the rod,
our bodies curvetting in that curious motion
by which men giving fish motions to lures
look themselves like fish, until Fergus' jig,
catching a rock as he reels in,
houdinies out of its knot, and the man
fishing next to us, Ralph, reeling
somewhat himself due to an afternoon
of no fish and much Molson's ale,
lends us one of his, and, shaking,
sleight-of-hands for us sobriety itself's
escape-proof shroud between line and jig,
while a fellow from downcountry
goes on about how to free a snagged line
by sliding a spark plug down it—
"Well," Ralph says a couple of times,
"I sure never heard of that one,"
though sure enough, a few minutes later,
when Ralph's own line gets snagged,
he takes the fellow up on the idea,
borrows the man's spark plug, taps
the gap closed over the line as directed,
and lets her slide, yanking and flapping
vigorously as the spark plug disappears
into the water, and instantly loses spark plug
and jig both, and says, "Nope,
I sure never heard of that one"—
though, in brief, we have crossed the entire state
up at its thick end, and fished with hope
all the above-mentioned fishing spots
from before first light to after nightfall
and now will just be able to make it
to Essex Junction in time
to wait the several hours that must pass
before the train arrives in reality,
we have caught nothing—not counting,
of course, the three yellow perch Fergus
gave away earlier to Bill and Anne
Allen's cat Monsoon, who is mostly dead
along her left side though OK on her right,
the side she was probably lying on the night
last winter when, literally, she half froze to death—
and being afraid that Fergus, who's so tired
he now gets to his feet only to cast
and at once sits down, must be thoroughly
defeated, and his noble passion for fishing
perhaps broken, I ask him how he feels:
"I'm disappointed," he says, "but not discouraged.
I'm not saying I'm a fisherman, but fishermen know
there are days when you don't catch anything."

—*Galway Kinnell*

East Middlebury

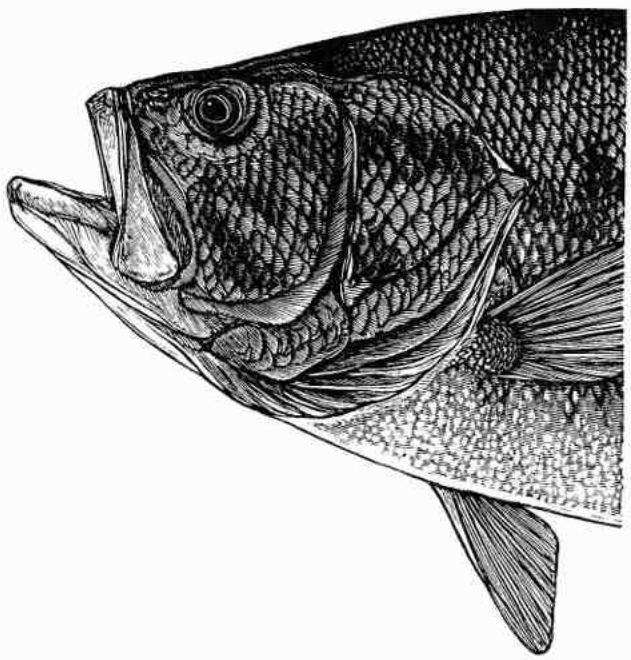
With small confidence in skill, tackle, gear,
years upstream of us, inattentive
and restless to renounce
everything we might have failed
to remember—on that day

of more than ordinarily dank sun,
thigh-deep in the familiar river
in which we no longer believed,
each of us pointed out to the other
where at the pool's head had occurred
one tiny rise—upon which came another,

more vigorous, and another, and so on, until
before long the river from bank to bank was lively
with splashes to a hatch
of little yellow mayflies,
which at this time of the afternoon at this time
of year, we ought to have
expected, and to which short and late
we cast, raising at once three
minor trout, then waded ashore to rest
in the strangeness it was to have undertaken

out of little hope the old rubric,
and by the agitations of the inert surface
to have been restartled.

—*John Engels*



Wood engravings by Alan James Robinson. Many of these illustrations appeared in *Big Water: Poems by John Engels* (New York: Lyons & Burford, 1995). Robinson's work will be displayed in an exhibit at the Museum May 9 to June 23, 1997.

Illustration of Col. Joseph Bates, Jr. by John Swan

Fishing Atlantic Salmon: The Flies and the Patterns

By Col. Joseph Bates, Jr. and Pamela Bates Richards, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Penn. Hardcover, 446 pages, color and black-and-white illustrations and photographs, $75.

