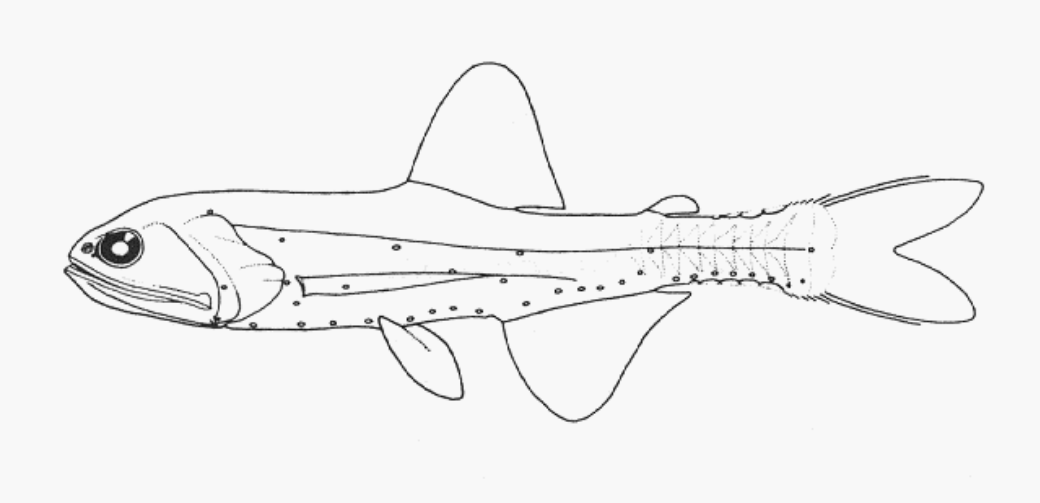
The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

FALL 2006 VOLUME 32 NUMBER 4

Namesakes



Lampanyctus steinbecki. *Illustration by Rolf L. Bolin. From Rolf L. Bolin, "A Review of the Myctophid Fishes of the Pacific Coast of the United States and of Lower California,"* Stanford Ichthyological Bulletin *(1939, vol. 1, no. 4), 89–156.*
"Of Fish and Men," Robert DeMott's article about John Steinbeck, begins on page 2.

Lampanyctus steinbecki. Cygnus bewickii. Both John Steinbeck and Thomas Bewick had species named after them: Steinbeck a fish, by Rolf Bolin of Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station; and Bewick a swan, by naturalist William Yarrell. Coincidentally, both Steinbeck and Bewick are featured in this issue of the *American Fly Fisher,* for which a species has yet to be named. We remain hopeful.

John Steinbeck may not have been specifically a fly fisherman, but fishing definitely informed his writing and his life. Ohio University American literature professor Robert DeMott has written extensively on Steinbeck, for whom, he tells us, "fishing and writing were twin aspects of a similarly attentive life." In his article, "Of Fish and Men," DeMott introduces us to this Steinbeck by focusing on his fishing, primarily through a few lesser-known essays, as well as a scene from *East of Eden* and a biographical anecdote. DeMott's article begins on page 2.

The wood engravings of Thomas Bewick have often graced the pages of the *American Fly Fisher;* in fact, the museum hosted a Bewick exhibit ten years ago. The wood engraver and naturalist was author and illustrator of the classics *A General History of Quadrupeds* and *A History of British Birds.* He died before the completion of *A History of British Fishes,* but he did produce several fish engravings and angling scenes in preparation for its publication. Many of these can be found in *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by Himself,* published posthumously in 1862. J. Keith Harwood, in "Thomas Bewick: Artist and Angler" (page 16), provides us with some facts of this man's life: his childhood, his journey into the world of engraving, and his general love of nature—which included fishing.

Rhodes S. Baker, a prominent Dallas attorney at the turn of the twentieth century, had a son and a grandson named after him. His grandson, Rhodes S. Baker III, has done a little research into his grandfather's interesting past. Seems that Rhodes III found an old scrapbook that belonged to Rhodes I. In it, Rhodes I—clearly a multisport adventurer—described a bicycling/fly-fishing adventure from 1896, a twelve-day trip of 425 miles from West Texas into Mexico. Rhodes III recreates a bit of this adventure for us in "Echoes from Yesteryear" (page 12) by sharing a few of his grandfather's letters as well as newspaper accounts of some of Baker's cycling exploits with friend F. G. Allen. He also makes note of some of the real-life characters the two may have encountered along that route.

It's with sadness that we note the passing of former Trustee Bill Barrett. His friend and fellow Trustee Bill Herrick pays tribute to him on page 23.

And now, I'm off to catch and name something.

Kathleen Achor
Editor

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ON THE COVER: *From Thomas Bewick,* Bewick's Select Fables of Æsop and Others *(London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1871), 58.*

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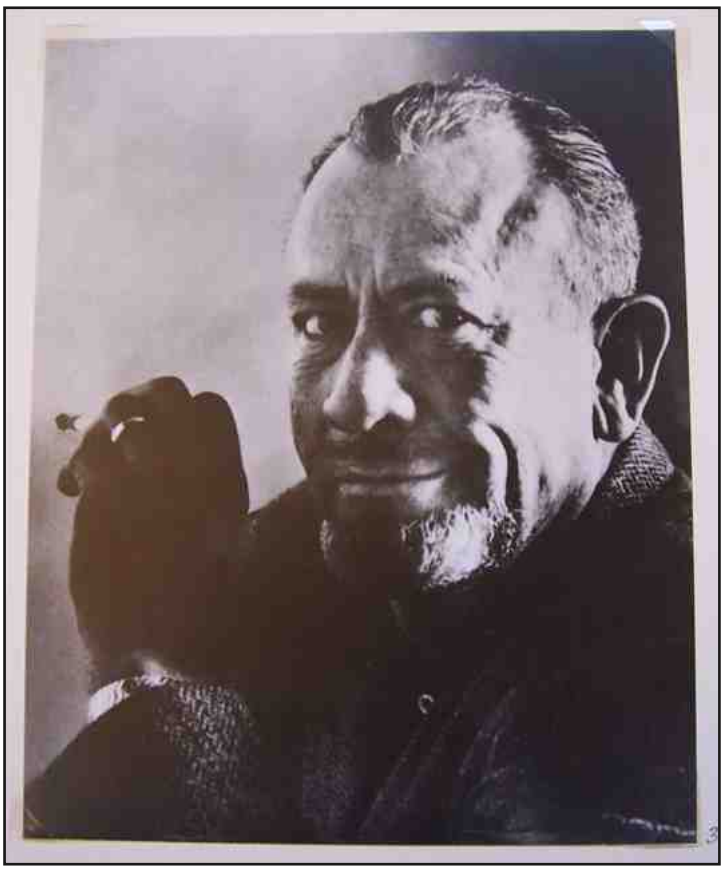


John Steinbeck. Photo courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Used with permission.

Of Fish and Men

by Robert DeMott

O Sir, doubt not but that Angling is an art; is it not an art to deceive a Trout with an artificial fly?
~ *Izaak Walton,* The Compleat Angler

. . .any man who pits his intelligence against a fish and loses has it coming. . .
~ *John Steinbeck, "On Fishing"*

Nobel Prize–winning novelist John Steinbeck (1902–1968) did not habitually employ traditional fly-fishing methods. There has been no sudden enlightenment on that score, in the way that historian Hal Wert recently revealed the heretofore untold depths of President Herbert Hoover's fly-fishing fanaticism in *Hoover: The Fishing President* (Stackpole Books, 2005)—a fanaticism, by the way, not fully discernible by reading Hoover's somewhat whimsical, offhand musings in *Fishing for Fun and to Wash Your Soul* (Random House, 1963). Nevertheless, Steinbeck was an avid though quirky amateur angler, who generally favored the means more than the ends of fishing. He fished, according to his youngest son, the late John Steinbeck IV, because ". . . this alliance between fish and fisherman, even the so-called thrill of the chase, was not really the reason or point of . . . his almost daily endeavor. Basically it was . . . a fine and elaborately feudal style of daydreaming."[1] Though Steinbeck once opined that no political candidate "would think of running for public office without first catching and being photographed with a fish,"[2] ironically his attitude resembled President Hoover's, who believed that "[f]ishing is not so much getting fish as it is a state of mind and a lure for the human soul into refreshment."[3]

Steinbeck enjoyed catching game fish—from trout during the 1920s when he was living at Lake Tahoe to bluefish and striped bass during the late 1950s and 1960s when he summered on eastern Long Island. But he was also utterly content to eschew the role of know-it-all angling expert—so much so, in fact, that John IV considered it "great stuff" when he "learned how little [his father] cared about being a good" fisherman.[4] Rather, Steinbeck seemed comfortable with the paradoxes and complexities of the angling life and considered fishing variously on a continuum from food gathering to existential play to private therapy to quasi-sacred calling. In 1927 and 1928, when he lived at Lake Tahoe, he often landed trout by necessity for dinner (by what method he does not say): "I caught a nine pound trout last night. The fish commissioner doesn't mind if we who live here catch them for food. . . . Lord what a fight he put up. Pulled me clear into the lake once. He will last a week."[5] A decade later, according to Thom, his eldest son, whimsical Steinbeck placed a large piece of broken mirror in a mountain stream near Los Gatos so that the stream's single resident—a small trout—on seeing his own image would not feel lonely.[6]

Steinbeck is in good company among American writers—novelists and poets in particular—who have not only been dedicated anglers but have written tellingly

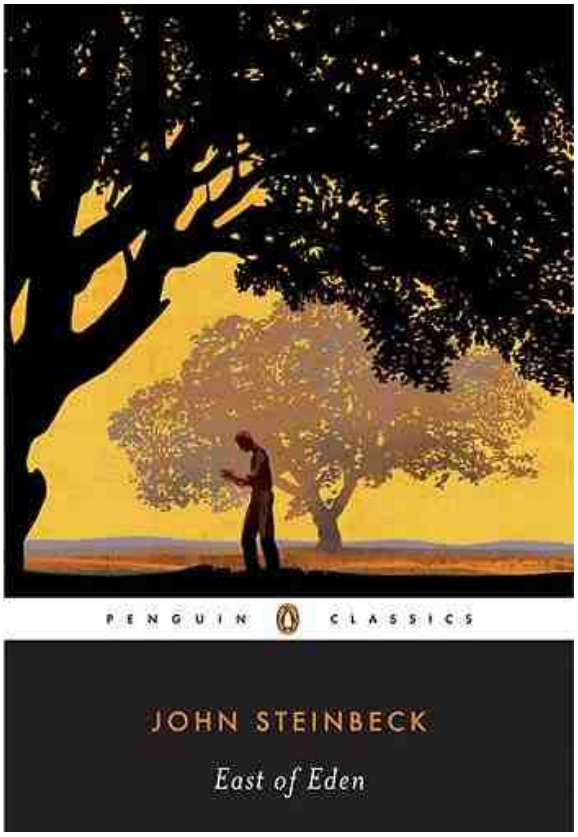
This essay is a revised version of a talk given at the twenty-fifth anniversary Steinbeck Festival at the National Steinbeck Center, Salinas, California, 6 August 2005. My thanks to Amanda Holder, Nick Lyons, Paul Schullery, Susan Shillinglaw, and Thom Steinbeck for their support and encouragement. This essay is dedicated to Jack Benson, scholar *extraordinaire*, fly-fishing gentleman, and valued friend. —RD

about the sport in and out of their art. Steinbeck is in the company of obvious figures such as Washington Irving, Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, Zane Grey, and Ernest Hemingway, but also less widely canonized contemporaries, such as the late Richard Brautigan, Raymond Carver, John Hersey, Richard Hugo, William Humphrey, Louis Owens, and Robert Traver (aka John D. Voelker), as well as other anglers still alive and casting: Bill Barich, Anthony Doerr, David James Duncan, John Engels, Carl Hiassen, Jim Harrison, Pam Houston, Greg Keeler, Tom McGuane, John Nichols, Craig Nova, Frank Soos, and W. D. Wetherell. All of them have given us impressive examples of fishing's marriage with excellent writing and the realization that, as Jim Harrison told me between casts on the Yellowstone River, " . . . it's no easier to write well about fishing than it is about anything else."[7] "Writing and fishing," Mark Kingwell claims in his nifty little treatise *Catch and Release,* "share this transcendental ability to heal the breach between thought and deed, to bridge the world of imagination and the so-called 'real' one."[8] For Steinbeck, fishing and writing were twin aspects of a similarly attentive life.

Reading the Water

Anglers have a phrase—"reading the water"—that is our version of the overland traveler's desire to discern the "lay of the land." It means observing carefully the subtleties and nuances of current and flow in rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, etc., to figure out what predator/prey action is occurring and where the fish—all of whom are finely honed opportunistic feeders—are most likely to be waiting for their next meal, which of course you hope will be the fly, lure, or bait you have on the end of your line that particular day. Reading the water is learning the language of rivers: "River reading is creative reading," Mark Browning claims.[9] In a sense, then, all water is a "text" begging to be interpreted, and fishermen are really critics who participate in an ongoing yet indeterminate hermeneutic process. Or better yet, all critics and writers are fishers, or fishing guides, trying to puzzle out methods of hooking that will produce best results. Puzzling things out is often satisfying enough, because as anglers, when do we ever receive the tangible rewards we expect or think we truly deserve?

I have long been a proponent of Steinbeck's occasional pieces.[10] His out-of-the-way texts provide interesting, unique, neglected, and fruitful (and sometimes unguarded) approaches to his literary preoccupations, and they reveal facets of his writing life often unremarked on by most critics and readers. To put it another way: I like angling in Steinbeck's offbeat texts, and in that vein, I approach this somewhat fanciful and admittedly elliptical and digressive topic, "Of Fish and Men," not by focusing on Steinbeck's obvious mainstream works, but on some less prominent side channels in his art and life: a relatively neglected scene from one of his otherwise most famous novels, *East of Eden* (1952); a biographical anecdote recorded by Graham Watson (1980); and a couple of tongue-in-cheek nonfiction essays called "On Fishing" (1954) and "Then My Arm Glassed Up" (1965), in which angling pursuits play a strong role. I use some of the common and more or less nontechnical elements and lingo of fly fishing to provide explanatory context for a few of Steinbeck's short, unheralded fishing texts. This essay, then, may be considered an unabashed fishing expedition, perhaps best thought of as a "meandering" one at that, to steal a crucial metaphor from Ted Leeson's *Jerusalem Creek,* one of the finest fly-fishing memoirs ever written.[11]



Cover of East of Eden *by John Steinbeck. (New York: Penguin, 2006).*

Some Fish to Remember, Some Fish to Forget

John Steinbeck was a fisherman. I mean that in the most honorable, as well as the most capacious, sense of that word. According to his definitive biographer, Steinbeck developed from childhood a "particular affinity for the seashore,"[12] and although you don't necessarily have to be a fisherman to love water, it does help. Steinbeck not only loved all manner of fresh- and saltwater bodies of water—swamps, springs, streams, creeks, brooks, rivers, lakes, sloughs, tide pools, estuaries, oceans—but he also prized the myriad live finny things that inhabited the depths of living water. Steinbeck, who was well versed in Jungian psychology,[13] understood the implications of water's primal archetypal relationship to the human unconscious—a mythic, elemental, and symbolic relatedness evident throughout his fictive work from *Cup of Gold* in 1929 to *The Winter of Our Discontent* in 1961. But he also understood water's commodity value and the dangers faced by commercial working fishermen who harvest the fish we need for our insatiable appetites.

