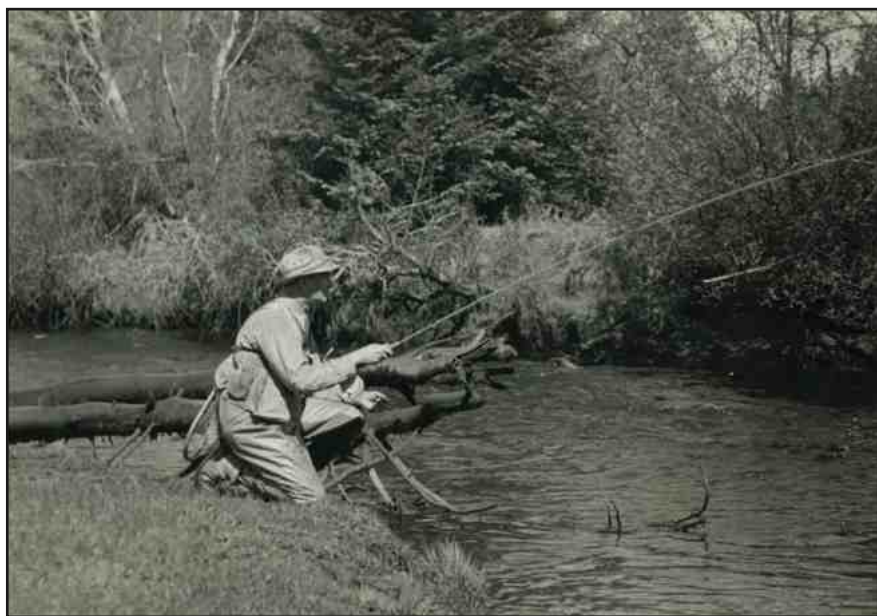


The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



WINTER 2009

VOLUME 35 NUMBER 1

Salmon, Anyone?



Salmon Fishing: Refreshment by Lionel Edwards.
From W. Shaw Sparrow, *Angling in British Art* (London:
John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, 1923), facing page 97.

WHO COULD BE UNMOVED by the romance of salmon? That anadromous life cycle. The adventure of swimming upstream. The death after spawning. It's the stuff of novels.

And then there's the catching of them—something I've never experienced, save for a few small landlocked in Maine. And the eating of them: raw, smoked, grilled (even their roe). Of course, we dare not forget the environmental and health issues surrounding them: dams, population decline, wild versus farmed. For purposes of this winter issue, we consider a bit of the history and mythology that has accumulated as a result of the existence of this magnificent fish.

Among important resources for the history of the sport of salmon fishing are private clubs and their publications. These documents and histories are the legacy of those who can afford to band together to fish and protect pristine waters. Charles B. Wood has amassed an impressive collection of mostly privately printed publications of salmon clubs, and in this issue, we present Part II of his impressive catalog (see Fall 2008, vol. 34, no. 4, for Part I). "Bibliotheca *Salmo salar*: The Literature of Salmon Clubs, Part II" starts on page 2.

In "Pacific Salmon and the Myth of Uncatchability," Paul Schullery looks into the possible origin of the once generally accepted story that Pacific salmon would not take a fly. He cites a common nineteenth-century tale of a visiting officer who makes this claim; the rank and identity of this man changes with various tellings, but the details remain basically the same. As Schullery says, "[P]erhaps the most amazing thing about the story isn't its durability or even its flexibility. The most amazing thing about it, at least from today's perspective, is its finality." Why were so many for so

long so quick to believe that no Pacific salmon would take a fly? Schullery has some ideas about that. The article begins on page 10.

Gerald Karaska has been reviewing books in the museum's collection, and in this issue, he highlights *A Celebration of Salmon Rivers*, a book featuring fifty-four rivers in eleven countries. Edited by John B. Ashton and Adrian Latimer, proceeds of the sales of this book support the North Atlantic Salmon Fund. Latimer, who lives in Paris now, stopped by the museum in September and got to visit with some of the staff (alas, not this editor, who was inconveniently out of town). Karaska's review begins on page 24.

Of course, salmon aren't the only fish with which the American Museum of Fly Fishing is concerned. In this issue's Gallery feature, Nathan George describes two unusual taxidermy mounts that can be found in our collection. Two pike, caught in Ireland by Alexandre Orłowski, were mounted head only by a rather well-regarded London taxidermy business. "The Taxidermy of Rowland Ward, Ltd." gives us a little history of the catch, of James Rowland Ward, and of how these mounts came to be part of the museum's collection. This Gallery piece can be found on page 21.

Museum staff continue to host events at a record pace. Our summer fly-fishing festival was a great success; see page 22 for details. And check out Museum News (page 26) for coverage of the annual Corbin shoot, our first art auction, and Pleissner biographer Peter Bergh's lecture on the Ogden M. Pleissner exhibit.