IT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE that Joe Bates could have improved on his last effort, *The Art of the Atlantic Salmon Fly* (Boston: David Godine, 1987), but thanks to new blood and new technology, combined with considerable help from his friends and family, "Joe's" last book is a dandy.

The engineer and the one who gathered all the necessary bits and pieces and then kept them focused—indeed glued—to the project through its production was the colonel's own daughter, Pamela Bates Richards, coauthor of the book.

The Art of the Atlantic Salmon Fly was an entertaining scholarly effort with static illustrations in muted tones that proved satisfactory to the needs of that particular title. *Fishing Atlantic Salmon,* the latest—and sadly, the last—volume by Colonel Bates was handled differently. It is a graphic celebration of color and technology, enveloping a text that is at times informative, at other times dated, but always entertaining.

The clean layout is accented frequently by the art of John Swan, whose illustrations are used profusely both to provide graphic support to specific portions of the text and to simply please the reader's eye. Where the art of John Swan leaves off, the magnificent color photography of Michael Radencich picks up, constantly luring the reader to turn still another page, leaving one wanting at the end of the book. Radencich's inordinate skill with the camera pleasantly overwhelms the eye, capturing the jewellike brilliance of Colonels Bates's collection of salmon flies, both old and new, in wonderfully arranged still lifes accented by pertinent props of the period. It is a magnificent tour de force for Radencich.

After my first read of *Fishing Atlantic Salmon,* I felt as though its subtitle—*The Flies and the Patterns*—should have been given top billing. Atlantic salmon flies are, in fact, the primary subject of the book, regardless of chapter titles claiming otherwise. So have we been deceived? I would say not. Indeed, the entire range of Atlantic salmon issues and fishing are discussed in some detail; however, the overall emphasis remains on the fly and those tyers who have left their indelible mark on the sport of Atlantic salmon fishing.

There are some very interesting chap-

The American Museum of Fly Fishing

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

JOIN!

Membership Dues (per annum)

INDIVIDUAL	
Associate	$35
Sustaining	$60
Benefactor	$125
Patron	$250
GROUP	
Club	$50
Trade	$50

Membership dues include four issues of *The American Fly Fisher* ($25). Please send your application to the membership secretary and include your mailing address. The Museum is a member of the American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, the New England Association of Museums, the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, and the International Association of Sports Museums and Halls of Fame. We are a nationally accredited, nonprofit, educational institution chartered under the laws of the state of Vermont.

SUPPORT!

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

VISIT!

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

BACK ISSUES!

Available at $4 per copy:

Volume 6, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 7, Numbers 2, 3
Volume 8, Number 3
Volume 9, Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 10, Number 2
Volume 11, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 12, Number 3
Volume 13, Number 3
Volume 14, Number 1
Volume 15, Numbers 1, 2
Volume 16, Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 17, Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 18, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 19, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 20, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 21, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 22, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4

ters on matters that will remain timeless, affected little by fad or technology, such as fishing techniques and the life cycle of the salmon. The various theories advanced by the authors to explain why certain flies are effective during specific water and light conditions and why, for that matter, salmon react as they do under still other conditions make for extremely interesting reading, but there are some weak spots.

The sections of the book dedicated to salmon-fishing tackle are, in my opinion, shaky and in some instances equivocating. Other chapters lack focus, roaming on in a series of loosely connected recollections of rivers and fishing incidents past, most likely coming to rest upon a specific fly pattern or fly tyer Bates had studied. Once again, the reader is snared into the entertaining net of Joe Bates.

Chapters dedicated to the various countries where Atlantic salmon are pursued are nicely worded travelogs that treat the reader to a well-spun literary wine tasting—a nice sip here and a swirl of the glass there—but *in toto* the value of the coverage is questionable. Some of these chapters deal with regions and rivers that are no longer viable salmon fishing resources. Their inclusion seems primarily to provide a backdrop upon which to showcase the flies created for that specific region. Were it not for the historical connection, these chapters could have been omitted without slighting the final form of the book. Indeed, one is left wondering if perhaps Bates himself felt this way when he mentions in his introduction that he was as yet reluctant to bring the final draft to print, lacking sufficient time and experience.

These few faults preclude *Atlantic Salmon Fishing* from being the complete resource on Atlantic salmon fishing information, but they certainly do not eliminate it as a prerequisite addition to every Atlantic salmon angler's library. The truly remarkable skill Joe Bates brought to the salmon-fishing fraternity was his keen eye for fly pattern history and his ability to present the attendant minutiae in such a fascinating way. For those of us who have developed an interest in Atlantic salmon fishing (the activity as well as the history and traditions of that activity), this is an inspired piece of work.