More than that, John Steinbeck appreciated the ecological importance of bodies of water in the vast web of planetary biodiversity and how humans are but a small part of an endless linked chain of species. His work with marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts on *Sea of Cortez* is a monumental love song to piscatorial interspecies relatedness that has proven uncannily prophetic in its deep ecological message. In fact, *Sea of Cortez* was his favorite book, the one he was proudest to have written. Besides its many virtues, it is a text in which water and aquatic creatures are main characters, highlighted by a prescient holistic vision.

Steinbeck certainly knew (to paraphrase Thoreau) that in angling, it is more than fish we seek; like Thoreau (and Christ before him), he was a fisher of (wo)men. In *Upland Stream,* W. D. Wetherell lists thirteen reasons why human beings fish,[14] but the fact is we probably do it for a hundred other different reasons too, and my guess is that, among them, Steinbeck loved the intimate process of fishing, the simple rituals

and preparations associated with the act, the tactileness and physicality of the equipment, the freedom and challenge of being on or near the water, the rush and sense of well-being that came from doing something for himself outside his workaday routine. Recreational fishing or boating was a form of therapy for Steinbeck, who considered Gardiner's Bay off his Bluff Point summer home in Sag Harbor, at the eastern end of Long Island, as healing waters. Water gazing and its manifold concomitant activities created a respite from daily obligations and imposed deadlines and duties, a masculine sphere of retreat and introspection in which he recharged himself.

> I love a certain kind of fishing above all other so-called sports. It is almost the last remaining way for a man to be alone, without being suspected of some secret sin. By fishing without bait it is even possible to avoid being disturbed by fish. I am surprised that the dour brotherhood of psychoanalysts has not attacked fishing, since it seems to me it is in competition. Two hours with a fishing rod is worth ten hours on the couch.[15]

In Steinbeck, as in Melville's Ishmael, water and meditation seemed truly wedded. Which is to say that, in an analogous sense, fishing was akin to writing, because Steinbeck considered both to require no other justification than being downright pleasurable. Freudian implications aside, in addition to the fact that both occupations require a long, hard instrument—pencil or fishing rod—they also require imagination, discipline, observation, problem solving, patience, and contemplation. A comment by Nick Lyons, arguably our era's most influential and literary fly-fishing author and publisher, is especially germane here: "Writing about fishing . . . multiplied the pleasure I'd always taken from fishing; I now had the thing itself and then the thing I'd made on paper."[16] Fishing, like writing, thrives on memory, because as soon as a writer records his or her fishing experiences (or any experiences for that matter), they are already past, already part of mythic angling memory, and therefore given to selection, enlargement, exaggeration, embroidery, distortion, and even fantasy—all of the elements that complicate representation. "We do well to remember," Odell Shepard writes, "how memory and imagination work together in adding ounces and inches . . . to the fish of yesteryear."[17]

In fact, in the popular imagination, fishermen, like writers, are considered liars, susceptible to what novelist Craig Nova in his spare but deliciously evocative book *Brook Trout and the Writing Life,* says is a propensity for "otherwise unbelievable stories."[18] Writing, Mark Kingwell claims, is "an activity that shares with angling and philosophy the qualities of solitude, quixotic dedication, addiction, momentary apparent pointlessness, and sheer dumb luck. And of course fabrication."[19] Fanatical politicians, know-it-all pundits, and television talking heads aside, stretching certain areas of literary truth is probably not such a bad thing. As Steinbeck told Professor C. N. Mackinnon in 1939, "I'll lie—not because I want to lie, but because I can't remember what is true and what isn't."[20] To fish and to write, then, is to lie. "The truth is," Judge John Voelker (whose pen name was Robert Traver) says in *Anatomy of a Fisherman,* "fishermen scheme and lie. . . ."[21]

Captain Albert E. Theberge, NOAA Corps (ret.)

Steinbeck bust on Cannery Row. Photo from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Department of Commerce.

These truth-bending elements come together in a moving and lyrical scene in chapter 23 of *East of Eden,* Steinbeck's fictionalized reminiscence of a fishing excursion in his youth with his mother's brother, his Uncle Thomas Hamilton. (Steinbeck does not say how old a child he was, but because Tom Hamilton died in 1912, John would have to have been a very impressionable eight years old or younger.) He wrote this chapter in June 1951, soon after he and his family had removed from their home in Manhattan (where he had written the previous twenty-two chapters) to a vacation rental house on a wind-swept coastal bluff in Siasconsett, on the island of Nantucket, where, as he said in his posthumous companion text, *Journal of a Novel,* their daily routine included "fishing."[22]

It strikes me as more than coincidental that as soon as Steinbeck entered a water-bound environment, one of his first compositional acts was to write about fishing. "What I know about," Steinbeck writes in chapter 23, "will be the result of memory plus what I know to be true plus conjecture built on the combination. Who knows whether it will be correct?"[23] Indeed, this statement works on both small and large levels to encapsulate one of the main themes of his most personal novel. In addition to exposing the inherent impreciseness of memory, his statement is a commentary on the slippery nature of elegiac prose. Where does truth reside? The child's experience is immediate, but he lacks the full dimensions of language to define it fully; the adult has the requisite language capacity to reconstruct the past, but in doing so—no matter how graphically the past is recollected—the experience inevitably owes more to sophisticated language than to raw, unmediated reality.

In other words, this dilemma is the fisherman's domain—the space where personal memory, factual experience, alleged falsehood, and language skills mix and mingle. The combination—the result of Steinbeck's angle on reality—leads us to a storied truth, which in this case is the ineluctable truth of narrative. "In the end it is all about stories," Ted Leeson says succinctly.[24] To put it another way, the river that runs through it, à la Norman Maclean, is language and memory as much as it is water and fish. No matter how we cut it, Steve Raymond claims, "[W]ords define the essence of the sport."[25] As writer and angler, Steinbeck, I believe, understood this indivisible linkage very well, for which this neglected scene in *East of Eden* is a touchstone.

In *East of Eden*, "Sometimes Tom took me fishing," Steinbeck declares.

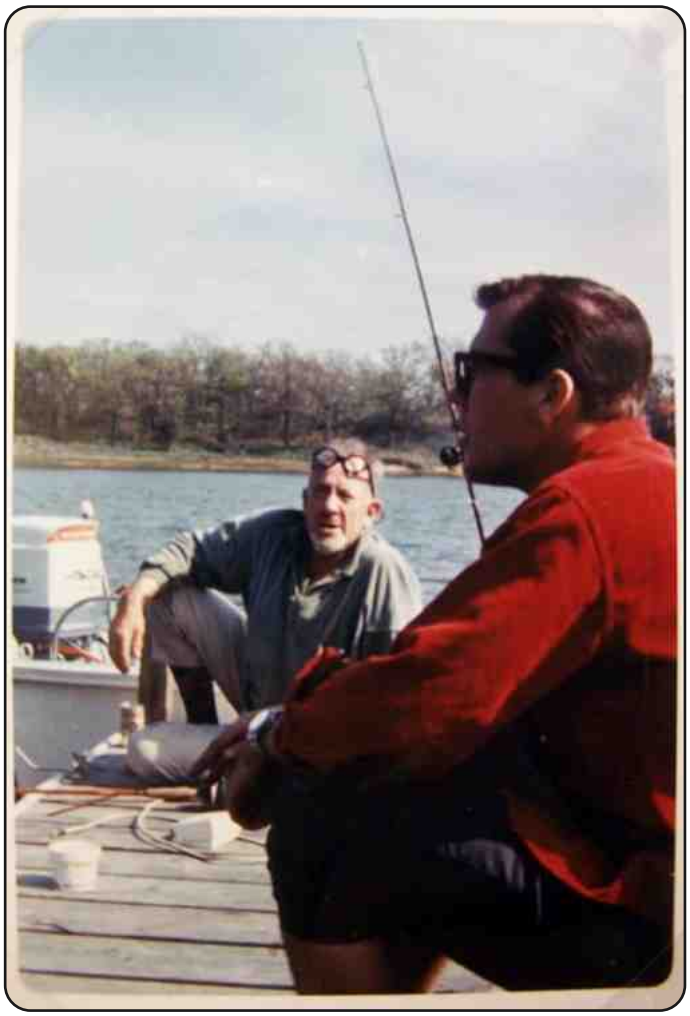
> We started before the sun came up and drove in the rig straight toward Fremont's Peak, and as we neared the mountains the stars would pale out and the light would rise to blacken the mountains. . . . I don't remember that Tom talked. Now that I think of it, I can't remember the sound of his voice or the kind of words he used. I can remember both about my grandfather, but when I think of Tom it is a memory of a kind of warm silence. Maybe he didn't talk at all. *Tom had beautiful tackle and made his own flies. But he didn't seem to care whether we caught trout or not. He needed not to triumph over animals.*[26] [my emphasis]

Steinbeck continues:

> I remember the five-fingered ferns growing under the little waterfalls, bobbing their green fingers as the droplets struck them. And I remember the smells of the hills, wild azaleas and a very distant skunk and the sweet cloy of lupin and horse sweat on harness. I remember the sweeping lovely dance of high buzzards against the sky and Tom looking long up at them, but I can't remember that he ever said anything about them. . . . I remember the smell of crushed ferns in the creel and the delicate sweet odor of fresh damp rainbow trout lying so prettily on the green bed.[27]

This patently nostalgic scene is an elegy for a long-lost person, place, and way of life, and as such—potentially fuzzy sentiments aside—it functions as a private origin myth (which is what most fly-fishing memoirs are). It is a moment frozen in time, a generative moment, born out of a certain kind of remembered reflective silence, a fisherman's silence, the kind of idyllic pastoral repose that Izaak Walton claimed more than 350 years ago complemented "contemplation and quietness,"[28] two of the angler's most desirable attributes.

Thus this scene in chapter 23 of *East of Eden* is a small yet sharply etched portrait of the beginnings of Steinbeck's lifelong involvement with fishing (not exclusively fly fishing) as a physical and philosophical adventure, his incipient fascination with its material allure and thingness, and by extension, his long-buried relatedness (and perhaps indebtedness) to his favorite uncle, Tom Hamilton, one of the least visible of the Hamilton clan, who was a skilled fisherman and adept at fly tying (a nonmechanized, throwback craft that requires observation, precision, dexterity, attention to minute details, and a correspondingly steady hand). Moreover, as we learn later in chapter 23, Tom was also a "secret" poet,[29] an angler of words.



John Steinbeck and his son, John Steinbeck IV, fish off a dock in this ca. mid-1960s family photo. Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Used with permission.

The writing fisherman, the fishing writer: Uncle Tom's "artistic" influence and example may have been far greater on his famous nephew's habits of being than has yet been calculated. And though the scene ends with a basket of dead rainbow trout (perhaps foreshadowing Tom's suicide ten chapters later), their bodies seem less to be tangible trophies of the outing than accidental by-products, which is to say that they are but a tiny part of the overall "catch." The passage is lyrical and painterly (as much fly-fishing writing tends to be): it is noteworthy for its textured density and the way Steinbeck, like our best fishing memoirists (Christopher Camuto, Lorian Hemingway, Ted Leeson, Nick Lyons, Harry Middleton, Howell Raines, and Paul Schullery, to name just a few), embeds the angling moment in a contextual surround, a thickly descriptive swirl of sights, odors, objects, physical gestures and processes, shaded interplay of light and dark, and sharp, discriminating insights, all of which occur in a striking geographic setting that at once triggers and frames the memory/experience.

Political correctness aside, the dead rainbow trout in *East of Eden,* like the trout Nick Adams lands in Ernest Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River," seem to be the least important part of the equation, and to miss that is to miss the way Steinbeck is honoring the gift of trout as a kind of blessing. Craig Nova speaks for many anglers when he says of his own experience, "These fish are forever associated in my mind with the depths of thankfulness for good fortune, just as they always reminded me of beauty and a sense of what may be possible after all."[30] In Steinbeck's case, the momentary spot of time was made possible as much by Tom Hamilton's generosity, noncompetitive nature, and warm silence as it was by the unequivocally painful knowledge that those attributes could not save Tom from himself, from his own depression and self-destruction. In the wake of Tom's literal and metaphorical silences (they too are part of the surrounding emotional experience), authorial and readerly interpretation flourishes and leads to a promise of redemption and a sense of being-in-the-world that Steinbeck never abandoned. Steinbeck's fly-fishing story—a twist on the old tale of "the one that got away"—keeps his uncle alive. In constituting Tom Hamilton's subjecthood via his fly-fishing passion, Steinbeck was fashioning part of himself as well and creating an artful legacy for his own sons, Thom and John IV, for whom the original version of the novel

was intentionally written, and who both eventually did their share of fishing and writing.

Steinbeck and I Shop at the House of Hardy

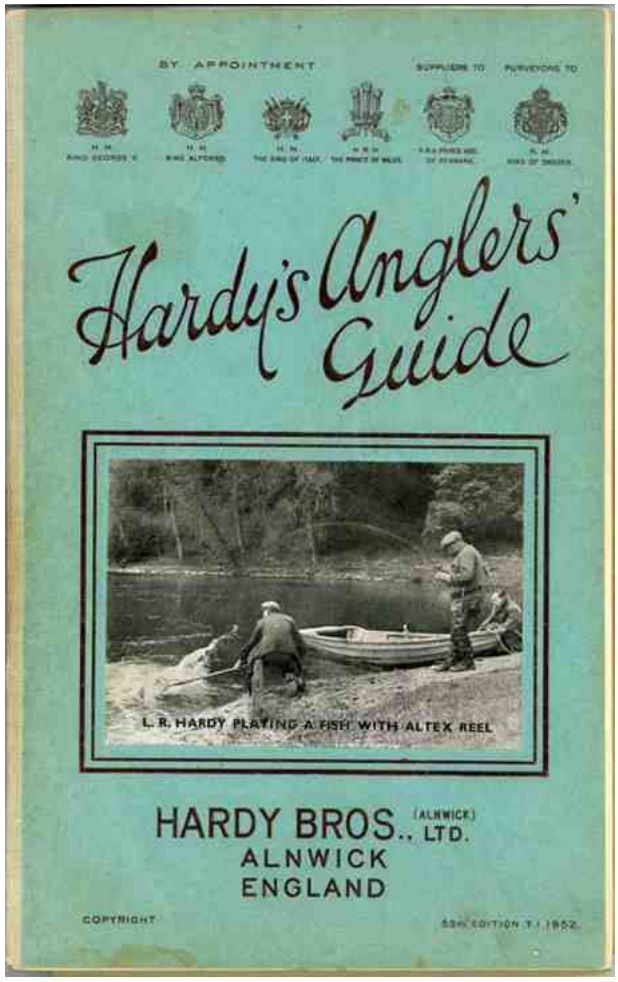
In his wonderfully diverting memoir, *Book Society,* Graham Watson, Steinbeck's British literary agent, recalls their first meeting in 1952. While their wives shopped in Bond Street, Graham and John "repaired to Hardy's—*always his most important call in London*" [my emphasis], where Steinbeck "bought a rather ridiculous fishing hat covered in salmon flies . . ."[31] The House of Hardy, founded in 1879 and headquartered in Alnwick, England, is the premier fishing tackle manufacturer in the British Isles.