May this find you in the midst of your own splendid upstream adventure.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR



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The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

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ON THE COVER: *Letcher Lambuth. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*

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Bibliotheca *Salmo salar*:

The Literature of Salmon Clubs

Part II

by Charles B. Wood

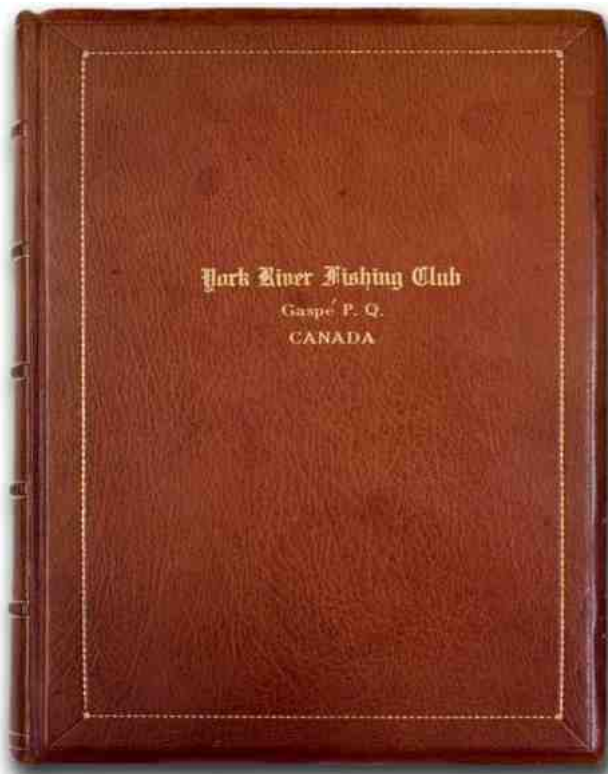
This is the second of a two-part piece (Part I having appeared in the Fall 2008 issue of this journal). Except for a couple of items, all of the titles discussed here are from my own personal collection, created over the past seventeen or so years. Part I discussed seventeen entries as follows: Ristigouche Salmon Club (eight), Bonaventure Salmon Club (one), Metapedia Salmon Club (one), Miramichi Fish and Game Club (three), and Moisie Salmon Club (four). The present second part concludes with fourteen additional entries.

As explained in the introduction to Part I, salmon clubs came into being because of the necessity of sharing expenses, as well as the sharing of camaraderie. They have been and still are mostly in the maritime provinces of Canada, in part because of the British (and hence Canadian) tradition of riparian law, whereby the ownership of flowing water can be privately owned or leased. Also, and most importantly, the rivers of the Canadian maritime provinces are the only rivers on this continent that still contain viable runs of salmon.

I have included a few examples (all of those I have been able to find) of salmon club literature from England and Scotland and one from Russia. I feel certain that there are more publications from these countries, but they are extremely elusive. As I asked in the introductory remarks to Part I, I will ask here also: if any readers know of any other salmon club publications, from any country, I would be delighted to learn of them.

YORK RIVER FISHING CLUB.

York River Fishing Club. Six quarto leather-bound volumes. Two volumes contain the manuscript or typescript records of the club; the remaining four are the original fishing logs. Of these four volumes, three are embossed in gilt on the cover: "York River Gaspé—Record of Salmon and Grilse Killed."



Despite its name, the York River Fishing Club was really a salmon club. I own the records of the club from its founding in 1922 through 1979 when it dissolved, as well as the fishing logs from the same period (actually, the logbooks begin in 1916). It was officially founded in 1922 by four gentlemen from New York City: Mortimer L. Schiff and F. S. Landstreet, bankers, and Joseph S. Auerbach and Arthur D. Weekes, lawyers. The four of them fished the river every summer from 1916 well into the 1920s and 1930s. One thing that comes through in these records and logs with crystal clarity is that it was a very small and exclusive bunch; through the 1920s, almost the only anglers to fish the river (or at least the only ones recorded in the book) were the above-mentioned four. Gradually, as the years came and went and the original members resigned or died, new members were taken in. There were eventually twelve shares, but it seems there were never more than seven or eight members (some members owning two shares). The largest fish recorded in the logbooks weighed in the low thirties, but the river record, according to George Gruenefeld (*Gruenefeld's Atlantic Salmon River Log* [Montreal: privately printed, 1988], p. 65), was a 47-pounder caught in 1873. The numbers of fish taken by the club ranged over the years from just more than 400 (1941) to just fewer than 100 (1966). In the early years, the club bought out the nets at the mouth of the river. In the later years (the 1970s), the YRFC shared the river with Gourmet Salmon Lodge, owned by Earl MacAusland, publisher of *Gourmet*. MacAusland owned the lower stretch of the river, approximately 10 miles freehold. W. M. Carter & Associates purchased the YRFC assets in 1980 and subsequently sold them to the Province of Québec. The Gourmet Salmon Lodge has recently been sold to private interests. Original records of salmon clubs such as this, especially for so long a period of time, are exceedingly rare. I obtained these from the agent who represented the club in their final transactions with the Province of Québec.

TABUSINTAC CLUB.

Levi P. Greenwood. *Tabusintac Club: What and Why Is Tabusintac Club?* N.p., n.d. Boston: Privately printed by the Atlantic Printing Co., ca. 1920.