The Atlantic salmon–fishing family evolved into two different groups: the fly-tying wing, which sometimes fishes, and the salmon-fishing wing, which likewise sometimes ties. Joe Bates's books, including this his last, are appealing to both groups. Most Atlantic salmon anglers are compelled by economics to limit their time on the river to a couple of weeks per summer, actively pursuing a "connection" with the silvery prodigal. So what does one do when not on the river? For some, the study of salmon flies is an obvious outlet. It's still very much connected to the sport, but it can be pursued at the individual's pace, both in terms of time and finances.

Joe Bates obviously was aware of this situation, and he has single-handedly created a means to keep us fishing vicariously through those stories he has spent a lifetime unearthing. These wonderfully instructive histories are put forth in the now-familiar Bates fashion, wherein he plays the comfortable host, all the while entertaining us with wandering asides, firsthand accounts, and historical facts warmed and softened by occasional touches of wit.

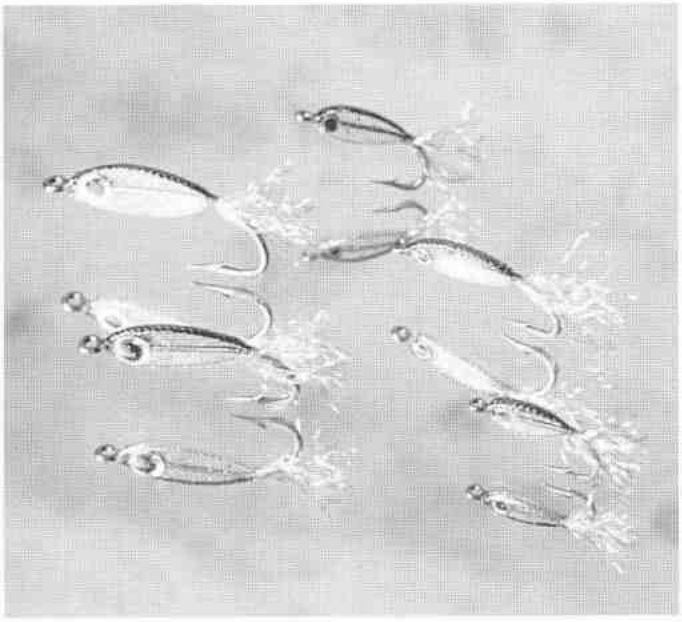
Stories of salmon flies, their origins, their victories, and their demise or metamorphosis into their contemporary forms are intertwined in chapter after chapter. After a few pages, the reader ceases to note the chapter titles and simply goes along for the ride through 300 years of salmon fly history. No one does it better than Joe Bates.

Joe may have had some reservations about the value or timeliness of this, his last manuscript. It would have been nice for him to have had the luxury of still another few years to refine *Fishing Atlantic Salmon,* but fate is not a good planner. Luckily, the manuscript was not lost with Joe. Atlantic salmon anglers and historians are much better off for this.

BILL HUNTER
NEW BOSTON, N.H.

Bill Hunter has been involved in the fly-fishing industry for nearly three decades. He now works as a consultant for various tackle manufacturers and sport travel companies. He writes when asked.

Pamela Bates Richards worked closely with Museum staff while researching Fishing Atlantic Salmon. *With access to the fishing diaries of Joseph Pulitzer II, she was able to document the origin of the Rusty Rat, reaching a conclusion that was, in fact, different from her father's. The book is a comprehensive collection of rare and historic flies, and the Museum is proud to be exhibiting a selection of flies and photographs from the book (see Fall 1996, page 26, for a description of this exhibit).* —EDITOR



f-stop Fitzgerald
February 7-March 24

THE WORK OF *f*-stop Fitzgerald has been published in more than 100 periodicals, including *Rolling Stone*, the *Village Voice*, *BAM* (*Bay Area Music* magazine, where he was staff photographer), *LA Weekly*, the *New York Rocker*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Oakland Tribune*. He has authored six books about rock and roll culture and will soon publish his second book of historic flies, *Secrets of the Saltwater Fly: Tips and Tales from the World's Great Anglers* (Bulfinch Press). The book includes flies photographed from the Museum's collection.