Along with America's Orvis Company (founded in 1856), the House of Hardy is considered one of the best—and most venerable—makers of fine rods and reels in the world. Hardy's seductive shop in Pall Mall is a required stop for fly-fishing and outdoor aficionados and sporting enthusiasts from around the world, and Steinbeck was not only a frequent visitor to the store but also conversant with the sporting tradition it embodied. Edward Weeks, essayist and longtime editor of *Atlantic Monthly,* notes in *Fresh Waters,* his genteel book of fishing essays, "Hardy's is the cornucopia of English angling; the shop is run with a quiet air of authority and it has everything . . . from . . . big Salmon flies . . . [to] . . . the latest word in fishing hats and waterproofs."[32]

England is the birthplace of modern fly fishing, a tradition of artful skill that has been written about continuously for more than five hundred years, from Dame Juliana Berners's 1496 *A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* (included in *The Book of St. Albans*), through Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler,* especially the fifth edition of 1676 (which includes a fly-fishing section penned by Charles Cotton), and thence on to the reformative writings of Frederic Halford, G. E. M. Skues, and many others in the mid- and late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and extending on from there via John Waller Hills, Frank Sawyer, and a host of others into our own time.[33] The Brits cornered the market in expounding their country's glories and traditions as a fishable nation. In fact, the "British style" of fly fishing for trout (as it may be loosely called) is essentially an upper-class, genteel tradition because it is not only elitist (the only proper quarry are trout and salmon; other species are considered "coarse" or "rough"), but also highly structured, code regulated, and protocol driven. This was especially true in fly fishing as it was promulgated around the turn of the twentieth century on the private gin-clear limestone chalk streams of southern England's Hampshire County—for instance, the highly groomed and manicured Rivers Test and Itchen—by purists such as Frederic Halford and his fellow members and cronies who belonged to the exclusive Houghton Club (limited to twenty-two members) and to the Flyfishers' Club of London. A rather imperious innovator, Halford codified in *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* and *Dry-Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice* the practice of casting a floating imitative dry fly upstream to rising trout that were dining on hatching winged insects. This came to be considered the only thoroughly sporting and ethical way of presenting a fly, and soon—for a brief span anyway—the method became fly fishing's version of High Church "gospel" truth.[34]

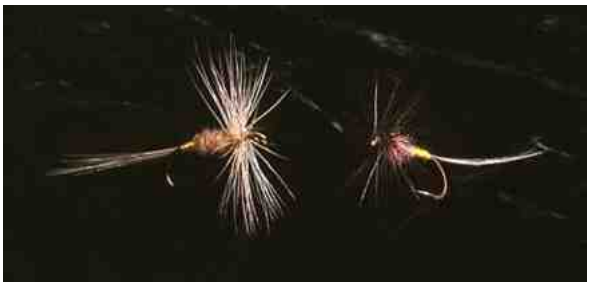
Novelist W. D. Wetherell calls Hardy's shop in Pall Mall "the snobbiest fishing store in the world."[35] Having visited it a couple of times myself, I can testify that to walk into Hardy's, with its hushed air of understated luxury and its somewhat condescending but very informed sales staff, is to glimpse, as if from the outside looking in, the world of what Howell Raines calls the "Tweedy Gent."[36] This is the sphere of privileged British country sporting life that the store simultaneously caters to and characterizes. The House of Hardy exudes an aura of gentility, upper-class insularity, earnest leisureliness, and confident knowingness, but has not succumbed to the gonzo level of pro specialization fostered now in American magazines such as *Wild on the Fly* and *Fish and Fly,* which cater to globe-trotting fly-rod extremists—the sport's "new paradigms," as novelist Tom McGuane (himself a world-class angler) calls them in his brilliant collection *The Longest Silence*—"the bum, the addict, and the maniac."[37] Rather, Hardy's more subdued image is symbolized by an advertising campaign featuring the mysterious, fetching, fresh-faced, red-haired "Hardy girl," as she has come to be known in the sporting press.[38]

Alluring Miss Hardy Girl aside, few of us have the social standing or financial resources to feel completely at ease in such an intimidating environment or to acquire its accouterment with guiltless abandon. Indeed, class does matter: many years ago, as a financially straitened junior professor, not too long out of graduate school and with a family to support, I recall being cowed by the prices of Hardy's rods and reels, and left their Pall Mall store (which took me half a day to find) feeling deflated because I was only able to afford in good conscience an insignia baseball cap and a few bucks worth of flies, including a wet-fly pattern called Coch-Y-Bondu, one of Hemingway's go-to flies (I confess to never having tried them) when he fished the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River at Lawrence Nordquist's L–T Ranch in Wyoming in the 1930s.[39] I also picked out half a dozen high-floating dry flies of a pattern called Tups Indispensable (the name alone was irresistible to me), a versatile English pattern developed around 1900 by R. S. Austin but given its catchy



Cover of the 1952 Hardy Bros. Ltd. catalog.

Cook Nielson



The Tups Indispensable, a noted English pattern named by G. E. M. Skues. Tied by Gordon M. Wickstrom.

moniker by G. E. M. Skues.[40] Anyway, to carry this willful digression from the sublime all the way to the ridiculous, the Tups Indispensable was traditionally tied with urine-stained wool from a ram's genitals, not exactly an easy ingredient for commoners to lay hands on nowadays, as Gordon Wickstrom notes.[41] My modernized versions, tied parachute style, turned out to be effective on cutthroat and rainbow trout feeding on *Epeorus albertae,* so I suppose my first pilgrimage to Hardy's, like Steinbeck's decades earlier (which I will get to shortly), paid unforeseen, though not nearly so comic or incisive, cultural dividends after all. At the very least, I learned something about the universal currency of mayflies.

For neo-Marxists in the crowd, before attacking Steinbeck for "going Hardy" and selling out, however, we should remember that, like many anglers who enter what Jan Zita Grover calls "the Cult of Stuff" in her captivating book on becoming a fly fisher,[42] it is helpful to recall that our old left-wing proletarian novelist was actually a gearhead. Shirley Fisher, one of Steinbeck's literary agents, longtime friend, and boon fishing companion, wrote in a lively reminiscence that "John loved tools."[43] Indeed, Steinbeck was fascinated by and owned all kinds of useful or exotic mechanical implements, gadgets, and conveyances (typewriters, dictaphones, Abercrombie & Fitch marine cannons, outboard motors, boats, Land Rovers, and more), as well as sporting paraphernalia and materials, and he especially reveled in suitable raiment. Graham Watson recalls, for instance, that Steinbeck "loved acquiring sports clothes and no London visit would pass without his buying a new yachting cap or a pair of shooting boots or a heavy macintosh,"[44] whether or not he actually used those items for sporting purposes on a regular basis. Witness again the fishing hat festooned with salmon flies.

Salmon flies of the mid-nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century were often extremely colorful and extravagantly dressed; whatever their potential utility, they resemble miniature hand-painted, but somewhat overly stuffed and busy, Victorian artworks. Andrew Herd calls these fanatically appointed, over-the-top feather creations "gaudy" flies.[45] The art of the salmon fly, or rather, the salmon fly as art: as fetish objects, they are perhaps more attractive to the fisherman and/or collector than they are to the fish, but then that is the point, as tackle manufacturers and purveyors discovered long ago. Nevertheless, even if Steinbeck's cache of salmon flies were of the plainer, less flashy, hair-bodied style typical of the mid-twentieth century and beyond, it isn't hard to see why the novelist might have been so fascinated by their intricate designs, their provenance and history, and, because he was onomastic, their catchy names: Silver Doctor, Stoat's Tail, Thunder and Lightning, Greenwell's Glory, General Practitioner. It would be misleading, then, to argue that Steinbeck's adherence to a dyed-in-the-wool British sporting tradition marked his capitulation to elite capitalism or marked him as an effete *poseur*. Fly fishing for trout and salmon *is* a pricey matter, but Steinbeck's view of the fishing life is too varied and complex for such a reductive assessment. On one level, Steinbeck's purchase of the salmon fly–adorned hat may be considered an homage to careful artisanship and connects thematically with the scene in *East of Eden* I spoke of above, and with the spirit of his long-dead Uncle Tom Hamilton, who valued authentic, one-of-a-kind items.[46]

Or to put it another way: the old adage that you get what you pay for is true. I received a Hardy LRH single-action fly reel as a Christmas gift in 1968, and I have used it continuously for four decades without its ever requiring repair or factory service. Hardy now makes a number of sexier, more technologically advanced fly reels, including the recently introduced, much-hyped Angel, but the old-timey retro Lightweight series—of which the LRH is one—is still in production, still available from some, but not all, American fly-fishing tackle shops, such as Dan Bailey's in Livingston, Montana. Given the LRH's fixed rim and outmoded "cage"-style design (which makes palming the spool impossible, and changing spools a bit tricky, especially in the dark), the reel seems ridiculously overpriced at $325 (the price of history and tradition, I guess), but its simplicity and bulldog reliability, which defy obsolescence, remain its chief attractions. No mention of its tactile appeal would be complete, however, without noting the delightful ratchet noise—somewhere between a shriek and an aggravated click—the reel makes when its handle is cranked to turn the spool and retrieve line. (These days, some advanced, high-end fly reels are silent.) The LRH's reassuring on-stream racket always gives the impression of being linked one-to-one to something immediate and real (pardon the pun), especially in the rare, unforgettable moments when the clatter is set in motion by a fast fish making a strong run.

In fact, thinking about my well-traveled fly reel, I have come to realize that no matter what other motives Steinbeck may have had for his frequent priority visits to Hardy's, he certainly understood and appreciated the quality of their trademark gear, as did Ernest Hemingway, who owned a substantial amount of Hardy equipment until most of it was lost in transit to Sun Valley in 1940.[47]

The Outdoor Indoor Sport: Watching Other People Fish

Far from being an example of untroubled materialism, I suggest that the House of Hardy episode has deeper import, for in the middle of one of the world's largest, densest urban areas, far from the nearest wild salmon river (whether in London or in New York), the flies' eventual use—other than their obvious ornamental, aesthetic, and ceremonial value—led Steinbeck indirectly to a kind of *reductio ad absurdam,* a cultural satire of sorts, the kind of broadly comic (and occasionally self-deprecating) angle toward popular sporting and athletic pursuits he struck in his 1965 *Sports Illustrated* piece, "Then My Arm Glassed Up," when he quipped: "And it has seemed to me that a man who can outthink fish may have a great future, but it will be limited to fish. His acquired knowledge will do him little good at a Sunday-school picnic or a board meeting."[48]

Steinbeck wrote about fishing—metaphorically, anyway—in all his books (he was, after all, a fisher of men and women who has managed to hook a worldwide audience), but he also penned a couple of savvy and humorous nonfiction pieces in which fishing is prominent. I want to dally over "On Fishing," in which Steinbeck boasts he is "one of the world's foremost observers of other people's fishing," and continues: "I believe that certain national characteristics emerge in fishing and attitudes toward fishing. With this in view I have for many years studied the relationship of fisherman to fish."[49]

This is an intriguing and resonant essay, which anatomizes in a very broad and playful way American, British, and French attitudes toward fishing. I'll start with Steinbeck's waggish take on the British, which I think puts a different spin on his Anglophilia and the House of Hardy episode. In short, like Twain in the lighter moments of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), Steinbeck beards the lion (or rather the trout), goofs with an elite tradition, signifies on what he called the "English passion for private property," which, based on Britain's eighteenth-century Enclosure Acts (designed to privatize common lands), "rises to its greatest glory in the ownership and negotiability of exclusive fishing rights in rivers and streams."[50]

The free-range Yank democrat then spins his version of "the ideal British fishing story," based on a set of "gentlemanly rules of conduct set up between trout and Englishmen," in which "the fisherman rereads Izaak Walton to brush up on his philosophic background, smokes many pipes, reduces all language to a series of grunts and finally sets out of an evening to have a go at Old George," an ancient and brilliant trout that has resided many years in a nearby meadow stream. Steinbeck continues:

> He creeps near to the sunken log and drops his badly tied dry fly upstream of the log so that it will float practically into Old George's mouth. This has been happening to Old George every evening for ten or fifteen years. But one evening perhaps Old George is sleeping with his mouth open or maybe he is bored. The hook gets entangled in his mouth. Then the fisherman, with tears streaming from his eyes, pulls Old George out on the grassy bank. There with full military honors and a deep sense of sorrow from the whole community, Old George flops to his death. The fisherman eats George boiled with brussels sprouts, sews a black band on his arm and gains the power of speech sufficiently to bore the hell out of the local pub for years to come.[51]

This fanciful little tale is a savvy send-up on one aspect of the storied and hoity-toity British tradition of blood sports and fly fishing, which the House of Hardy represents and which Steinbeck suggests had already, by the middle of the twentieth century, entered the nether universe of cultural stereotype and parody.

But it isn't just the British who come in for a hooking; the Americans, too, get their comeuppance, and in fact, Steinbeck is especially hard on his fellow countrymen, perhaps because he recognizes elements of himself in the generalized portrait of the well-dressed, excessively outfitted angler.

> The American conceives of fishing as more than a sport: it is his personal contest against nature. He buys mountains of equipment: reels, lines, rods, lures, all vastly expensive. Indeed, the manufacture and sale of fishing equipment is one of America's very large businesses. But equipment does not finish it. The fisherman must clothe himself for the fish with special and again expensive costumes. Then, if he can afford it, he buys or charters a boat as specialized for fishing as an operating theater is for surgery. He is now ready to challenge the forces of nature in their fishy manifestations.[52]

American fishermen "enter a kind of piscatorial religion all for the purpose of demonstrating his superiority over fish,"[53] a national attitude of acquisitiveness and conquest that Steinbeck finds ruthless and unsavory and that reaches its zenith in a view of fishing as a testosterone-fueled battle.