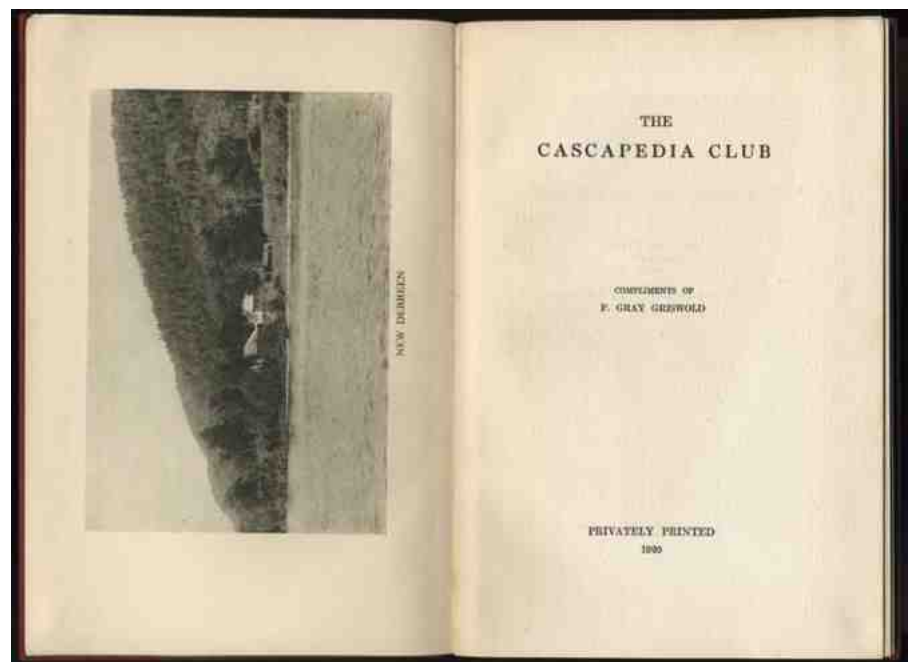
A nicely printed account of an old-time gunning and fishing club on the Tabusintac River, 40 or so miles north of Newcastle (now Miramichi City), New Brunswick. It is written in an informal and colloquial manner, not for a wide readership, but for members and perhaps guests. The name of Dwight Blaney (1865–1944) is mentioned in the text as the artist who painted the goose on the clubhouse door; he was a member, and he made the charming pen sketches that illustrate the booklet. The attribution to Levi P. Greenwood was made by Charles M. Wetzel in his *American Fishing Books* (1950), p. 148. The club still exists; I am told that if you are there at the right time, the fishing for sea-run brook trout as well as salmon can be very good.



CASCAPEDIA CLUB.

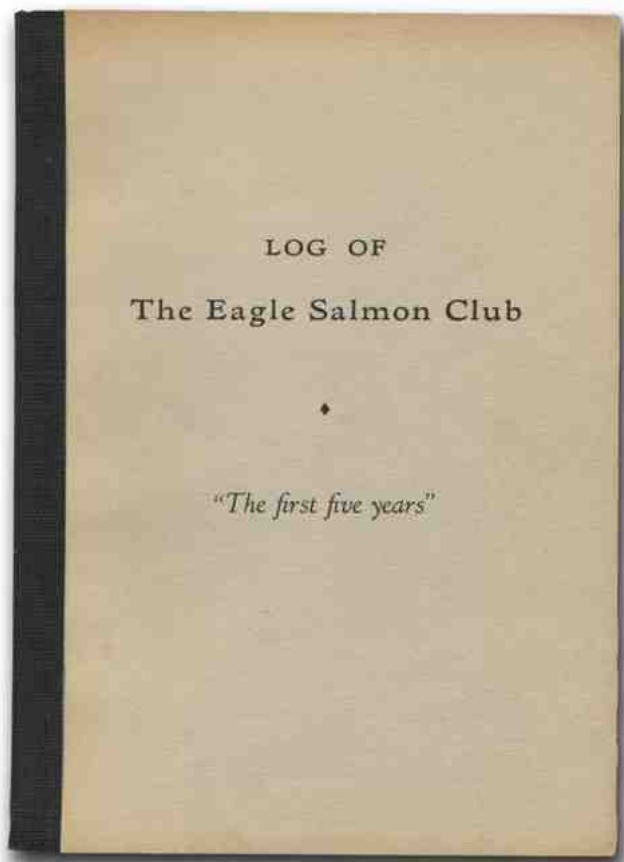
Frank Gray Griswold. *The Cascapedia Club*. Norwood, Mass.: privately printed, 1920.

First edition. This was the first of Griswold's several works on salmon fishing and the Grand Cascapedia. He explains that the governors-general of Canada had the rights to the river from 1878 to 1893 (Marquis of Lorne, 1878–1883; Lord Lansdowne, 1883–1888; Lord Stanley, 1888–1893). In 1893, the river was leased to the Cascapedia Club. They had more than 40 miles of fishing and more than fifty salmon pools. There were eight original members in 1893: John L. Cadwalader, E. W. Davis, R. G. Dun, Henry W. De Forest, H. B. Hollins, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Philip Schuyler, and J. J. Van Alan. Griswold was elected to membership in 1920. The club's portion of the river was broken into four sectors: New Derreen, Middle Camp, Tracadie, and "Above the Falls." The full-page halftone illustrations, made from very good photographs (probably taken by the Notman firm of Montreal), illustrate three camps (New Derreen, Middle Camp, and Tracadie) and three pools (Dewintons, Big Curley, and Lazy Bogan). My copy is inscribed "Henry W. De Forest from F. Gray Griswold, 1921."



The edition size is not indicated on most of Griswold's books, but it is generally thought to have been about 250 copies for each title.

The best source of information on the Cascapedia Club is Hoagy Carmichael, *The Grand Cascapedia River: A History* (2006), pp. 59–114.