Fitzgerald began his career as a freelance photographer shooting music, art, and politics for many San Francisco underground publications. His photographs have been exhibited both in the United States and abroad in galleries such as the National Gallery of Australia, Museo d'Arte Contemporaneo in Mexico City, Rosco Louis Gallery, Galleria de la Raza, Martin/Weber Gallery, Everson Museum of Art, Real Art Ways, LightWorks, and the Museum of Temporary Art. His work was previously shown at the American Museum of Fly Fishing in 1995.

Fitzgerald's work will be on exhibit February 7 through March 24. The Museum will host an artist's reception and book signing on March 21.

Galen Mercer
March 28-May 5

GALEN MERCER was born in Toronto, the son of an artist father and grandson of two painter grandfathers. Since graduating from the Thornton Hall School of Fine Arts, Mercer has spent his life exploring and painting the outdoor world from Argentina to Iceland—but especially the Catskill Mountains of New York, to which his father, an avid fly fisherman, first introduced him when Mercer was just a boy. Beginning with his earliest work as a full-time painter, Mercer has been chiefly drawn to what he terms "the impact of place and consequent effects of light and atmosphere on the subject," rather than the "action story" as traditionally associated with outdoors genre art. "My aim is to present the viewer with an evocative moment and place, rather than 'spinning a yarn' —which really, in my view, ought to be the province of writers, not painters."

The Museum will host an artist's reception and opening on March 28. Mercer's work will be on exhibit through May 5.

Photograph by Cook Neilson

The Montague Rod & Reel Company

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS has been a center for rodmaking companies for more than a century. Thomas & Thomas in Turner's Falls now dominates the area, which is also dotted with numerous small workshops (Bob Taylor's, for example). The most famous company was the Montague Rod & Reel Company in Montague City, a town that no longer appears on maps of the area, but which at one time saw tens of thousands of rods produced every year.

In May 1881, Leander and Eugene Bartlett bought the J. G. Ward Rod Company of Amherst, Massachusetts. Eugene was a rodbuilder from Pelham, New York, who had perhaps worked with Frederic Malleson, Thomas Conroy's primary rodmaker, of nearby Brooklyn. The following year, the Bartlett brothers expanded the Ward Company by opening a second factory in Montague City. The Amherst factory was managed by Eugene, and Leander ran the new factory.

On 24 October 1885, the Ward Rod Company was reorganized as the Montague City Rod Company. In 1889, when Malleson went bankrupt, the Bartlett brothers bought his Brooklyn factory. In 1891, they expanded yet again by purchasing the Chubb Company of Post Mills, Vermont. (Although totally owned by Montague, Chubb rods would be made under the Chubb name for the next forty years). In 1899, Montague bought the reel-making capabilities of the U.S. Net & Twine Company of Brooklyn, New York, and began making reels (not rods) with the Climax and Kosmic imprints.

Also at the turn of the century, the Bartlett brothers hired George Varney as their chief rodmaker. Very little is known about Varney, although he played a significant role in the history of bamboo rodmaking. He worked in the Central Valley, New York, Leonard factory in 1881 and was a part of the Leonard mass exodus of 1889. He also received patent #422,470 on 4 March 1890 for a serrated ferrule as a method of attaching ferrule to bamboo. This ferrule design, along with seamless metal improvements acquired from another former Leonard employee, became the standard, and they are both still in wide use. Initially, this patent appeared on rods sold by J.B. Crook and Von Lengerke & Detmold, both large tackle outfitters. In 1895 and 1896, Varney was living in Poughkeepsie, New York, but by the end of the century, he was overseeing the Montague rodmaking facilities in Massachusetts. While there, he also began stamping rods with his own name.

In 1907, patent #841,761 was awarded to Leander L. Bartlett of Montague City for a "handle with socket of varying diameter." This new style of reel seat became standard on Montague rods and was even used by manufacturers as diverse as H.J. Frost and E.C. Powell.

By 1925, the Chubb factory in Vermont alone produced more than 50,000 rods a year. Two years later, the Montague City Rod Company changed its name to the Montague Rod & Reel Company and took out a series of trademarks with the U.S. Patent Office. All their rods with the talon-grabbing-a-fish logo are from the post-1927 period. When the Great Depression hit Montague, the company went into bankruptcy. The court agent assigned to their case was a young man named Sewell N. Dunton. With his help, they got back on their feet by liquidating the Chubb factory and consolidating all of their operations into Montague City. Dunton liked the company and they liked him, so he became their treasurer.