> He prefers the huge and powerful denizens of the sea which have great nuisance and little food value. Once fastened to his enemy, the fisherman subjects himself to physical torture while strapped into a chrome barber's chair, and resists for hours having his arms torn off. But he has proved that he is better than the fish. . . . The fisherman endows the fish with great intelligence and fabulous strength to the end that in defeating it he is even more intelligent and powerful.[54]

It is not too much of a stretch to sense the shadow of Hemingway as writer and iconic sporting celebrity in Steinbeck's dissection of the big-game fishing craze. In an era before catch and release became a fairly standard practice among fresh- and saltwater sport fishers, trophy fishing held no interest for Steinbeck. Photographs of Hemingway posing with his catch of astonishingly big ocean fish—blue marlin, mako shark, sailfish, tarpon, barracuda, or tuna—are legion. Photos add a powerful visual dimension to such books as *Fishing with Hemingway and Glassell* and *Hemingway on Fishing*,[55] and remind us dramatically of a way Steinbeck never cared to be. In fact, one looks in vain for photos of Steinbeck and his trophy fish. As far as I know, there are none, which I believe proves a point made by Jackson Benson in a 1985 essay originally called "Hemingway the Hunter and Steinbeck the Farmer," that "where Hemingway was drawn toward the action to participate, Steinbeck was drawn toward it to observe."[56]

Steinbeck's implicit criticism of the performative Hemingway is in some sense an ethical one, for he decried the waste of such great creatures. In fact, a decade later, Steinbeck was especially critical of "the shark hunter," who, though not named in his essay, was very probably Montauk charter captain Frank Mundus (the alleged model for Peter Benchley's character Quint in *Jaws*). Mundus was already making a publicized name for himself in eastern Long Island Sound waters for having successfully harpooned a 4,500-pound great white in June 1964 and was gaining a reputation as one of the only captains regularly targeting sharks as rod-and-reel quarry. Steinbeck's response is telling: "He kills these great and interesting animals not only with glee but with a sense of administering justice to a cruel and hated enemy. The carcasses are usually thrown away after photographing. There is utterly no understanding that sharks may well be factors in an intricate ecological balance."[57] Anyone who has watched Discovery Channel's popular *Shark Week*

From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

John Steinbeck was not a fan of those anglers who, like Ernest Hemingway (above), had a propensity for posing with their catch of the day.

Alex de Carvalho

A French angler working the Seine in Paris.

(or on a less savory note, Outdoor Life Network's *Shark Hunter* series) will recognize immediately the prophetic import of Steinbeck's statement.

So what was Steinbeck's ideal fishing scenario? Not surprisingly, in an article that appeared on commission in a French publication, Steinbeck reserves his highest praise for the patient, noncompetitive style of fishing he encounters along the Seine in Paris and later "on the banks of the lovely Oise on a summer Sunday afternoon."[58] The French angling method appeals because it is sedentary, simple, playful, and both nonhierarchical and nonteleological, which is to say, in a material sense, it is useless (I am inclined to say "un-American"). Instead, the French method (if I may crib from venerable Izaak Walton) is "like virtue," an end and "reward" in itself.[59] Steinbeck sums up this avocation:

> Here is no sentiment, no contest, no grandeur, no economics. Now and then a silly baby fish may be caught but most of the time there seems to be a courteous understanding by which fish and fisherman let each other strictly alone. Apparently there is also a rule about conversation. The fisherman's eyes get a dreaming look and he turns inward on his own thoughts, inspecting himself and his world in quiet. Because he is fishing, he is safe from interruption. He can rest detached from the stresses and pressures of his life. . . . From the sanctity of this occupation, a man may emerge refreshed and in control of his own soul. He is not idle. He is fishing.[60]

Besides anticipating Herbert Hoover's sentiment (that fishing refreshes the soul), Steinbeck's passage also proves a point about cultural difference that Paul Schullery makes in "Civilized Fishing," the tenth chapter in *Royal Coachman:* "The codes of behavior by which we define what is acceptable in fishing in fact require a great deal of flexibility of us. Fishing is what we make of it and what we decide, in each location, is best."[61] In this passage, Steinbeck is writing with the ghost of his uncle, Thomas Hamilton, in mind, and he has cast his line back to chapter 23 of *East of Eden,* where he had extolled a similar kind of pastoral, ruminative silence and a civilized noncompetitive deportment that allowed his elder not to care whether fish were caught or not: "He needed not to triumph over animals" (p. 606). I don't know whether it is as simple as saying "like uncle, like nephew," or that "blood (or perhaps ink) is thicker than water," but in an age when the most profound historical/contextual determinants of fly fishing for trout are increased angling pressure, whirling disease, prolonged drought, New Zealand mud snails, habitat degradation, acid rain, hatchery-reared fish, and increasingly embattled public-access rights, the river-gazing persona's serene attitude toward angling that emerges in "On Fishing" is worth serious consideration. In fact, Steinbeck's postmodern take on fishing, which sanely emphasizes process over product as the true register of success, is a precursor of a current activity beginning to take hold on such rivers as the West Branch of the Delaware, in which dry flies are dressed on a John Betts–inspired hook (with ring or eye in place of a point) or just a hook that has had its bend or barb clipped off. The goal of this "bite and relinquish" or "touch and go" effort is to fool the trout to rise and take a fly without the inevitable stress and traumatic mishandling caused by hooking, playing, and landing fish. If this strategy makes fly fishing more of a dilettantish aesthetic exercise than ever before, it also has the indisputable concrete value of extending renewability of our already beleaguered wild trout population.

A Fish by Any Other Name

Besides John Steinbeck, of how many other American novelists can it be said that a new species of fish was named after them? I don't have any hard facts and provable data about this, but my guess is none. Zero. Zip. In 1939, ichthyologist Dr. Rolf Bolin of Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station named the longfin lampfish *Lampanyctus steinbecki.*[62] This is an honor, which were it more widely known, might rival—even eventually surpass—the prestige of Steinbeck's Nobel Prize among us fishy types, and proves a point made years ago by the redoubtable Sparse Grey Hackle (aka Alfred W. Miller) to the effect that the best fishing is not always in water but in print. Think of the possibilities: from his early days as Lake Tahoe "piscatorial obstetrician" overseeing the propagation of millions of trout for the California Fish and Game Commission, to participant on a landmark collecting trip to the Gulf of California, to self-proclaimed expert observer of other people's fishing, to internationally acclaimed author of such classics as *The Fish of Wrath, Fishery Row, The Wayward Fish, The Fish of Our Discontent, The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Fish,* John Steinbeck was truly one with the fishes.

Indeed, he is all aroun' in the dark water, wherever there's a fish being hooked, he'll be there; wherever there's a cop beatin' up a fish, he'll be there. Why, he'll be in the way kids laugh when it's time to go fishing, and, since his ashes were committed to the ocean off Point Lobos, we can say, in Sicilian fashion, Steinbeck still sleeps with the fishes. Whenever we remember Lennie stroking a dead fish in his pocket or asking George to let him please tend the fishes, whenever we dress our flies, bait our hooks, or wet our lines, whenever we sit down to baked salmon or grilled trout at a trendy bistro, whenever we are tempted to be haunted by waters, we should remember John Steinbeck's parting words: "It has always been my private conviction that any man who pits his intelligence against a fish and loses has it coming."[63]

1. John Steinbeck IV and Nancy Steinbeck, *The Other Side of Eden: Life with John Steinbeck* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2001), 22.

2. John Steinbeck, "On Fishing." In Susan Shillinglaw and Jackson J. Benson, eds. *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 133. Steinbeck's article (written in English, then translated into French by Jean-Francois Rozan) originally appeared as "Sur les bords de l'Oise" ("On the banks of the Oise") in the French-language journal *Le Figaro Litteraire* on 10 July 1954 and was collected, with a number of Steinbeck's *Figaro* pieces, as the eighth chapter in a little-known, limited-edition paperback volume, *Un Americain à New-York et à Paris* (Paris: Rene Julliard, 1956). Between August 1954 and January 1955, the essay was reprinted in English under different titles in *Punch* ("Fishing in Paris"), *Sports Illustrated* ("Of Fish and Fishermen"), and American, British, and Canadian editions of *Reader's Digest* ("How to Fish in French"). It appears as "On Fishing" in *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction* (John Steinbeck, edited by Susan Shillinglaw and J. Benson, copyright ©2002 by Elaine Steinbeck and Thomas Steinbeck; used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Group [USA] Inc.) and is the source I employ throughout this essay. Jackson J. Benson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer* (New York: Viking Press, 1984), 760, quotes a June 1953 letter by Steinbeck regarding his newly completed fishing essay. In the letter, Steinbeck told his Viking Press editor, Pascal Covici: "I enclose . . . the newest article for *Figaro.* An essay on fishing. I think it is true and hope you find it amusing. The boys [sons Thom and John IV] have poles now and are ready to do some fishing in the Seine. And about time too. Catbird [family nickname for John IV] would rather fish than do anything in the world. It is the only thing that can hold his attention indefinitely."

3. Herbert Hoover, *Fishing for Fun and to Wash Your Soul,* ed. William Nichols (New York: Random House, 1963), 30.

4. Steinbeck and Steinbeck, *The Other Side of Eden,* 21. In his essay in Susan Shillinglaw's *John Steinbeck: Centennial Reflections by American Writers* (San Jose, Calif.: Center for Steinbeck Studies, 2002), 89, Thom Steinbeck corroborated his younger brother's memory: " . . . my father had little interest in catching fish. . . . Instead, he considered a line in the water as a perfect cover for reading or daydreaming. I have known him on many occasions to ignore baiting his hook altogether, because a strike . . . would distract his train of thought."

5. John Steinbeck, personal correspondence with parents [John Ernst and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck], April 1927, Wells Fargo Steinbeck Collection, M1063, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. Quoted with permission. Years later, Steinbeck still showed enthusiasm for eating the occasional quarry. "We spent the last long weekend at the [Elia] Kazan's in Connecticut," he told his sister. "Chris Kazan, who is fourteen, and I, did a lot of Pickeral [*sic*] fishing and got a lot of Pickeral—I'm going to try and smoke them in my new barbecue. . . . I love smoked fish." John Steinbeck, personal correpondence with Esther Steinbeck Rodgers, 7 June 1953, Wells Fargo Steinbeck collection, M1063, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. Quoted with permission.

6. Thom Steinbeck, interview with author, Hempstead, New York, March 2002.

7. Jim Harrison, interview with author, Livingston, Montana, August 2003.

8. Mark Kingwell, *Catch and Release: Trout Fishing and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003), 81.

9. Mark Browning, *Haunted by Waters: Fly Fishing in North American Literature* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998), 148.

10. Robert DeMott, *Steinbeck's Typewriter: Essays on His Art* (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Publishing, 1996), 234–64.

11. Ted Leeson, *Jerusalem Creek: Journeys into Driftless Country* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2002), 57.

12. Benson, *True Adventures of John Steinbeck,* 8. Benson states later in this biography that Steinbeck "spent a lot of time plotting against . . . fish," and that "he considered himself an experienced sailor and fisherman" (841).

13. Robert DeMott, *Steinbeck's Reading* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), 62–63; 156–57.

14. W. D. Wetherell, "Why Fish?" In *Upland Stream: Notes on the Fishing Passion* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 184–204.

15. John Steinbeck, "Then My Arm Glassed Up." In Shillinglaw and Benson, eds. *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction,* 127–28.

16. Nick Lyons, *Full Creel: A Nick Lyons Reader* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000), xvi.

17. Odell Shepard, *Thy Rod and Thy Creel* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931), 77.

18. Craig Nova, *Brook Trout and the Writing Life* (New York: Lyons Press, 1999), 51.

19. Kingwell, *Catch and Release,* 3–4.

20. Thomas Fensch, ed. John Steinbeck, *Conversations with John Steinbeck* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 22.

21. Quoted in Nick Lyons, ed. Robert Traver [John D. Voelker], *Traver on Fishing* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2001), 119.

22. John Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel:* The East of Eden *Letters* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), 105. Each working day from January through October 1951, before settling down to write two thousand words on his novel, Steinbeck penned a diary entry, addressed to his Viking Press editor, Pascal Covici, in which he discussed a wide range of topics, such as his plan of work, his aesthetic intentions for the novel, his memories of the Hamilton (his mother's) family, and more. Steinbeck's lengthy original handwritten manuscript of *East of Eden* (comprising more than five hundred 10-by-14-inch lined ledger pages), housed at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, reveals that he wrote the novel expressly for his sons, Thom and John IV, then aged seven and five, to tell them about the universal human stories of good and evil, fulfillment and loss. The published version of *East of Eden* (New York: Viking Press, 1952) was significantly cut, and as a result, many of the digressive and often didactic, editorial addresses to his sons were deleted. See my *Steinbeck's Typewriter,* 206–32. The Steinbeck sons remembered their father's predelictions well. During Steinbeck's working summer on Nantucket, fishing was sometimes an excuse for daydreaming about his novel project. On 13 July 1951, Steinbeck told Covici, "I took Thursday off and went fishing. . . .The fishing trip got no fish and I got a painful sunburn but out of it I got a whole new extension of the book. I guess I never really do stop working." See Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten, eds., *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 424.

23. John Steinbeck, on *East of Eden.* Quoted in Robert DeMott, ed. *Novels, 1942–1952* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 602.

24. Leeson, *Jerusalem Creek,* 239.

25. Steve Raymond, *Rivers of the Heart: A Fly-Fishing Memoir* (New York: Lyons Press, 1998), 167.

26. Steinbeck, *East of Eden,* 606.

27. Ibid.

28. Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler Or, The Contemplative Man's Recreation, with Instructions How to Angle for a Trout or Grayling in a Clear Stream, by Charles Cotton.* Introduction by Howell Raines (New York: Modern Library, 1996), 37.

29. Steinbeck, *East of Eden,* 607.

30. Nova, *Brook Trout and the Writing Life,* 111.

31. Graham Watson, *Book Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1980), 108. Later, Steinbeck reported gleefully to Watson: "I am wearing the hat with great success. Men, prone to take it lightly as a piece of solid British frippery, are thrown into a paroxysm of admiration at the beautiful salmon flies." See Steinbeck and Wallsten, eds. *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters,* 498.

32. Edward Weeks, *Fresh Waters* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 87.

33. This highly truncated chronology ignores the equally important but shorter-lived development of U.S. fly fishing, the story of which is available in Paul Schullery's indispensable *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987) and in his essay collection *Royal Coachman: The Lore and Legends of Fly-Fishing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

34. Arnold Gingrich, *The Fishing in Print: A Guided Tour through Five Centuries of Angling Literature* (New York: Winchester Press, 1974), 199. I fished the River Test a few years ago and was bemused and fascinated to find that some of the same protocols and regulations are still in effect: you are expected to

cast only to visible fish, and you are not supposed to leave the bank and wade. Break these rules, and you risk being chided as a loutish Yank, as Texas novelist William Humphrey, in his entertaining chapter about British chalk stream fishing, "Bill Breaks His Duck," which appears in *Open Season: Sporting Adventures* (New York: Dell, 1989), characterized this way: " . . . down on the river there awaited us a fishing catechism as strict as any church's. It was to be a series of Thou Shalt Nots" (176).