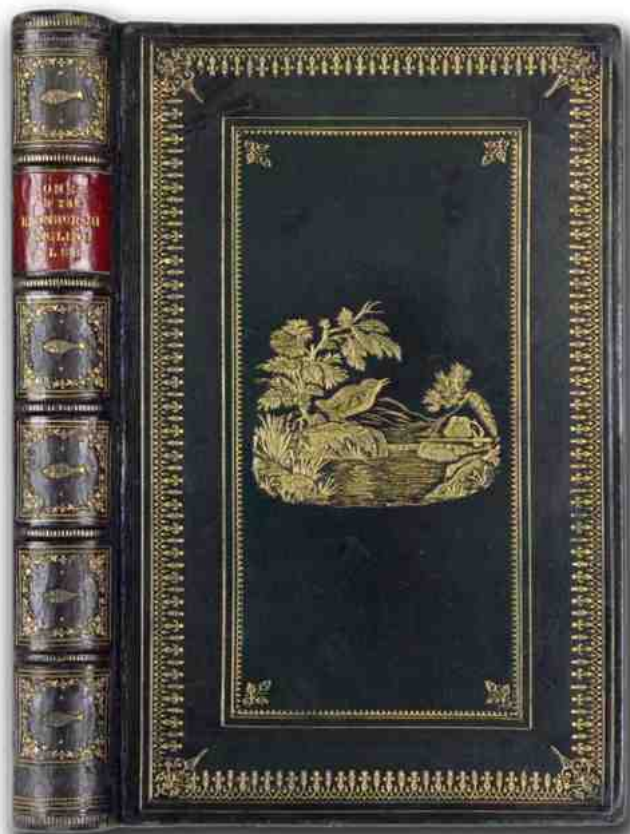


EAGLE SALMON CLUB.

Log of the Eagle Salmon Club: "The First Five Years."
N.p., n.d. St. John's, Newfoundland: privately printed,
ca. 1963.

The Eagle Salmon Club, on the Eagle River, Labrador, was founded in 1958. The origin of the club is given on the first page: "In July 1956, five fishermen (John E. Birks, Shrimp Cochran, Jim McAvity, Bill Savage and Jim Cronyn) flew into the Eagle River bringing with them all the food, bedding and supplies, needed for a stay of five days. For shelter they used an abandoned and unfurnished cabin which had been built by the Hudson's Bay Company for an official, long since retired, who combined his inspection of the Labrador posts with fishing on the Eagle River. The party borrowed a small row-boat from the Brown family and was given some assistance in moving about the river by the R.C.A.F. who had a well equipped camp beside the falls. As a result of the fishing experienced by this group, it was decided to form a club. In December 1957 the Hudson's Bay Company agreed to sell the cabin on the Eagle River and on January 13th, 1958 was held the first meeting of the Eagle Salmon Club." According to the log, the fishing was very good in those early years, with weekly totals of more than 100 fish not being unusual (though with a high proportion of grilse). It is interesting to read the names of the anglers, a few of whom are still well-known names in the salmon world, such as Lee Wulff and Ted Rogowski.

It is noted at the beginning of the *Log*: "The gratitude of the Club is hereby expressed to the linotype operators and other men who laboured so diligently over the hand-written copy."



EDINBURGH ANGLING CLUB.

Songs of the Edinburgh Angling Club. With illustrations drawn and engraved by members of the club. New edition, with additions. Edinburgh: privately printed for members of the club, 1879.

The club, which was one of salmon fishers, was founded in 1847. The *Songs* were first published in 1858; almost all of them, in one way or another, deal with salmon fishing. The titles of a few of them are "The Saumon," "The Tweed," "The Disappointed Angler," "My First Salmon," and "The Killing of a Salmon." They had their own clubhouse, called the Robin's Nest, at Fernilee, on the Tweed, and they had salmon water to go with it. The penultimate paragraph of the preface strikes a sadly contemporary note: "It may be permissible to say that, as of old, the Club has yet one trouble. The pollution of the waters mourned at the close of the first book still continues—nay, grows worse, with ever increasing aggravation. More manufacturing villages have sprung up, and, in spite of all law and good sense, pour their poisonous refuse into the fair waters of the Tweed, to the destruction of the fairness and the fish. Let us hope that before long a change may be effected, and that those who do the mischief may be taught that they have no more right to pollute the river than they have to poison the air or set fire to the houses of their neighbourhood" (p. xiii).

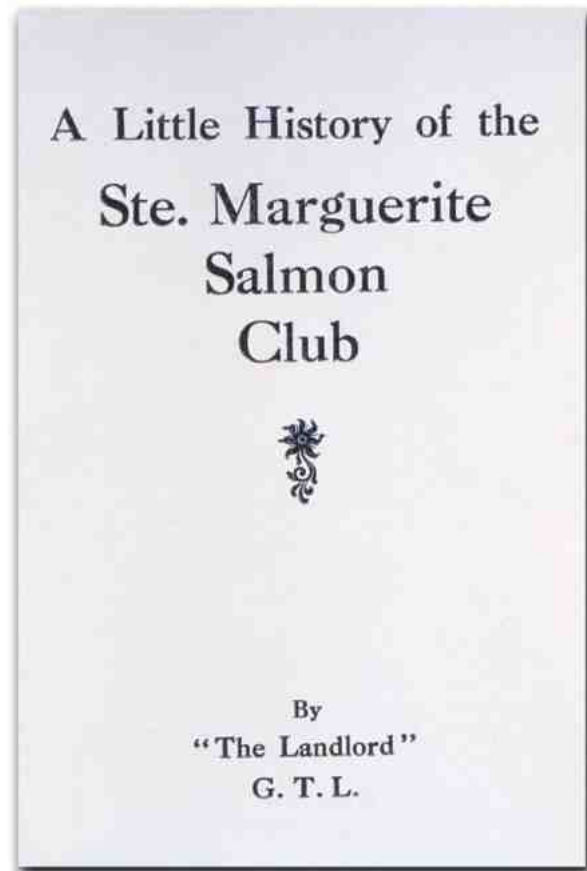
I have a copy of the first edition of 1858, but chose to illustrate the present copy (which is a later edition), as the binding, which is from the deluxe issue, is quite splendid. The gilt-blocked vignette on the cover illustrates a water ouzel (a species of bird, also called a *dipper*) and a creel resting on a rock beside a stream.