Montague was bought by the Ocean City Manufacturing Company in 1934, and Montague rods continued to be produced for twenty years. After the company was sold to the American Fork and Hoe Company (more commonly known by their trademark, True Temper), the name changed to the Montague–Ocean City Rod & Reel Company, and bamboo rod production ceased in 1955. But that does not end the story. In 1948, the Amherst Fishing Rod Company started business with Eugene Bartlett's grandson as manager, though the company made rods for only a few years. More importantly, Sewell Dunton bought all of the company's bamboo blanks and set up his own shop as a bamboo rodmaker in Greenfield, Massachusetts. This was at a time when most rod companies were altogether halting bamboo rod production, mainly because of the Chinese embargo and the rising popularity of fiberglass rods. So it was easy for Dunton to purchase quite a bit of bamboo from South Bend, Union Hardware, and Horrocks-Ibbotson. With such a varied inventory, Sewell N. Dunton rods became known as the "mutts" of the rod world, but he did make bamboo rods available during a "severe drought." In 1974, Dunton finally retired and sold his equipment to the Thomas & Thomas Company.

Pictured here are several artifacts from the complex history of the Montague Company: a Montague Gaspe salmon rod, a Chubb catalog from 1908, and rod varnish and reel parts for anglers who liked to fix up their own tackle. The third rod pictured is a Chubb Silkien process rod. The Silkien rods were entirely wrapped in silk, a feat achieved by a method patented by John Kenyon of Toledo, Ohio. But that's another story.

JON MATHEWSON, CURATOR

Board Meets in Bozeman

The annual meetings of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee were held October 4 and 5 in Big Sky Country—Bozeman, Montana. Several trustees got on streams and reported fair to good results in the sunny and warm weather. Our host for the weekend was Michael Copeland, to whom the Museum gives its thanks.

The weekend began with a dinner/auction at the River Side Country Club on Friday evening, bringing trustees together with Museum members and friends. Absent an auctioneer, bids on the dozen or so items were written on cards and winning buyers were announced after dessert.

Following elections and reports by President Richard Tisch and Director Craig Gilborn, the board reviewed a draft of a three-year plan prepared by the staff and Treasurer James Carey. The plan included proposed revenues and expenditures at the Museum through 1999. Development Director Eric Brown was on hand to help present the plan.

Shadows were lengthening as members of the group drove to Livingston, twenty-three miles to the east, where the American Museum of Fly Fishing joined with the Federation of Fly Fishers to host a reception at FFF headquarters. FFF Director Robert Wiltshire played the perfect host to his Vermont colleagues. The Federation is adapting a floor of a former school building into a living educational center where fish and habitat conservation can be presented through demonstrations, exhibits, and public talks.

It was nearly dark when thanks were said and people went off on their own —many with temporary Montana fishing licenses in their pockets.

Staff Changes

The Museum bids farewell to two of its long-time employees and welcomes a new one. Lillian Chace, who served the Museum as our part-time membership coordinator since 1994, resigned in August. Virginia Hulett, executive assistant since 1987, left the Museum in October.

Marianne Kennedy has joined the Museum as executive assistant. She began her position in mid-September 1996. Marianne holds a B.S. in community health from the State University of New York–Empire State College and a J.D. from the Vermont Law School. She has worked in law, mediation, and teaching for ten years and was in solo practice and a partner in the law firm of Winburn, Kennedy & Ameden in Manchester, Vermont, from 1990 to 1995.

Craig Gilborn

Marianne Kennedy

Marianne has served the Bennington County community in many volunteer activities, including chair of the Northshire Courthouse Preservation Committee, chair of the Bennington Family Court Ad Hoc Mediation Committee, member and past secretary of the Vermont Mediators Association, and trustee of Long Trail School. Marianne has come to the job with a refreshing enthusiasm, and we feel quite privileged to be the recipients of her organizational verve.

Marianne lives in Sandgate, Vermont, with her husband, Shane Sweet, and her son, David.

IFTD Show

Executive Director Craig Gilborn manned the Museum's exhibit at the International Fly Tackle Dealer show in Denver, Colorado, September 12 to 14. Museum displays showcased c. 1890 photographs of Colorado streams, innovative flies from Colorado and Montana, a selection of western tackle, and an overview of Denver rod companies (Granger, Phillipson, and Wright & McGill). A video display ran historical fishing footage. Copies of *The American Fly Fisher* and Museum brochures were available. The booth was also staffed by Trustee Pamela Bates Richards and Colorado volunteers Anthony D'Amico (Denver), John Betts (Denver), Gary Carbaugh (Greenwood Village), Ray Smith (Fort Collins), and Dan Snow (Divide).