35. W. D. Wetherell, *Vermont River* (New York: Lyons Press, 1984), 99.

36. Howell Raines, *Fly Fishing through the Midlife Crisis* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 98.

37. Thomas McGuane, *The Longest Silence: A Life in Fishing* (New York: Knopf, 1999), ix.

38. See "Fly Fishing's Mystery Woman," *Fly Rod & Reel* (July/October 2005, vol. 27), 14; and "Hardy Girl Update," *Fly Rod & Reel* (November/December 2005, vol. 27), 10.

39. Jack Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman: My Life with and without Papa* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1986), 18.

40. Skues, one of modern fly fishing's undisputed heroes, records his historical recollection of Tups Indispensable in chapter 7 of his 1939 book, *Nymph Fishing for Chalk Stream Trout.* Skues, who published a slim but nonetheless revolutionary text called *Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream* in 1910, pioneered fishing subsurface flies and made significant inroads into the Halfordian dry-fly-only congregation. In *Open Season,* William Humphrey claims without hesitation that Skues may have been the "best trout fisherman who ever lived" (177). Certainly, Skues was a tireless innovator, and in both books mentioned here he writes convincingly of fishing the Tups Indispensable as a wet fly. See the Skues handy double collection, *Nymph Fishing for Chalk Stream Trout & Minor Tactics of the Trout Stream* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1974). I have never been able to determine if Steinbeck ever heard of Skues, much less read his work, but I always found it intriguing and perhaps even a bit suspicious that the names of two chief characters in *East of Eden*—brothers Adam and Charles Trask—mirror the names of Skues's London publisher.

41. Gordon Wickstrom, *Notes from an Old Fly Book* (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2001), 17.

42. Jan Zita Grover, *Northern Waters* (St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 1999), 201.

43. Shirley Fisher, "Steinbeck's Days in Sag Harbor." *New York Times* (3 December 1978), Long Island Section, 20.

44. Watson, *Book Society,* 109. Watson further claims that Steinbeck "loved the sound of a line stripping off a reel, the feel of a newly honed knife, the smell of beeswaxed leather, the texture of a well-oiled rifle stock . . ." (109).

45. Andrew Herd, *The Fly* (Ellesmere, England: Medlar Press, 2003), 262.

46. Susan Stewart's brilliant treatise on nostalgia, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1984; rptd. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 68, has suggestive implications for the fly-fishing community, which prizes the small, scaled-down objects of our sport, such as flies: "the miniature object represents an antithetical mode of production: production by the hand, a production that is unique and authentic . . . [and is] . . . located at a place of origin (the childhood of the self . . .)."

47. H. Lea Lawrence, *Prowling Papa's Waters: A Hemingway Odyssey.* Foreword by Ted Williams (Atlanta, Ga.: Longstreet Press, 1992), 189. One of Hemingway's personal favorites—a split-bamboo Hardy "Fairy" fly rod—is on permanent display at the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester, Vermont.

48. Steinbeck, "Then My Arm Glassed Up," 128.

49. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 132. See Warren French, *John Steinbeck's Nonfiction Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 83–99, for an account of the personal, professional, and political contexts of Steinbeck's *Figaro* publications, all of which the novelist hoped would lighten strained Franco-American relations, and many of which French rightly claims "deserve to be better known" (99).

50. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 133.

51. Ibid., 133–34.

52. Ibid., 132. Steinbeck was not immune from boasting about the attractions of a well-equipped fishing boat. In *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* (Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten, eds.), he told Webster Street on 5 July 1955: "This afternoon, we are taking our boat off Montauk Point to fish for blues. They are fine fighting fish and wonderful to eat and they are said to be running well right now. It is about a forty-five minute run in our boat which will do thirty-four miles an hour if it has to. It is a sea skiff, lapstrake, twenty feet long and eight feet of beam and a hundred horse power Grey marine engine. I could cross the Atlantic in her if I could carry the gasoline. . . . This is fabulous boating country and fishing country too" (505). For more on Steinbeck's Long Island Sound boating/fishing experiences, see Benson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck,* 772, 777–78, 790, 841.

53. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 132.

54. Ibid., 132–33.

55. See S. Kip Farrington, *Fishing with Hemingway and Glassell* (New York: David McKay, 1971), and Ernest Hemingway, *Hemingway on Fishing* (Nick Lyons, ed.; foreword by Jack Hemingway; New York: Lyons Press, 2000). In his last book, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 87, Steinbeck records an unsuccessful fishing outing, which includes a pointed allusion to Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) and/or Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952): "We walked and cast and did everything we knew to interest bass or pike. My friend kept saying, 'They're right down there if we can just get the message through.' But we never did. If they were down there, they still are. A remarkable amount of fishing is like that, but I like it just the same. My wants are simple. I have no desire to latch onto a monster symbol of fate and prove my manhood in titanic piscine war, but sometimes I do like a couple of cooperative fish of frying size."

56. Jackson J. Benson, *Looking for Steinbeck's Ghost* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 220.

57. Steinbeck, "Then My Arm Glassed Up," 128.

58. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 134. The Oise enters the Seine northwest of Paris. In an earlier *Figaro* piece, "J'aime cette Ile de la Cite" ("I Love This Isle of the City"), which appears as "One American in Paris (fourth piece)" in Shillinglaw and Benson, eds., *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction,* Steinbeck wrote evocatively of watching the Seine River fishermen with his sons, Thom and John IV, who "wait patiently for some of the many fishermen to catch a fish and when some tiny thing is hooked we run to examine and to congratulate. This minnow is a trump beyond which the big game fisherman cannot rise" (247).

59. Walton, *The Compleat Angler,* 25.

60. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 134–35.

61. Schullery, *Royal Coachman,* 165.

62. Eric Enno Tamm, *Beyond the Outer Shores: The Untold Odyssey of Ed Ricketts, the Pioneering Ecologist Who Inspired John Steinbeck and Joseph Campbell* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows Press, 2004), 277. Dr. Rolf Ling Bolin (1901–1973), ichthyologist and oceanographer, was assistant director of Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station at Pacific Grove, California. In *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research* (New York: Viking Press, 1941), 31, Steinbeck and his collaborator Edward F. Ricketts praise Bolin because he "loves true things." In *Working Days: The Journals of* The Grapes of Wrath, *1938–1941,* ed. Robert DeMott (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 29, Steinbeck noted on 17 June 1938, "Doc Bolin here yesterday. Fine people. He is going on a collecting trip to the south seas and is very excited about it." Deep in the writing of *The Grapes of Wrath,* Steinbeck noted ruefully, "I'd like to go but won't or can't or something" (29).

63. Steinbeck, "On Fishing," 133. Steinbeck's presence among contemporary fly fishers has odd ways of making itself felt. James R. Babb, in *Crosscurrents: A Fly Fisher's Progress* (New York: Lyons Press, 1999), 155, quotes from Steinbeck and Ricketts's *Sea of Cortez* as an epigram for his chapter, "Cabo Wabo." In his last interview, Gary La Fontaine told Craig J. Oberg that he considered Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday* ". . . perfect books. That's what I tried to pattern *Fly Fishing the Mountain Lakes* after. They had just the right number of words to get across the effect of the story, and they had the perfect amount of information"; see "One Nine-Inch Rainbow—A Last Conversation with Gary LaFontaine," *Weber Studies* (Fall 2002, vol. 20), 11. Rick Wollum, host of thirteen episodes of ESPN's *Fly Fishing America* in 1999, revealed that the format of his peripatetic series was indebted to Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* (interview with author, Livingston, Montana, August 2005).

Echoes from Yesteryear

by Rhodes S. Baker III

The author's grandfather Rhodes S. Baker (left), nineteen, and his friend F. George Allen (right), thirty-eight, posed for an 1893 studio shot in San Angelo, Texas. These intrepid sportsmen traveled light while off on their cycling adventures, but still found room for their fly rods. Photo from the Baker family collection.

Curious about my namesake's limb of the family tree, I rummaged around up in the attic and discovered a veritable treasure buried there in a steamer trunk. Kneeling, I blew the dust off my grandfather's scrapbook, then gingerly turned its browned and brittle pages until I found a fascinating magazine article. It described a bicycling and fly-fishing adventure that took place back in July 1896.[1]

From San Angelo, Texas, the story related, Rhodes Baker,[2] age twenty-two, and his friend George Allen,[3] forty-one (proprietor of Allen's Music Store in San Angelo), pedaled southwest to Sonora, then farther south to Juno and the Devils River country, into Del Rio, across the Rio Grande via ferry raft poled by elbow grease to Villa Acuña, Mexico, thence east to Brackett and Fort Clark, then back home through Rock Springs to point of beginning.

Whew! Consult the map: that twelve-day trip of approximately 425 miles would be difficult today, but even more so over the primitive stagecoach roads and wagon trails of 1896 in the heat of a sweltering Texas July.

Allen and Baker were "San Angelo Wheelmen," a band of fun-loving and adventuresome young folks much like many other cycling groups organized across the United States during the Gay Nineties, bicycling's Golden Age.

Women, too, took to pedaling. Indeed, that activity proved so liberating for the fairer sex that it met with denunciation from some church pulpits for its radical departure from Victorian principles of feminine fashion and proper behavior.

In tolerant San Angelo, however, wheeling by the distaff side was accepted without raised eyebrows and finger-wagging condemnation. Moreover, women's fashions soon accommodated the biking craze with shorter skirts and bloomers that modest-

An old map of West Texas, the eastern portion of which encompassed the areas of the bicycle trip. Map courtesy of the West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

ly covered the legs to the ankles. And the drop-frame design pioneered by Charles Duryea in 1895 allowed women to dismount a bicycle without having to—in an unladylike fashion—swing a leg over.

Allen used his wheels both for business and pleasure, traveling great distances to sell and tune pianos and other musical instruments. His friend Baker often tagged along, a Colt pistol and fly rod packed in his roll (along with other bare essentials), and they raced together across the West Texas countryside for sporting fun and business profit.

Allen's first long cycling trip was in the early 1880s to the ranch of Will Sanderson, located in the Live Oak Draw of the Pecos River, about 150 miles southwest of San Angelo. He went way out west pedaling his Columbia to tune a piano he'd sold to Sanderson as a present for his daughter. It was the longest trip ever made by bicycle up to that time, so folks say.

Sometimes the trail grew faint, and Allen got lost. He'd pause to take a compass reading, adjust his course, then strike out again across the prairie. Cactus thorns were his nemesis. He faced worrisome tire punctures, no gas stations, no air compressors—a simple patch kit and a foot pump for emergency repairs on the run out in the middle of nowhere. There was the infernal dust, sandy grit, and other discomforts no end, not to mention a plethora of rattlesnakes, tarantulas, and horned toads. He was forever sweating under a sweltering hot sun with scant shade and little relief from tepid canteen water.

Rhodes Baker was infatuated with the lovely University of Texas coed Miss Edna "Pansy" Rembert of Vernon, Texas, and penned letters to her while off gallivanting on his turn-of-the-century cycling adventures. Baker soon settled down, however, and commenced a distinguished legal career in Dallas, Texas, where Miss Pansy and he were betrothed in 1899. Photo from the Baker family collection.

In June 1896, Baker graduated from the University of Texas, and his eyes remained fixed upon an attractive coed there, Miss Edna "Pansy" Rembert from Vernon, Texas.[4] Baker kept in close touch with Miss Pansy by frequent correspondence that summer of 1896, even posting letters to her during the twelve-day adventure trek recounted briefly to you here.

It is known for a fact that the proper Miss Pansy wanted nothing to do with adventures of this sort, she not being the "wheeling-type." Baker, though circumspect in describing his excursion with Allen, spoke of the good fishing on the Devils River and the critters that skittered and slithered through camp, such as skunks, snakes, and tarantulas. Black bear, mountain lions, white-tailed deer, and fearsome razorbacks also ran free in that scenic but rugged and prickly canyon country.

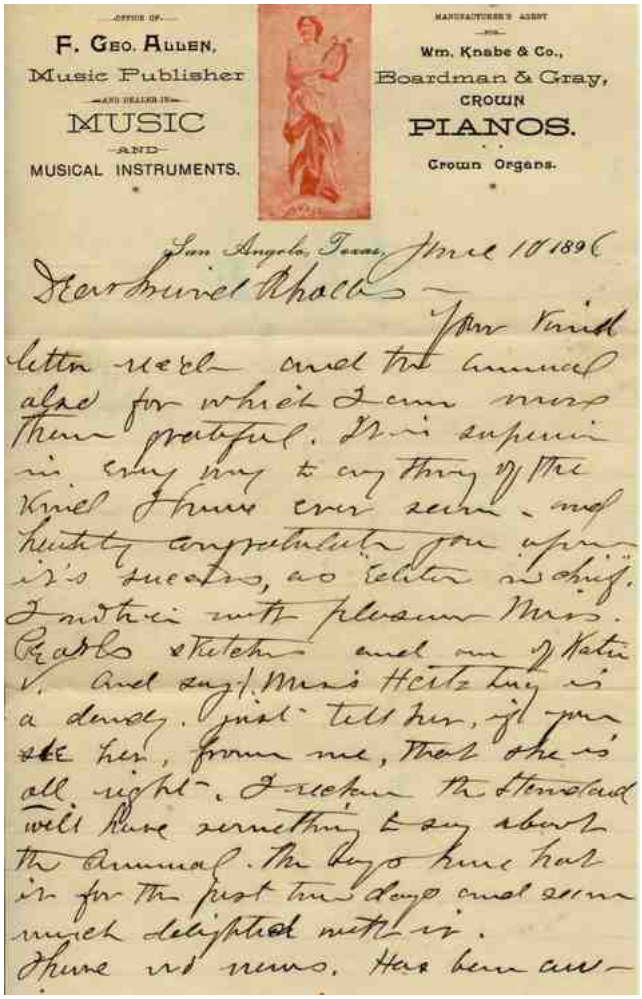
Baker chronicled his Devils River adventures in letters penned while in camp and handed off to passing stagecoaches. In a letter to Pansy (written on a subsequent trip), he notes:

> We have been having a most enjoyable season of fishing; have caught all the fish we wanted and more than we could eat; thus, we have now inaugurated the rule that fish must be put back in the river as soon as caught.[5]

Apparently, my grandfather invented catch and release more than a hundred years ago!

> Our days are passed in fishing, exploring, taking pilgrimages to nearby places sleeping and lounging around camp lying on our cots and reading some old magazines and yellow-back novels we brought with us on our tour.
>
> I have not yet seen any rattlesnakes on this trip, but have seen a few water moccasins. No polecats have enlivened camp with their presence. Nothing from the wild has visited us except tarantulas. They occasionally call, but always seem on business intent and are always taken in the act of marching through camp just as if they did not know there was such a place as camp. . . . I went up to a Mexican house a short distance from camp a few days ago and discovered a dog that had been tied to a tree making a (great) deal of commotion barking at something on the ground, which something on investigation

This overhang among the cliffs along the Devils River in Val Verde County, north of Del Rio, Texas, shelters priceless, ancient Indian petroglyphs on its walls. Baker and Allen likely camped and fished here while on their cycling odyssey of July 1896. Photo © courtesy of Michelle Huebner d/b/a Thunder Outfitters, LLC.