SAINTE MARGUERITE SALMON CLUB.

Gard T. Lyon ("The Landlord"). *A Little History of the St. Marguerite Salmon Club*. N.p., n.d. Oswego, N.Y.: privately printed by the Radcliffe Press, 1916.

The Sainte Marguerite is located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, and for most of its length, it parallels the Saguenay. It was well known as a salmon river from as early as the 1840s, thanks to the writer Charles Lanman's *A Tour to the River Saguenay in Lower Canada* (Philadelphia, 1848). The club was founded in 1885 by Willis Russell of Québec and Robert Powel of Philadelphia. It was incorporated with eight charter members; twelve more were soon elected, and the number of shares was then held to twenty. They were mostly Americans. One of the most important was Gardner T. Lyon of Oswego, New York. For more than thirty years, he kept the club's records, and in 1916, he privately published the present book in a very small edition. An ever-present figure on the river for more than thirty years was the artist Walter Brackett (1823–1919) of Boston, known especially for his paintings of fish. Although he was friendly with them and is mentioned repeatedly by Lyon, he was never a member of the club; instead, he held his own lease on the northeast branch. A well-known member was Dr. Henry van Dyke, author of *The Travel Diary of an Angler* (1929), in which he includes a chapter on this club. According to Lyon, the record fish of the river was killed by David Price in Batteur Pool before the club took possession of the river; it weighed 48 pounds.

As far as I can determine, the present book exists in only one copy: in the library of Harvard University. It was bequeathed to them by a former member of the club.

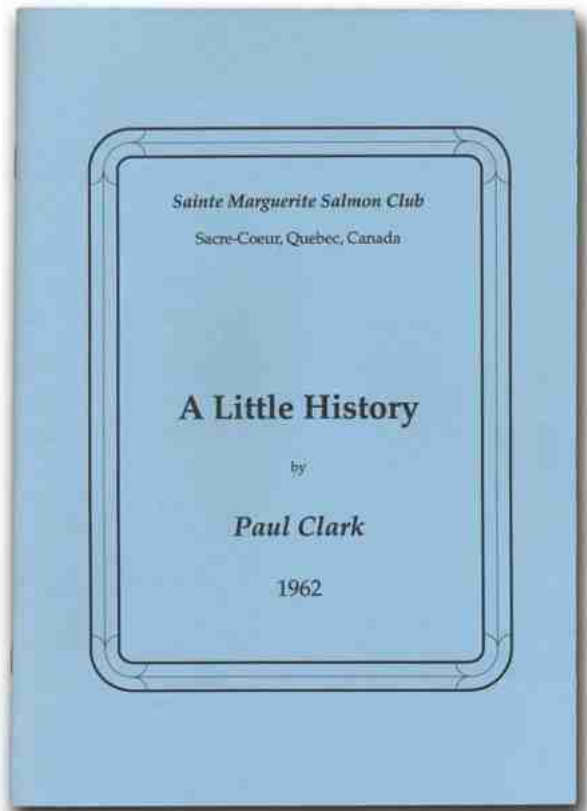


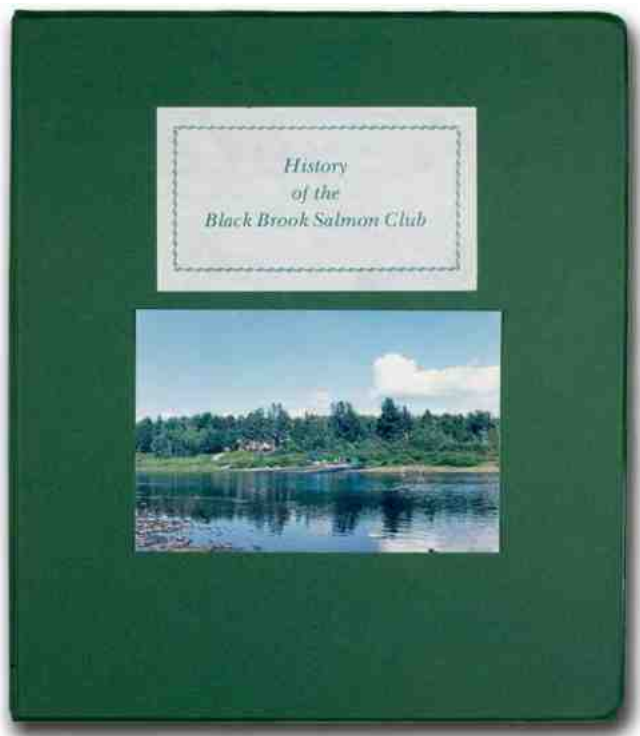
SAINTE MARGUERITE SALMON CLUB.

Paul Clark. *Sainte Marguerite Salmon Club, Sacre-Coeur, Québec, Canada: A Little History*. 1962. N.p., n.d. Toronto: privately printed, 1994.

For the earlier portions of the history, up to 1916, this work relies, and indeed quotes, heavily from Gard T. Lyon's book. But the rest was written by Paul Clark. It was completed in 1962 but lay unpublished until 1994. Clark, who was never a member of the club, was the assistant to R. E. Powell, who was president of Alcan Canada and president of the Sainte Marguerite Club from 1938 to 1973. Indeed, it was Powell who personally saved the club—which was suffering as a result of the Depression, poaching, and illegal netting—from extinction in 1938. It made a comeback and is still in existence today, but in a somewhat different form. In the 1980s, by government mandate, a local association was formed to manage the river. After a year or so, both parties worked out a reasonable relationship to share the fishing.