Youthful Opinions

Rebecca Raymond, an art teacher at the Manchester Elementary School, was so taken with the George Thomas's pastels (on display at the Museum August 30 to October 15) that she arranged for

K.C. Bushnell

Ginny Hulett surrounded by Museum staff and friends at her farewell reception October 18: Randall Perkins, Craig Gilborn, Kathleen Achor, Jon Mathewson, Ginny Hulett, Joe Pisarro, Joe McCusker, and Angus Black.

sixty of her seventh-grade art students to tour the Museum in October. Curator Jon Mathewson guided them around the exhibits and reports that although they thought the old stuff was interesting, they were mostly intrigued by Babe Ruth's rod, the Cortland line winder, and the colorful salmon flies on display.

Call for Books

Our wish list made it up to the year 1800 in the Summer 1996 issue. The following are ten angling titles our library needs from the years 1801 to 1808:

The Angler's Manual, or Concise Lessons of Experience. Liverpool, 1808.

The Kentish Angler, or The Young Fisherman's Instructor. Canterbury, 1804.

MacKenzie, Alexander. *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence.* London: T. Cadell, Jr. & W. Davies, 1801.

Mackintosh, Alexander. *The Driffield Angler; in two parts.* 1806.

Millikin, R. A. *The River-side: A Poem, in Three Parts.* 1807.

Pollard, Richard. *The New and Complete Angler, or Universal Fisherman.* London, 1802.

Russell, Patrick. *Description and Figures of 200 Fishes Collected on the Coast of Coromandel.* London, 1803.

Snart, Charles. *Practical Observations on Angling in the River Trent.* Newark, 1801.

Thornton, Thomas. *A Sporting Tour Through the Northern Parts of England.* 1804.

Williamson, Captain Thomas. *The Complete Angler's Vade Mecum.* London, 1808.

1997 ART EXHIBITS

February 7–March 24	*f*-stop Fitzgerald, photographs
March 28–May 5	Galen Mercer, oils
May 9–June 23	Alan James Robinson, wood engravings and etchings
June 27–August 4	John Betts, mixed media
August 8–September 22	Don Wynn, oils
September 26–November 10	Shirley Cleary, oils

A book signing will be held for *f*-stop Fitzgerald on March 21. All other exhibit openings will be held the first night of the show. For more information on the Fitzgerald and the Mercer exhibits, see page 23.

In the Library

The Museum depends on donations of books for the expansion of our library. We would like to thank the following publishers for the donation of copies of their (mostly) recent titles that became a part of our collection in 1996 (as of November 1; all books listed below were published in 1996 unless otherwise noted).

Lyons & Burford sent us *Fly Fishing Handbook* by Cathy Beck, *A.K.'s Fly Box* by A.K. Best, *John Goddard's Trout-Fishing Techniques: Practical Fly-Fishing Solutions from an International Master* by John Goddard, *To Know a River: A Haig-Brown Reader* edited by Valerie Haig-Brown, *The Gift of the Trout* by Ted Leeson, *The Best of Hook and Bullet* by Wayne Hardbark McLoughlin, *Cast Again: Tales of a Fly-Fishing Guide* by Jennifer Olsson, *Dream Fish and Road Trips: Fly-Fishing from Alaska, Montana, and Beyond* by E. Donnall Thomas, Jr., and *Trout Maverick: Fly-Fishing Heresies and Tactics* by Leonard M. Wright, Jr.

Frank Amato Publications sent us *Fish Flies: Volume Two* by Terry Hellekson (1995), *Pardon My Backcast* by Alan Pratt, and *Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon* by Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson, and Pat Trotter (1985). Greycliff Publishing Company donated *True Love and the Woolly Bugger* by Dave Ames and *Montana Fly-Fishing Guide, Volume II: East of the Continental Divide* by John Holt. Pruett Publishing Company gave us the new third edition of *The Earth Is Enough: Growing Up in a World of Flyfishing, Trout, and Old Men* by Harry Middleton as well as a new release of *With Rod & Line in Colorado Waters* by L.B. France (1996, originally published 1884).