In June 1896, Baker (a graduating student at the University of Texas) and Allen exchanged correspondence about their upcoming trip to the Devils River. Allen used his bicycle for business and pleasure, often pedaling long distances in record time to peddle and tune instruments. Allen's colorful letterhead advertised his musical wares under supervision of a strumming Greek goddess. Letter from the Baker family collection.

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proved to be a tarantula near the foot of the tree, standing perfectly still eying the dog as if to say that he would hold his ground if necessary till the cows come home and that he did not intend being bluffed by any common cur dog.[6]

Newspaper accounts of the day chronicled cycling competition and its derring-do regularly. In a summary of local racing results, the *San Angelo Standard* of 8 October 1892 reported:

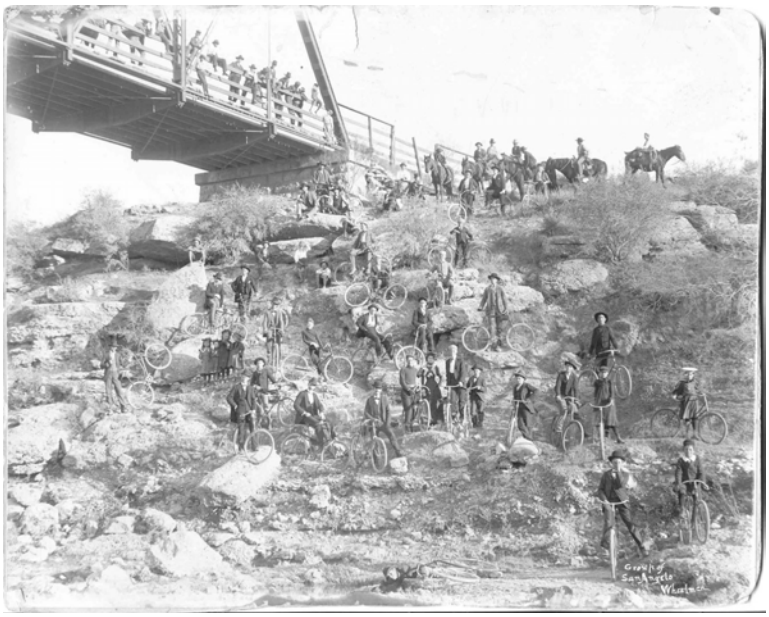
> In the half-mile bicycle race there were only three entries, Rhodes Baker, Harry Hickley and Bob Holland. The track having two inches of dust on it was heavy enough to kill any ordinary man. Hickley's machine broke down a short distance from the starting pole; Bob Holland's followed suit coming down the quarter stretch and Rhodes Baker won in a canter.

The *Standard* of 24 February 1894 spoke of one of Allen's and Baker's noteworthy wheeling exploits:

> A Bicycle Trip to the Devils River
>
> F. G. Allen and Rhodes Baker returned the first of the week from a combined business and pleasure trip to Sonora and the Devils River country, going as far south as the R. W. Prosser ranch. They stopped two days with Mr. Hiram Young, enjoying his hospitality and a hunt with him in the Devils River canyon. Their outward run from San Angelo to Sonora, 72 miles, was made in 8 hours and 45 minutes.

Baker had migrated to San Angelo with his family in 1884 from Duck Hill, Mississippi. His father, Colonel Andrew Jackson Baker, was a Confederate veteran (the storied University Grays of the 11th Mississippi) who exhibited utmost bravery and survived wounds sustained in the bloody cornfield at Sharpsburg (known as Antietam in Yankee parts) in 1862 and less than a year later at Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg. At the time of Rhodes Baker's and George Allen's trek across West Texas, Colonel Baker was serving as Texas's land commissioner under Governor Charles Culberson.

George Allen, a Yankee from Boston, arrived in Tom Green County, Texas, in 1881 with intentions of becoming a sheepman; instead, he entered the music business, selling pianos and other musical instruments. The likeness of a comely goddess of music strumming a stringed instrument adorned his business letterhead. Cowboys on long cattle drives entertained themselves around the campfire playing tunes, such as "Get Along Little Dogie" and "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," on French harps procured from Allen's music store.



This interesting photograph of the "wheeling crowd" was taken circa 1897–1898 at the Oakes Street bridge, which spanned the Concho River in San Angelo, Texas. Wheelman A. S. Lowe identified several of the cyclists. He noted the fellow on the left with wheel upended as "a floater named Hayes, who beat my mother out of a small board bill." "The boy lying down with face against the water is one of the Ligon boys and I think his name is Alvro." "Thumbing his nose is Shan Hull" (ironically, Hull later became a Methodist minister). And (in the middle) "George Allen, the music store man." Photo courtesy of the West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Dave and Lizzie Baker settled at Baker's Crossing on the Devils River in 1884. Baker's Crossing was a stop on Deaton's Stage Line that ran from Comstock to Ozona. Lizzie, wife and mother, also served as postmistress. Dave provided food for the table by hunting game with his hounds in the rugged Devils River canyons. (Note the bear carcass in the photo.) Photo courtesy of Whitehead Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas.

I shake my head in wonder just thinking of my granddad and his friend George Allen, what they saw and what they did as they wheeled up and down those miles and miles of dusty trails back in the good old days.

Traveling the trail along the headwaters of the Devils River at the Prosser Ranch, Allen and Baker most likely spent the night at Baker's Crossing before crossing the river and heading south to Comstock and Del Rio.

The proprietors of Baker's Crossing, Dave and Lizzie Baker (no kin to the Bakers of San Angelo) were well-known in those parts for never turning away a stranger, whether outlaws, in-laws, or ne'er-do-wells. They'd owned the 107 acres since 1884, having bought it from a man who sold out soon after he stumbled upon a gruesome scene of Native American violence down the road a piece at Dead Man's Crossing.[7]

Dave Baker, age forty-six, was a crack shot who spent most of his time hunting bears and panthers in the surrounding Devils River canyons with a pack of hounds. When he was not chasing wild game, Dave must have been chasing Lizzie, for they had as many children as you could count on both hands.

There were other colorful characters that Allen and Baker might have encountered in those parts, including the legendary J. H. McMahan (referred to in later life as "The Old Man of the River"). James Henry McMahan (1845–1932) was a Confederate veteran, fearless Indian fighter, trapper, and an explorer who stood out rather prominently—he was an albino. If Baker and Allen didn't cross paths with McMahan, they probably enjoyed some soup from turtles he'd caught out of the Rio Grande and sold to Del Rio hotels and eating establishments. Half-blind at age eighty-six, McMahan died on a Del Rio street when he walked into traffic, was struck by a passing motorist, and fell, fracturing his skull.[8]

Home at Last

Upon his return to San Angelo, Baker penned another letter to his lady friend in Vernon, Texas, summing up the incredible bicycle trip in a single paragraph. The terse summary read like a real estate legal description.

San Angelo, July 15, '96
Miss Pansy Rembert
Vernon, Texas

Dear Miss Pansy,

I have just returned from a 12-day bicycle and fishing trip and feel like I have been gone a month. We went south down the Devils River to Del Rio, thence across the Rio Grande for a short stay into Mexico, thence to Brackett where is located Fort Clark, thence back home, in all about 425 miles. The trip was full of enjoyment for me; but for you who doubts if you could find anything very interesting in rocks and trees and rivers and birds and mountains, I could not describe it very entertainingly.

Very Sincerely,
Rhodes Baker

I never knew my grandfather; he died two weeks before my birth. However, my research and travels provided a fascinating, vicarious glimpse into the life of Rhodes Baker, source of my name and infatuation with fly fishing.

~

ENDNOTES

1. "Horses Shied, Tires Collapsed But Cyclists Rode On," *Western Weekly Magazine* (unknown date, author).
2. Rhodes Semmes Baker (1874–1940); prominent Dallas attorney and church and civic leader.
3. F. George Allen (1855–1939). Music, church, and cycling were George Allen's only loves until he renounced his bachelorhood and married Beatrice Fitch in 1899.
4. Edna Miller Rembert (1878–1955) married Rhodes S. Baker on 26 January 1899.
5. Rhodes Baker, letter to Mrs. Rhodes Baker, 2 August 1903 (camp), postmarked 3 August in Comstock, Texas (north of Del Rio, west of the Devils River). Rhodes affectionately greets Pansy as "My Dear Little Girl." Pansy was a fishing widow at an early age; the letter was addressed to her care of her mother in Vernon, Texas. She had been forewarned, however; Mr. Baker's love affair with the Devils River was no secret.
6. Ibid.
7. Dave and Lizzie Baker acquired the Baker's Crossing place of 107 acres in the spring of 1884, paying $1,000; $250 down and three annual installments of $250 each. Considered top dollar for land in those days, Dave paid a premium price because of its pretty spot on the river and the fact that it already had a house on it.
8. Mr. McMahan's death certificate and the *Del Rio Evening News,* 23 January 1932.

Thomas Bewick: Artist and Angler

by J. Keith Harwood

Newcastle artist William Nicholson painted this portrait of his friend Thomas Bewick. When he moved to Edinburgh in 1814, Bewick displayed the portrait to help advertise his skills. Tyne & Wear Museums' collection.

It is a great pity that Thomas Bewick, renowned English wood engraver and naturalist, never completed his book *A History of British Fishes.* Like his *General History of Quadrupeds* (1790) and *History of British Birds* (1797 and 1804), it would undoubtedly have become a classic of its genre and much sought after by naturalists and bibliophiles alike. *The History of British Fishes* was to have followed the same format as his other two books. Each fish would have had its own chapter, headed by an engraving of the species itself, and closed with a tailpiece, a vignette depicting some aspect of life, not necessarily relating to the particular fish. This format had proved immensely popular, and both his *Quadrupeds* and *Birds* went through several editions during Bewick's lifetime. Fortunately, however, Bewick did produce several fish engravings in preparation for his *History of British Fishes* and more than twenty vignettes depicting angling scenes, many of which are to be found in *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by Himself,* published posthumously in 1862. The angling scenes in particular are miniature masterpieces, seldom more than 2 inches across, depicting incidents, often humorous, to which anglers of all generations can relate. Indeed, they are so carefully observed as to leave the viewer with no doubt that Bewick himself was an angler.

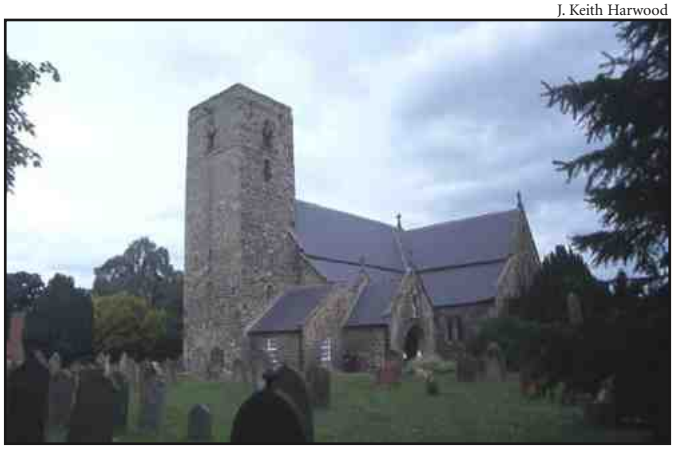
Thomas Bewick was born on 10 August 1753 at Cherryburn House (now a museum devoted to Bewick), Eltringham, Northumberland, within a stone's throw of the River Tyne. His father,

J. Keith Harwood

Cherryburn House, where Bewick was born, and the farmyard where he observed birds.

An earlier version of this article appeared in the February 2003 issue of *Waterlog.*

J. Keith Harwood



Ovingham Church; Bewick attended the school here.

John, was the tenant of a small 8-acre farm and an adjacent colliery. His grandfather, Thomas, was also a farmer and a keen angler. The young Thomas's schooldays were definitely not the happiest of his life, and in his autobiography, *A Memoir,* he complained that he was frequently beaten, even when blameless. On one occasion, in order to escape yet another beating, he ran away from school. From that time onward, he was a frequent truant, preferring to spend his time building dams and making little boats to sail on the local stream. Eventually, he was sent to the school of the Reverend Christopher Gregson of Ovingham, for whom his mother, Jane, had served as housekeeper before her marriage. It was here that he discovered a talent for drawing, and instead of learning his Latin verbs, he preferred to doodle.

> And the margins of my books and every space of spare and blank paper became filled with various kinds of devices or scenes I had met with and these were often accompanied with wretched rhymes explanatory of them; but as soon as I filled all the blank spaces in my book, I had recourse at all spare times to the grave stones and the floor of the church porch, with a bit of chalk to give vent to this propensity of mind of figuring whatever I had seen.[1]

His father did not approve of him spending his time in such idle pursuits, but he could not deter the young artist.

> Many of my evenings at home were spent in filling the flags of the floor and the hearth stone with my chalky designs. After I had long scorched my face in this way, a friend, in compassion, furnished me with a lot of paper upon which to execute my designs. Here I had more scope—pen and ink and the juice of the brambleberry made a grand change. These were succeeded by a camel hair pencil and shells of colours, and thus supplied I became completely set up. But of patterns or drawings I had none—the beasts and birds which enlivened the beautiful scenery of woods and wilds surrounding my native hamlet, furnished me with an endless supply of subjects.[2]

Bewick's love of the countryside and its creatures was further enhanced by angling and by following, at every opportunity, the local hunt. During the winter months, he was sometimes employed to look after a small flock of sheep on the fells. Milking the cows was another duty he was frequently called upon to perform. While engaged in this task, he developed a love of bird watching.

> Within the byer door I snugly watched the appearance of various birds which passed the little dean below, and which the severity of the weather drove from place to place in search of shelter. With the sight of my intimate acquaintances, the robins, the wrens, blackbirds, sparrows, and a solitary crow and some others, I was not much attracted, but always felt an extreme pleasure and curiosity in seeing the more rare visitants, such as the woodcock, the snipe and other waders, with the redwings and fieldfares etc. make their appearance.[3]

His favorite season of the year was undoubtedly the spring. The lengthening days and warmer weather turned his thoughts to angling, and he was frequently to be found on the banks of the Tyne, a notable game-fishing river both then and now. However, his angling expeditions were the cause of some anxiety to his parents.