The whole of Clark's manuscript was edited for the present publication by Harold Corrigan of Toronto, who was president of the club from 1980 to 1994.



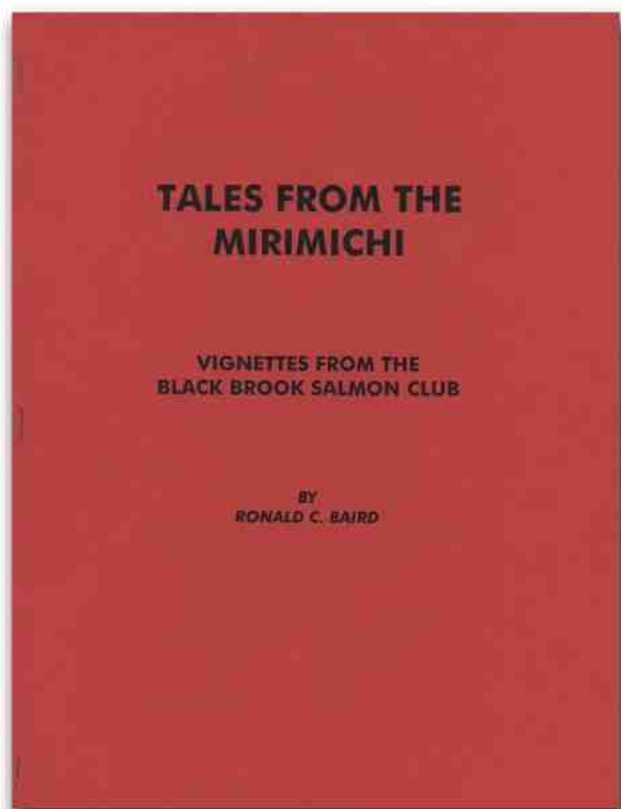


BLACK BROOK SALMON CLUB.

Donald Hight, MD; A. Theodore Lyman Jr.; John L. Newell, MD; and Joseph Sherer, MD. *History of the Black Brook Salmon Club*. N.p., n.d. Worcester, Mass.: privately printed, ca. 1989.

Located on the Main Southwest Miramichi, the Black Brook Salmon Club was incorporated in 1961. The joint product of four members, this interesting book begins with the early history of New Brunswick and carries through the nineteenth century, noting the great fire of 1825, and into the twentieth. Chapters then describe events leading to the formation of the club, events soon after the club was formed, and Six Mile Camp (a camp on the Cains River, no longer property of the club). The late Ted Lyman contributed a good chapter on Lou Butterfield, inventor of the famous Whiskers dry fly. Further chapters describe events at Six Mile, the flood of 1970, and the acquisition of the Allen Camp in 1970. Appendices list membership and officers, an outline of major events, and a list of the heaviest salmon caught between 1966 and the date of publication.

The edition was said to have been “about 40 copies.”



BLACK BROOK SALMON CLUB.

Ronald C. Baird. *Tales from the Miramichi: Vignettes from the Black Brook Salmon Club*. Silver Spring, Md.: privately printed, 2006.

A charming collection of tales, leading off with a snipe hunt—no, not the kind you remember from Cub or Boy Scouts, but a real snipe of the genus *Gallinago*, shot during a woodcock hunting expedition. The next story, “Biddies, Doodles, Twenty-six and Out,” is an account of a day of shooting ruffed grouse and woodcock, topped off by the capture and release of a 26-pound salmon. What a day! (I remember it well—I was there.) Another story is a tale of a big one that got away—one of the classic angling tropes. These are personal stories; they involve individual members or guests of the club as well as the author himself. What comes through in each and every story, as well as in the two poems, is the author’s love of the place, the people, the sport, and the camaraderie.

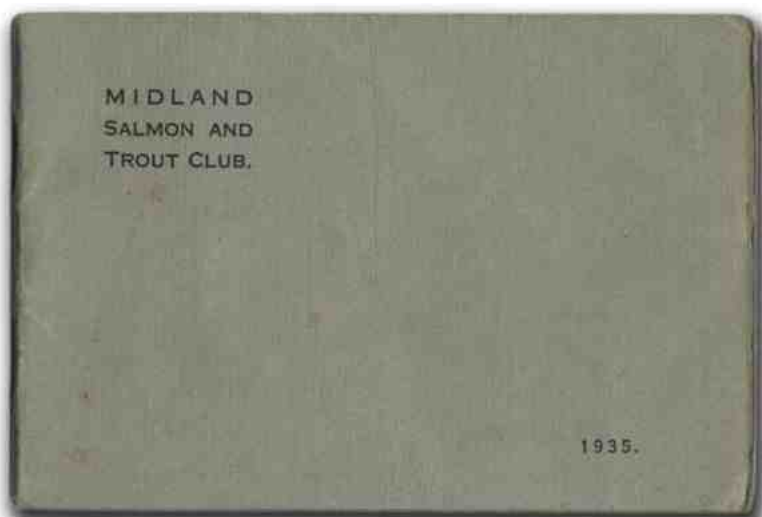
This is a typical desktop or storefront printer’s production; it is printed all the way through in boldface sans-serif caps and is held together with three staples. The author has an engaging and enjoyable style; we hope he will write some more. The edition is unstated but was clearly quite small; he did it to give away to friends.

MIDLAND SALMON AND TROUT CLUB.

Midland Salmon and Trout Club. Rule book. Birmingham, England: privately printed for the club, 1935.