From Black's Sporting Dictionaries we received *Black's 1996 Fly Fishing: The Complete Angler's Guide to Equipment* by James F. Black, Jr. Ragged Mountain Press gave us *A Master's Guide to Atlantic Salmon Fishing* by Bill Cummings (1995). Odysseus Editions donated *Lefty's Favorite Fishing Stories and Complete Index* by Bernard "Lefty" Kreh. Atlantic Monthly Press sent us *A Flyfisher's World* by Nick Lyons. W.W. Norton Company, Inc., donated *Fly Fishing: A Trailside Guide* by John Merwin. Keokee

Craig Gilborn

Among those staffing the American Museum of Fly Fishing booth at the IFTD show in Denver were, from left: Ray Smith, Pamela Bates Richards, Dan Snow, and John Betts.

Company Publishers gave us *Darwin's Bass: The Evolutionary Psychology of Fishing Man.* Abenaki Publishers sent us *Fly Fishing Only* by Gene Trump (1993). And Willow Creek Press sent us *Flashes in the River,* which features essays by Ed Gray (of *Gray's Sporting Journal* fame) and watercolors by Arthur Silverstone.

Recent Donations

Maxine Atherton presented us with her fly-fishing photograph collection. Included are photographs from the turn of the century to the present day—photographs of salmon, trout, and saltwater fishing from British Honduras to the Arctic Circle. There is also a photo collection of famous anglers, such as John Atherton, Ted Williams, John McDonald, Ed Hewitt, Lee and Joan Wulff, Vern Peterson, Mead Schaeffer, Richard Adams, and Louise Miller (both with Tom Rosenbauer and fishing with Margot Page). Especially interesting are the photos of John Atherton's San Francisco jazz band, circa 1925.

Jack Foster popped into the Museum in mid-September to present us with our Manchester Village tax bill and a canister of Montague rod varnish his father picked up on a fishing trip in the late 1920s (pictured in Gallery, page 24).

Mrs. Henry Riley of Brownsville, Vermont, gave us a rebound copy of *Memoirs of the Old Schuylkill Company* (1830) in memory of her late husband, Henry D. Riley. **Phil White** of Nampa, Idaho, sent us a copy of his recently published book, *Meisselbach & Meisselbach-Cattucci Reels.* **James C. Henderson** of Midland, Texas, sent the Museum a copy of B. L. "Bud" Priddy's *Fly-Fishing the Texas Hill Country.* Longtime Museum friend **H. Peter Kriendler** of New York City sent us two boxes of books and catalogues.

In response to our list of needed books for our library, Museum member **R. Rick Reiss** of Newport News, Virginia, sent us an 1817 fourth edition of *The North Country Angler.* Please refer to this issue's continuance of the list to see how you can assist the Museum in creating an even finer library than the one we already have.

W. E. Forsyth of Fort Myers, Florida, sent us three reels (one by Otto Zwarg, one by Edward Vom Hofe, and one by Julias Vom Hofe) and four rods: one made by Ed Payne, one made by the Leonard & Mills Company, one sold through Von Lengerke & Detmold, and an absolutely beautiful rod from Thomas Conroy made from Calcutta bamboo with a steel-wrapped grip.

Sandy Greenblat of San Rafael, California, sent us two tournament casting rods, one made by the R. L. Winston Company and another that was an early prototype made by Cliff Wyatt. **Carleton Schaller, Jr.**, of Littleton, New Hampshire, dropped off a Horrocks-Ibbotson *Gulf Stream* saltwater rod, along with an accompanying Penn #180 saltwater reel.

Eugene D. Wadsworth of Manchester, Vermont, and Syosset, New York, dropped off a collection of fishing tackle formerly belonging to his uncle, who passed away in 1934. The collection includes, among other things, a greenheart rod made by John Krider, an 1884 Edward vom Hofe boat rod, a Henry Whitty raw bamboo rod, and two brass scales.

M. T. Bronstad, Jr., M.D., of Fort Worth, Texas, sent the Museum three letters written by R. B. Marston in 1921 and 1922.

Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Harrison of Cascapedia, Quebec, had Museum friend Peter Castagnetti deliver a framed set of Green Bottle salmon flies. The gift was made in memory of their daughter, Deborah Barbara Harrison (1963–1995). Mr. Harrison is a guide on the Grand Cascapedia River.

Ed Snyder and **Mike Freeman** drove up from Massachusetts to present us with a framed fly and print. The fly was designed by Mike Freeman in honor of fly-fishing Massachusetts Governor William Weld, and the print is Ed Snyder's rendering of the fly. The fly is called, appropriately enough, the Governor Weld, and the print is signed by both Snyder and Governor Weld.