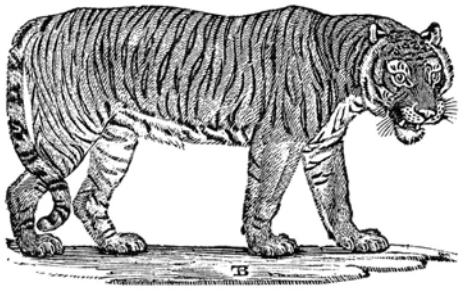
> As soon as the bushes and trees began to put forth their buds and made the face of nature look gay—this was the signal for the angler to prepare his fishing tackle, and in doing this I was not behind hand with any of them in making my own all ready. Fishing rods, set gads and night lines were all soon made fit for use, and with them late and early I had a busy time of it during the long summer months and until the frosts of autumn, forbid me to proceed. The uneasiness which my late evening wadings by the water side gave to my father and mother I have often since reflected upon with regret—they could not go to bed with the hopes of getting to sleep, while haunted with the apprehension of my being drowned, and well do I remember to this day, my father's well known whistle which called me home—he went to a little distance from the house, where nothing obstructed the sound, and whistled so loud through his finger and thumb that in the still hours of the evening, it may be heard echoing upon the vale of the Tyne to a very great distance. This whistle I learned to imitate and answered it as well as I could and then posted home.[4]

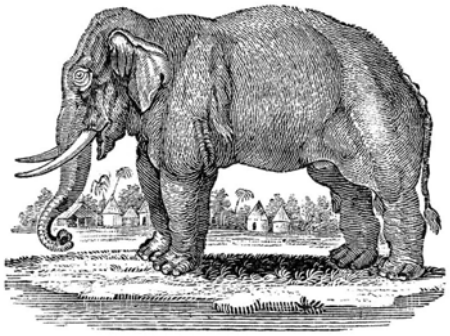
From Thomas Bewick, The History of British Birds: Water Birds *(Newcastle, England: Edward Walker, 1804), 52.*

Such was Thomas Bewick's childhood. However, the time soon came for him to embark on a career and, in October 1767,

J. Keith Harwood

The River Tyne near Ovingham where Bewick fished.





Engravings of a tiger, stag, and deer from Thomas Bewick's A General History of Quadrupeds *(Newcastle, England: Sol. Hodgson, 1790).*

through the influence of Mrs. Simons, his godmother, he was apprenticed to Ralph Beilby, a Newcastle engraver. Beilby was not specifically a wood engraver, but carried out a wide variety of engraving commissions ranging from brass clock faces and doorplates to bank notes and shop bills. His speciality was ornamental silver engraving, and he was widely regarded as one of the best in the country. Thus the young Bewick gained experience in all aspects of engraving, and it was in wood engraving that he was to make his mark. Beilby himself had no great love for wood engraving, so commissions from publishers for woodcuts were normally given to his apprentice. Bewick soon found that he had a talent for such work, and it gave him the opportunity to exercise his drawing skills. One such commission, a woodcut of the *George and Dragon* for a bar bill, attracted a lot of attention and brought in a great deal of subsequent work.

During his apprenticeship he was still able to find time for fishing. "When I was an apprentice I had a few holy days at Easter and Whitsuntide allowed me, according to promise, and these were wholly employed in angling."[5] After completing his apprenticeship in October 1774, he returned to Cherryburn, where he remained until the summer of 1776. During this time, he undertook a number of engraving commissions, both from his former master and from his friend Thomas Angus, a Newcastle printer. He also found much more time for his favorite pastime of angling, so much so that by June 1776, he was becoming tired of it.

> Having all my life, at home, at school and during my apprenticeship lived under perpetual restraints—when I thus felt myself at liberty, I became as I suppose like a bird which had escaped from its cage. Even angling of which I was so fond, and of which I thought I never could tire, became rather dull when I found I might take as much of it as I pleased. While I was pursuing this sport, on a hot day in June, I gave it up and laying down my rod awhile, I then tied it up and walked home—having resolved to see more of the country.[6]

When he returned home, he packed his bags and embarked on a walking tour around Scotland. His Scottish travels lasted until August, but on returning home, he again became restless; in October, he set out for London to seek work. Although he was successful in London and found plenty of work, he was homesick for his native countryside. By June 1777, he had returned once more and set up in partnership with his former master, Ralph Beilby. He also took on his younger brother John as his apprentice. The partnership prospered, and there was no shortage of commissions. During the spring and summer months, however, he reserved his Mondays for angling and even contemplated writing a book about his piscatorial exploits.

> I mostly stopped when the weather suited in spring and summer, and spent the Mondays in various streams, at this my favourite and indeed only diversion. In this I was accompanied with my cheerful associate Jack Roe, with his flies and his tackle, and when we had got a number sufficient, I returned that night or the next morning with my creel filled with fish, which I divided among friends in Newcastle. With an account of these hungry stream wading ramblings and the days spent in angling, and with a description of the beautiful scenery of water sides and the renovating charms which these inspired, a volume might be filled, in imitation of the Patriarch of Anglers, Izaak Walton.[7]

On the 15 November 1785, the day on which his father died, Bewick began work on *A General History of Quadrupeds,* the first of his natural history books that was to establish his reputation and to set a new standard in book illustration. The following year, he married Isabella Elliot of Ovingham at St. John's Church, Newcastle. *The History of Quadrupeds* eventually appeared in 1790 and was an immediate success, so much so that his friend George Byles was moved to verse.

> On his excellent Engravings on Wood, in the HISTORY of QUADRUPEDS, published at Newcastle.
>
> GO on great Artist in thy pleasing way,
> And learn us Nature as the rising day:
> Thy just Creator's wond'rous beings show,
> And teach us from thy art—his boundless pow'r to know:
> Thy charming pencil claims our warm applause,
> And leads us on to study Nature's laws.[8]

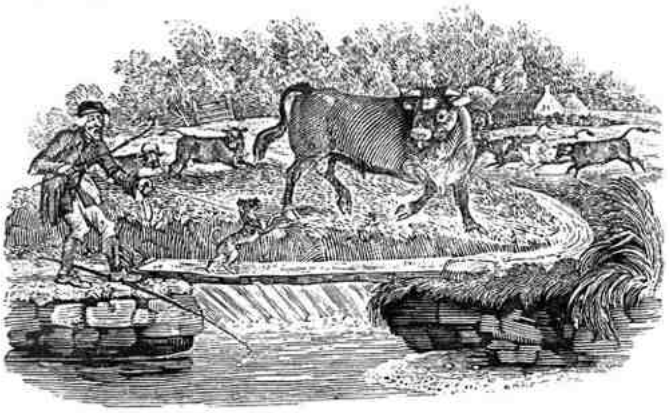
The first volume of his *History of British Birds: Land Birds,* appeared in 1797, followed by volume two, *Water Birds,* seven years later. What made Bewick's books so special was not the text, which was rather pedantic, but the marvelously detailed illustrations of animals and birds in their natural habitats. Indeed, his work was of such quality that it was not until photographic methods of reproduction were used that it was bettered. Bewick wanted his books to be of interest to young people and to lead them to an appreciation of nature.

> I illustrated them by figures delineated with all the fidelity and animation I was able to impart to mere woodcuts without colour; and as instruction is of little avail without constant cheerfulness and occasional amusement, I interspersed the more serious studies with Tailpieces of gaiety and humour.[9]

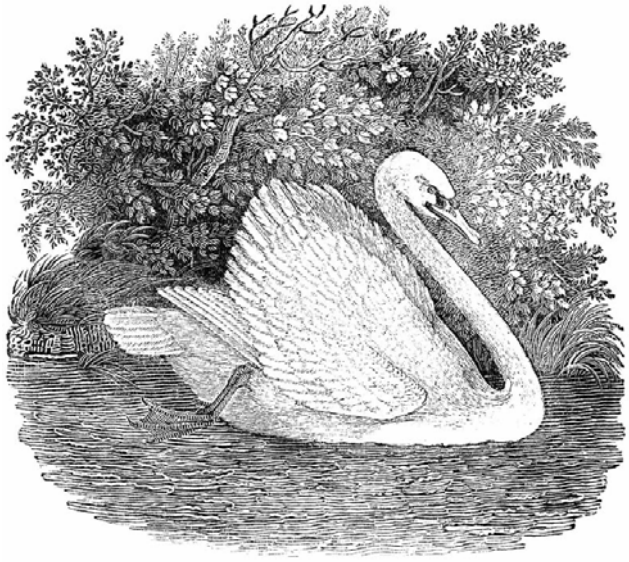
It is these small tailpieces or vignettes that are of interest to the angler because they frequently depict incidents that all anglers have experienced or to which they can relate. One of my favorites is from the tailpiece of the heron, in *Water Birds,* which depicts a bedraggled angler stoically waiting out a rainstorm under the shelter of a swaying tree. The ferocity of the downpour is emphasized by the oblique angle of the sheeting raindrops; in the distance, a castle looms through the foul weather. I can certainly remember several similar experiences in my angling career.

Another of my favorites, from *Land Birds,* depicts an aged angler struggling to control his yapping dog, which has panicked five cows and attracted the unwanted attention of a very large bull. With his walking stick, white hair, and craggy features emphasizing his years, the old man is ill-equipped to beat a hasty retreat. I, too, can remember arousing the ire of a bull on my way home from the river and having to make a quick exit over a barbed wire fence while clad in a pair of chest waders. It was not a pleasant experience!

Another common occurrence while angling is getting snagged up on a branch. In a vignette from *The Fables of Aesop* (1818), a hapless angler is depicted standing in a swollen river desperately trying to free his line, which has caught on a branch in the foreground. The whole scene emphasizes the angler's frustration, a feeling we have all experienced in similar circumstances.



Engravings from David Lank, Once-Upon-a-Tyne: The Angling Art and Philosophy of Thomas Bewick *(Montreal: The Antiquarian Press, 1977).*



From Thomas Bewick, The History of British Birds: Water Birds *(Newcastle, England: Edward Walker, 1804), 252.*

Wilfried Berns

*Bewick's swan (*Cygnus bewickii*).*

These are but a few of the many vignettes depicting angling that Bewick has recorded in almost photographic detail. Although he did not invent wood engraving, he did make several innovations that helped to revive the process in favor of copperplate engraving. Wood engravers had traditionally worked on the side or plank of the board, producing the lines of their illustrations by cutting away the background with a knife. Bewick himself used the end of the wood instead of the plank and a graver instead of a knife. These innovations resulted in a fineness of detail and blocks of immense durability that have been known to yield 900,000 prints without being worn out.

Shortly before he died on 8 November 1828, he was visited by John James Audubon, the great American naturalist and artist, whose comments provide a fitting tribute to his genius.

> My opinion of this remarkable man is, that he was purely a son of nature, to whom alone he owed nearly all that characterized him as an artist and a man. Warm in his affections, of deep feeling, and possessed of a vigorous imagination, with correct and penetrating observation, he needed little extraneous aid to make him what he became, the first engraver on wood that England has produced.[10]

Another fitting tribute appeared two years after his death. The naturalist William Yarrell recognized the beautiful Bewick swan as a separate species and named it after him.

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Bewick, *My Life,* Iain Bain, ed. (London: The Folio Society, 1981), 28. This is a new and retitled edition of *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by Himself* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne and London: Longman & Co., 1862), which was published posthumously.
2. Ibid., 28–29.
3. Ibid., 32.
4. Ibid., 34.
5. Ibid., 102.
6. Ibid., 80.
7. Ibid., 102.
8. Ibid., 126.
9. Ibid., 138.
10. Ibid., 21.

Museum News

Adriano Manocchia

AMFF Trustee Emeritus Buzz Eichel joins SIM Technical Director Claudio Tosti and artist Alberto Coppinni from Italy as they examine a museum display honoring Ernest Schwiebert.

Pesca Andata (Gone Fishing)

The museum hosted a reception for representatives of the Italian Fly Fishing Federation and the Museo Internazionale della Pesca a Mosca (International Museum of Fly Fishing in Castel di Sangro, Italy) on Thursday, May 25.

This contingent of Italian fly fishermen journeyed to the Batten Kill as part of a sister-city arrangement with Cambridge, New York, and a sister-river relationship, via Batten Kill Conservancy, between the Batten Kill and the Sangro River (known for great trout fishing). Among the guests arriving in Manchester were Lino Alviani, art director of the museum; Osvaldo Galizia, president of the Italian Fly Fishing Federation, and his son Alessandro; and artist Alberto Coppini.

The museum took this opportunity to establish a sister-museum relationship with the museum in Castel di Sangro, Italy. Executive Director Bill Bullock presented the group with our own hardback copy of *Treasury of Reels* by Jim Brown, our thirty-fifth anniversary poster, pins, patches, hats, journals, and other gifts, plus a certificate of mutual appreciation for our shared vision of preserving fly-fishing history. The Italian visitors presented so many gifts to the museum that Bill was heard saying, "This is just like Christmas!" We received two ancient Roman hooks displayed in a beautifully framed shadow box dated approximately 300 A.D. and a phenomenal sculpted fish made of metal mounted on a Plexiglas stand with its ribs showing in relief. Our visitors also gave us a certificate acknowledging our sister-museum relationship, posters, maps and guides of the Sangro River area, and a beautiful book on angling in Italy. The group took a tour of the museum with Adriano Manocchia, local artist, acting as interpreter.

Hearty refreshments were enjoyed. Many toasts were given to and received from our newfound friends, with sincere invitations to visit them in Italy. Becky Nawrath, membership director, and Sara Wilcox, art director, helped with the festivities and thoroughly enjoyed our terrific visitors. As the afternoon turned into early evening, a group took to the pond for casting demonstrations by Claudio Tosti (technical director for Scuola Italiana di Pesca a Mosca [SIM]), while the rest enjoyed the remaining refreshments at the picnic table. After many hugs and kisses, our guests departed to their respective hosts for the evening with a promise to fish the next day.

—Rebecca M. Nawrath

Father's Day Event

On Saturday, June 17, the American Museum of Fly Fishing hosted a special Father's Day event for fathers and their children and grandchildren to introduce them to the wonderful sport of fly fishing. In conjunction with Fathertime, a local nonprofit run by Suzanne and George Meyers, the museum invited local families to enjoy a morning of activity and arts and crafts, and to learn more about the excitement and history of fly fishing.

Twelve boys and girls joined their fathers and grandfathers. After a healthy breakfast at the museum, we formed two groups representing the wild trout of the Batten Kill River. The Brown Trout scurried to the pond, where they received expert casting instruction from museum members and Casting for Recovery leaders Seline Skoug and Kate Fox. Kate and Seline did a wonderful job with the kids, who swiftly began throwing tight loops on the museum's pond. Meanwhile, the Brook Trout were treated to a guided tour of the museum's *Anglers' All* exhibit with Collections Manager Yoshi Akiyama and Executive Director Bill Bullock. The Brookies then repaired to the library, where Membership Director Becky Nawrath introduced them to the delicate world of antique books. Using

Yoshi Akiyama

Alex Zabik helps his son Marcus cast a fly rod during the museum's Father's Day gathering on June 17.