Rule book of a posh Birmingham salmon and trout club. It was limited to fifty members and in 1935 was full up. This little pocket-sized booklet includes maps of the fishings and was undoubtedly meant to be taken along to the riverside. The club had water on the Severn, which was local to Birmingham; also fishings on the Dee as well as the “Blythe Fishery” and the “Onny Fishery.”

It also includes a list of the books in the club library (forty-one titles, almost all standard works) and a list of the fifty members. The president in 1934 was Neville Chamberlain. The members included a few peers, a few retired military officers of middling rank, and, interestingly, one woman (probably a widow who liked to fish). Such ephemeral booklets as this are rare and difficult to find.



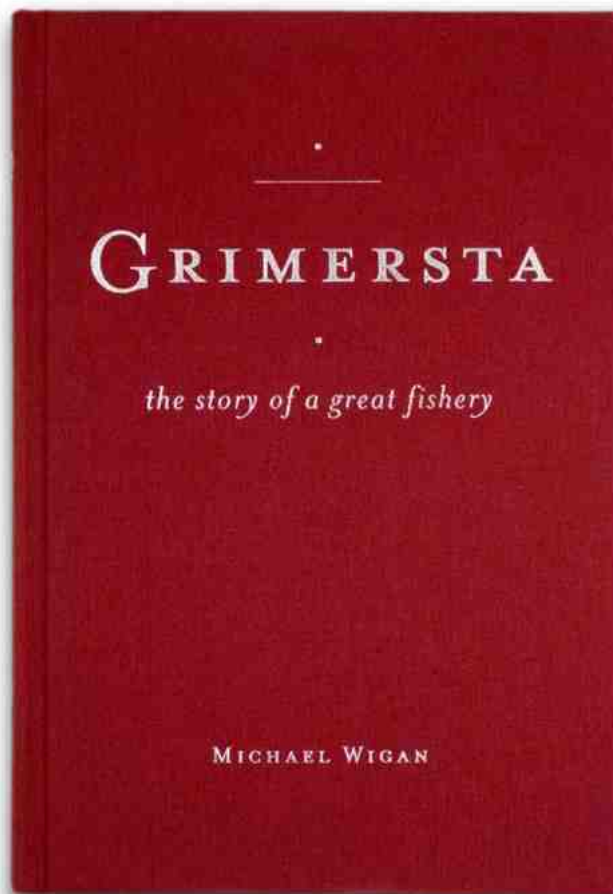
GRIMERSTA ESTATE.

Michael Wigan. *Grimersta: The Story of a Great Fishery.* N.p. Isle of Lewis, Scotland: privately printed, 2000.

A history of the Grimersta Estate, a syndicate or club of twenty-five members that controls the Grimersta salmon fishery on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The river and its system of lochs was famous even in the nineteenth century; on 28 August 1888, A. M. Naylor caught fifty-four fish, an all-time record for Britain. The syndicate was founded in 1924 with thirteen members; at the time of publication (2000), there were twenty-five members, the price of a share being fifty thousand pounds. The members are an exclusive bunch, successful men of business, leavened by what one member refers to as “clapped-out peers.” One of the Grimersta regulars was England’s poet laureate and angler extraordinaire, the late Ted Hughes.

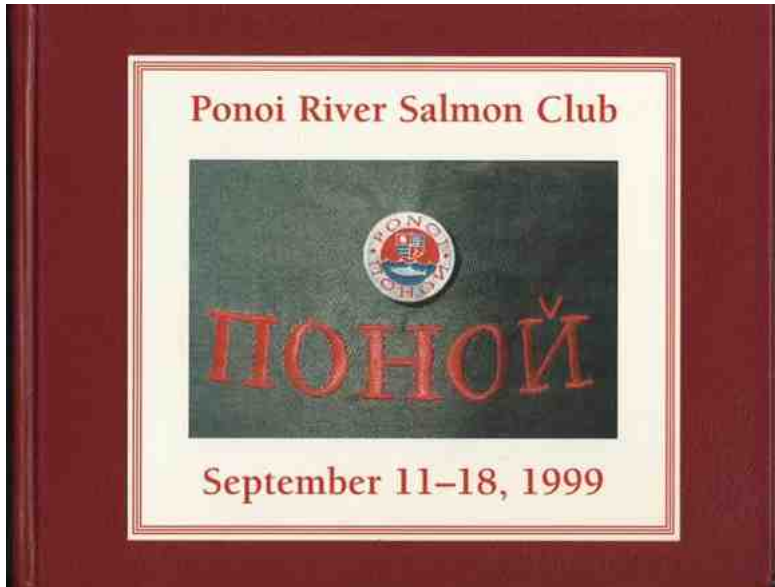
This is a particularly good book. It was written on commission by a professional writer, an angler and an expert on all that pertains to the Atlantic salmon. Wigan was given access to all the club minutes and records, interviewed the club members and the staff, and fished the Grimersta himself (though only for one week). His comments on the personalities, past and present, of both members and staff, are shrewd, amusing, and insightful.

In his discussion of his sources, Wigan makes one remark that is especially pertinent to our subject: “One other feature of the minutes over many years has been comment on the progress of the literary history of the river; it was always progressing but never arriving. This thread, at any rate, is one that will now be broken.” The edition was 650 copies.