On Line

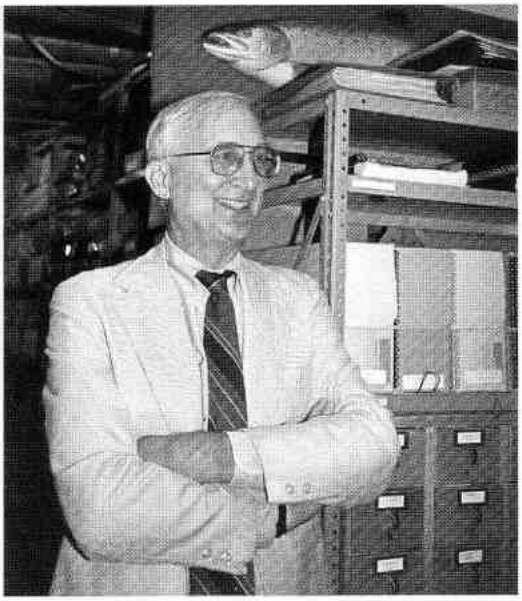
Visit one of our three websites on the World Wide Web! We can be found at these three addresses:

- www.outdoorsource.com/amff
- www.gorp.com/cl_angle/canecoun/museum.htm
- www.genghis.com/Manchester/fly/fishing.htm

CONTRIBUTOR

Alessandra Lorini

Alvaro Masseini is a high-school teacher of history and philosophy in Florence, Italy. He has worked with several Italian environmental organizations. An expert on water pollution and related problems, he is the author of numerous articles on fly fishing in many areas in Western and Eastern Europe (including Scotland, Lapland, Siberia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Austria) and in the Americas (British Columbia, Labrador, New England, the Rocky Mountains, and Patagonia) published in major Italian fishing magazines such as *Pescare* and *Pesca-In.* He has participated in several scientific expeditions during which he discovered an unclassified sedge and midge *(Eurthoclasius Masseini).* The author gives special thanks to Alessandra Lorini for her help with the English translation of this piece and for her enthusiastic involvement in an ambitious project on the social history of fly fishing in several countries of which his article is a humble beginning.



Margot Page

The Past Is Prologue

On a Saturday morning more somnolent than usual because eight inches of fresh show had fallen the night before, a band of fly fishers pondered the Museum's future in a lower Manhattan brick building. The subway had stopped because of smoke in the tunnel ahead, so I slogged the rest of the way, entering a cozy book-lined room to find the group of trustees amiably chatting over coffee. It was February, and the place could not have been nicer given the month and the snow outside.

At the top of the agenda was a look at the Museum's past. That pleased the historian in me. To see where we want to go, we need to know something about where the Museum has been.

New trustees knew very little about the Museum's earliest years. Seasoned trustees helped, as did a twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *The American Fly Fisher,* which listed high points of the Museum between 1968 and 1993. Events could be presumed, but dates and chronology were uncertain. In 1978, Paul Schullery became the first executive director, but was he the first staff person to earn a salary?

This stage held the group's attention because no one had a clear grasp on the Museum's twenty-seven or so years of existence. One conundrum was the effect of the Museum's earliest and formative years without a paid staff. There was no time to delve into possible answers—our work chiefly lay with the future.

Institutions have histories, like people and nations. Professional historians cannot be presumed to be reliable caretakers of the histories of their own institutions, even though they may manage the histories of everyone else. The reasons are understandable. Staff and volunteers are absorbed in their daily tasks. In addition, and perhaps more telling, people are diffident about their contributions, even historians. They don't feel that what they do may interest someone in what seems to be the remote future. Most museums have weak institutional memories, and the retirement of persons with a decade or two of work can be a subtle but real loss, especially where questions about value and judgment arise, as they do in museums.

Quizzing early players is illuminating and it can be fun. Old folders with letters and the like are important and must be preserved. This is the Museum's archive. But recollections of people like Dick Finlay, who has been associated with the Museum almost from its start, lend a human dimension to dates and facts. Memory can play tricks and has a fugitive shelf life, but it is unfailingly useful and engaging.

History can't tell the group what direction the Museum should take. But the history we glimpsed, abbreviated as it was, provided a context for the Museum and enabled participants, whatever the extent of their understanding, to become sharers in the Museum as a corporate body.

As a boy I was puzzled by the cry, "The King is dead, long live the king." Now I know it meant that kings are mortal, but the institution of kingship survives. The same is true of trustees and Museum employees: we receive the torch and pass it on. Our task is to see that the Museum prevails. We need a sure grasp on the past to have a vision of the future.

Craig Gilborn
Executive Director

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

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

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

Accredited by the American Association of Museums