Upcoming Events

October 27–28
Membership/Board Meeting
Manchester, Vermont

November
Date TBD
Hartford Dinner and Sporting Auction
Farmington, Connecticut

January 19–21, 2007
Fly-Fishing Show
Marlborough, Massachusetts

January 26–28, 2007
Fly-Fishing Show
Somerset, New Jersey

Spring 2007 (dates TBD)
New York Anglers' Club Dinner and Sporting Auction
Cleveland Dinner and Sporting Auction

For more information, contact the museum at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at amff3@amff.com.

gloves to protect the books, each child learned how to properly handle a book. The last indoor activity for the Brookies was learning more about the wild trout of the Batten Kill and then creating their own wild trout mobiles by painting wooden trout cutouts. Then, the Brookies headed out to the pond, and the Browns headed inside. At the end of the day, each child was then given their own copy of James Prosek's wonderful book, *A Good Day's Fishing.*

The museum looks forward to repeating this event in 2007. Our sincere thanks to Suzanne and George Meyers of Fathertime, Seline Skoug and Kate Fox of Casting for Recovery (www.castingforrecovery.org), and the staff at the AMFF: Becky Nawrath, Yoshi Akiyama, and Doreen Richard.

Recent Donations

Collin M. Cunningham Jr. of the Tihonet Club, Dover, Massachusetts, donated a collection of sixty-one artifacts and sixty-six books from the club, including artwork by Frank W. Benson (for a detailed list, contact the museum). This donation was made possible by the hard work of museum friend Gerald J. Karaska of Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dick Davis of Arlington, Vermont, donated original art done by Charles DeFeo titled *George Reed and Cains River Brute,* 18 x 24 oil on canvas board (1967); a color photograph of George Reed and Charles DeFeo; and a shadow-box frame of three flies tied by Hallie Galaise.

Ted Juracsik and Tibor Reel Corporation of Delray Beach, Florida, donated a Billy Pate antireverse tarpon reel, no. 8, 1975–1976, one of the first hundred Pate reels ever produced; a Billy Pate trout reel, no. 01, 1989, the very first trout production model; a Billy Pate bonefish reel, which went through a boat fire; a Black Everglades reel, the original prototype, 1994; and a Big River reel, 1998, as a prototype for the Tibor Light Tailwater CL.

John S. Mackiewicz of Albany, New York, donated a Rochester Reel Co. German Silver Fly Reel, 1920; a Muscovy Navijak fly reel, made in Czechoslovakia; an Olympia fly reel, made in India; and nine bags of magazines and catalogs.

Martin Sornborger of Barrington, Rhode Island, donated items that belonged to Harold Gibbs, including thirty-two books (contact the museum for a complete list of titles); two letters to the Orvis Co. (24 July 1946 and 4 September 1946); a brochure for the Orvis Bakelite Impregnated and Bakelite Cemented Rod; "The Tying of the Flies: Dame Juliana Berners," by John McDonald & Dwight A. Webster, in the 27 May 1957 *Sports Illustrated;* two copies of Harold Nelson Gibbs's biography; a copy of a newspaper article on Harold Gibbs; two original paintings of flies done by Austin Hogan; H. L. Leonard Rod Co. fishing tackle catalog; Darbee's fly-tying material price list vol. 49; a magazine article about Theodore Gordon's trout flies; and three letters from Carl Pickhardt to Harold Gibbs, c. 1967.

James Heckman of Manchester, Vermont, donated two Pennsylvania fishing license buttons; seven Yellow Breeches Anglers buttons; one Spring Creek project button; *A Guide to Collecting Fishing & Hunting Licenses* by Robert Miller; and Alfred A. Knopf's *American Sportsman Treasury.*

In the Library

Thanks to the following publishers (and author) for their donations of recent titles that have become part of our collection (all titles were published in 2006, unless otherwise noted):

Meadow Run Press sent us Ronald S. Swanson's *Grand Cascapedia Giants.* Stackpole Books sent us Pete Bodo's *The Trout Whisperers* and Rick Hafele's *Nymph-Fishing Rivers & Streams: A Biologist's View of Taking Trout below the Surface.* Frank Amato Publications, Inc. sent us Skip Morris's *Morris on Tying Flies.*

The Medlar Press sent us Clive Gammon's *Castaway* (2005). And J. Keith Harwood sent us a copy of his *The Hardy Book of the Salmon Fly,* which he just published with Medlar Press.

Back Issues!

Volume 6:	Numbers 2, 3, 4
Volume 7:	Number 3
Volume 8:	Number 3
Volume 9:	Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 10:	Number 2
Volume 11:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 13:	Number 3
Volume 15:	Number 2
Volume 16:	Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 17:	Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 18:	Numbers 1, 2, 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
Volume 23:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 24:	Numbers 1, 2
Volume 25:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 26:	Numbers 1, 2, 4
Volume 27:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 28:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 29:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 30:	Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 31:	Numbers 1, 2,
Volume 32:	Numbers 1, 2, 3

Back issues are $4 a copy.
To order, please contact Rebecca Nawrath at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at amff3@amff.com.

IN MEMORIAM

William Michael Barrett
1921–2006

Bill Barrett—a popular, longtime supporter of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, board member (1988–1996), former treasurer (1992–1993), and vice president (1993–1995)—died peacefully May 22 at the Lourdes-Noreen McKeen Pavilion in West Palm Beach, Florida.

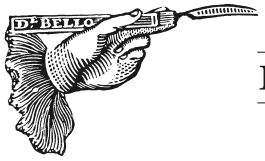
Bill was born in 1921, the son of Lois S. Barrett and Edmund E. Barrett of New Rochelle, New York. He was a graduate of Iona School and Georgetown University, class of 1946. He served in the United States Army, 10th Mountain Division, during World War II. Following his military service, he joined the Mead Corporation in Dayton, Ohio, where he spent his entire career. He retired in 1986 as vice president of the paper division.

Bill was an avid outdoor sportsman. No member of the Board of Trustees ever had a more upbeat spirit than this excellent fly fisherman. He loved golf and skiing, but fly fishing for salmon was high on his list of pleasurable activities. He was a longtime member of the Westchester Country Club (Rye, New York), Ekwanok Country Club (Manchester, Vermont), and Loxahatchee Club (Jupiter, Florida). In recent years, he enjoyed his golf with the "Old Guard" at the Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida. He was also a member of the University Club, New York.

Bill was known as one of the friendliest members of AMFF. The welcome mat was always out at his home in Dorset. His art collection was second to none, and he enjoyed in particular the drawings and paintings of George Shortmeier, whose work is still collected throughout the country. My wife, Phyllis, and I count Bill among the truest friends we ever had.

He is survived by his sisters, Lois Brady of Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, and Barbara Coughlin of Bronxville, New York. He was predeceased by his sister Mary Hendrickson of Rye, New York, and his brother Edmund E. Barrett Jr. of Grantham, New Hampshire.

Bill Herrick
Trustee Emeritus



LETTER

I'm sure the outpouring of reminiscences about "when I fished with/met Ernie Schwiebert"—Ernesto, to me—since the Spring 2006 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* hit the membership has been legion. Because I have been out of the fly-fishing loop temporarily, I only learned of his sudden passing when I ran into Bill Herrick at the supermarket several weeks ago. Most of his friends must have had the same vacant stare of disbelief that I had, and the same mind full of coulda-dones and shoulda-dones concerning proper husbandry of Ernie's friendship. There was plenty of time, and my life got in the way. Right now, the memories are bittersweet, but I'm sure they will soften eventually into fondness.

I first met Ernie at *Fly Fisherman* magazine when it was located here in Dorset and Don Zahner ran the show. I was a fly-fishing newbie whom Dick Finlay took under his wing, made me my very own 8-foot for a 6-weight, and showed me how to present the fly from the banks of the Batten Kill at Johnson's Meadow. Ernie was editor-at-large for the magazine and was due to arrive in Dorset late one summer afternoon. We were all invited to have drinks with Ernie at the Barrows House after the meeting. Ernie had just been featured in *People* magazine, and I was completely ga-ga at the thought of even being in the same town with him, no less right at the same table forcing small talk. Yikes! Of course, Ernie was charming, and my friend Suzi Dorgeloh and I strained to appear nonchalant.

As years passed, I stayed very involved with fly fishing, including two stints at the museum, and I had the pleasure of spending many grand times in Ernie's presence. So brilliant—truly a renaissance man. Once I contracted to type a manuscript for him about Iceland, and his brain held a compendium of "all things Iceland" that was truly daunting. I had typed many of his manuscripts before, and the wealth of lore and knowledge I learned from them is still one of my references. I remember when the Iceland tome arrived. Ernie wrote on legal pads—white, with no lines. And he printed each word in capital letters. It's hard to think of Ernie without a manuscript page backdrop. He would tape these pages to a wall and visually and physically manipulate them until their progression felt natural. Then, he would take them down in order and tape them together into a scroll! That's what I typed from (pardon the dangling preposition, Ernesto).

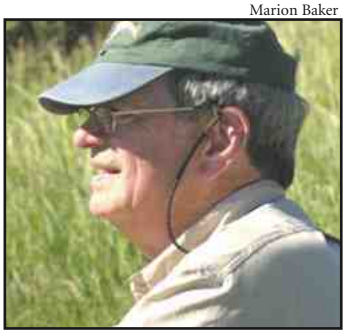
The last time I saw Ernie was this past fall at the museum. It had been a couple of years since I had seen him, and he did look a bit pale and frail. He lied to me about his health, brushing his appearance away with some "just got over . . . " fleeting ailment. I'm glad I gave him that big hug before I headed home later that evening. The hug back? Priceless.

Thank you, museum staff, for this issue of the *American Fly Fisher.* Reading it and thinking about Ernesto is my personal tribute to a great and caring friend.

Paula "Stick" Morgan
Arlington, Vermont

CONTRIBUTORS

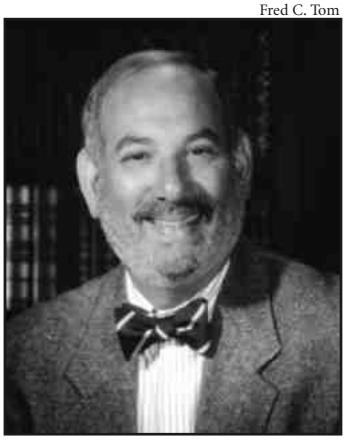
Marion Baker



Rhodes Baker is a retired attorney residing in Dallas, Texas. "My writing these days is far less profitable but much more fun," he says. "In July 1896, my grandfather and a friend pedaled their Columbia bicycles in an incredible long-distance adventure trek across West Texas, camping and fly fishing along the way. I retraced some ancestral tracks with 'Echoes from Yesteryear' . . . a vicarious odyssey, so to speak."

Previously published in *Texas Sporting Journal* and *Persimmon Hill* magazines, Baker says, "I also copyedit for some local, regional, and national magazines. It helps keep me busy between fishing trips."

Fred C. Tom



A fly fisher since 1956, Connecticut native **Robert DeMott** is Edwin and Ruth Kennedy Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Ohio University, where he has taught since 1969. His edition of *John Steinbeck's Working Days: The Journals of* The Grapes of Wrath, *1938–1941* was a *New York Times* Notable Book in 1989. *Steinbeck's Typewriter: Essays on His Art* received the Nancy Dasher Book Award from the College English Association of Ohio in 1998, and *The Weather in Athens* was a co-winner of the 2002 Ohioana Library Award in poetry. An FFF casting instructor and member of West Virginia's Blennerhassett Chapter of Trout Unlimited, DeMott has published in *Fly Fisherman, Gray's Sporting Journal, Yale Anglers' Journal, Trout,* and *American Angler.* He lives in Athens, Ohio, and is reachable at demott@ohio.edu.

Jon Ward-Allen

J. Keith Harwood teaches Latin and Greek at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, an institution founded in 1554. He is a keen angler and fly dresser and is very much interested in the history of angling. He has contributed articles to a number of magazines, and his book on the history of the float (bobber), *The Float,* was published in 2003. He has just completed a book on the history of salmon flies, *The Hardy Book of Salmon Flies,* which was published by the Medlar Press in July 2006. His article "The Ramsbottoms: Pisciculturists, Tackle Manufacturers, and Fly Dressers" appeared in the Fall 2001 issue of this journal.

Thoreau's Maine Woods and Maine Fishing

Mount Katahdin from Togue Pond.
Photo from V. R. Ludgate, "Katahdin, Sentinel of the North Woods,"
The Regional Review, *vol. 1, no. 3, September 1938.*

This July has been especially warm and unstable, with lots of rain making the Batten Kill almost unfishable. With this in mind, I decided to return to one of my favorite fishing spots, the West Branch of the Penobscot River, near Baxter State Park in northern Maine. I called my brother-in-law to see if I could persuade him to join me on a climb up Maine's tallest peak, Mount Katahdin, and do some fly fishing for one of the greatest game fish on the fly, Maine's wild *Salmo sebago.* After some negotiating, he agreed, and we aptly named our journey the 2006 Surf and Turf.

Having grown up in Bangor, this was familiar country to me, and I was excited to introduce Kit to this rugged place. He had never seen Katahdin nor fished for Maine's brook trout or landlocked salmon. Luckily, Kit had also read Henry David Thoreau's *Maine Woods* in college, so we had lots to talk about during our eight-hour ride to Caribou Lake.

I am always amazed by the myriad connections that Maine has to the history of our sport. Hiram Leonard opened his rod-making shop in Bangor, where sports from all over the United States were flocking to chase Atlantic salmon at the Bangor Salmon Pool. Bangor was the crossroads for accessing the Great North Woods, and the Penobscot River served as the greatest highway to access the sporting opportunities available to those hearty souls. Teddy Roosevelt visited Bangor on several occasions on his way north to fish and hunt the Mattawamkeag and Penobscot region.

When I returned from the trip, I dove back into my dog-eared copy of Thoreau's journal to both reconnect to his route and search for specific fishing references that might connect back to our collection. I found this passage, which I cherish:

> In the night I dreamed of trout-fishing; and, when at length I awoke, it seemed a fable that this painted fish swam there so near my couch, and rose to our hooks the last evening, and I doubted if I had not dreamed it all. So I arose before dawn to test its truth, while my companions were still sleeping. There stood Ktaadn with distinct and cloudless outline in the moonlight; and the rippling of the rapids was the only sound to break the stillness. Standing on the shore, I once more cast my line into the stream, and found the dream to be real and the fable true. The speckled trout and silvery roach, like flying-fish, sped swiftly through the moonlight air, describing bright arcs on the dark side of Ktaadn, until moonlight, now fading into daylight, brought satiety to my mind, and the minds of my companions, who had joined me.[1]

Although Kit and I did not encounter the "silvery roach" (most likely whitefish or chubs), we did catch several speckled jewels (wild Maine brook trout) and had excellent fishing for one of the few original remaining wild strains of *Salmo sebago.* I cannot help but think that the brook trout and salmon we released that evening were directly descended from the same fish Thoreau describes in his journals. How lucky we are to be connected through fishing to the words of this eloquent, adventurous philosopher.

Bill Bullock
Executive Director

[1]Henry David Thoreau, "Ktaadn" (1848), which appeared in *The Maine Woods* (1864), which is included in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), vol. 3, 91–92.

The American Museum of Fly Fishing

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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.

Join!

Membership Dues (per annum)

Associate	$40
International	$50
Family	$60
Benefactor	$100
Business	$200
Patron	$250
Sponsor	$500
Platinum	$1,000

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher.* Please send your payment to the membership director 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.

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.