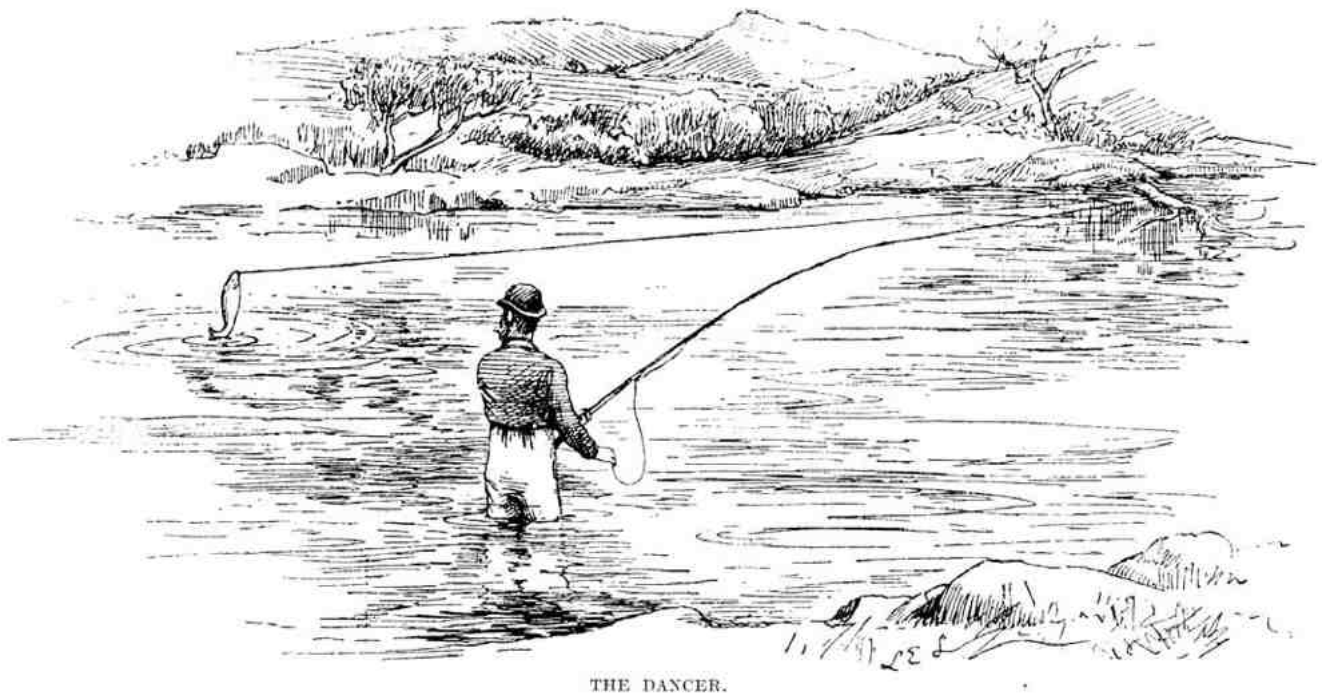
PONOI RIVER SALMON CLUB.

W. Thorpe McKenzie. *Ponoi River Salmon Club: September 11–18, 1999*. N.p. Hawthorne, N.Y.: privately printed, 1999.



This is a beautiful example of a type of limited-edition book that the new world of digital photography has made possible. Aside from the cover title (illustrated) and the final leaf—which is a list of the twelve members of the club—there is no text. The book consists of twenty-nine leaves of color reproductions of very good photographs taken by McKenzie. They are views of the river, the anglers, the helicopter, the camps, and the guides. It is a well-conceived book: the pictures are nicely sequenced and it has an odd quality of serenity that is due, perhaps, to the fact that it has no text.

One of the guides in the photos was Ian Neale, a Scotsman, who guided me in Tierra del Fuego and who wrote a fishing book himself, *Shadows on the Stream* (2000), which includes a good section on the Ponoi. In regard to the present book, McKenzie wrote me: “I did not make these to be ‘published’ or collected, rather they are just personal snapshot records of two fabulous, remote places where I have spent many wonderful hours. I never wanted to forget the views, flora, etc. from these valleys. I hope you enjoy them too.”



From The Salmon Fly by Geo. M. Kelson (London: Wyman and Sons Limited, 1895), 397.

TOBIQUE SALMON CLUB.

Anonymous. *History of the Tobique Salmon Club*. N.p., n.d. (ca. 1972–1973). Unpublished typescript.

A well-written and completely documented thirty-page history of the Tobique Salmon Club from its founding in 1890 to the final legal settlement with the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission on 17 October 1966. The general story of this club is well known. Its fishing was ruined by a downstream dam, at Beechwood (built 1954–1957), on the St. John River, into which the Tobique flows. After a prolonged legal struggle with both the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission and the Province of New Brunswick, the matter was finally settled in the club's favor, and they were awarded \$400,000 in damages. The club moved to Québec and is still operating today on a lower section of the Matapédia.

The *History* is not really anonymous, of course, but the name of the author is not given. He must have been a member of the club, as the essay is fully sourced, based primarily on correspondence to which only a member would have had access. It is a fascinating, if somewhat depressing, story.

TOBIQUE SALMON CLUB.

A group of four unpublished typescripts: (1) Burton S. Moore, "The Tobique, Then and Now" (February 1940); the rest of the three are separate brief essays under the overall heading "Some Memories of the Tobique," which include (2) William L. R. Emmet, "The Tobique Salmon Club" (1939), (3) Frank C. Partridge, "The Early Tobique" (November 1939), and (4) Mortimer R. Proctor, "The Tobique—Thirty-five Years Ago" (November 1939).

All together, a really fascinating read. Burton Moore was a New Brunswicker (born 1883) and was manager of the Tobique Salmon Club from 1928 until 1960; in addition, he was manager and part owner of Nictau Fish and Game Club. He was a good writer, and his account is extremely informative. The other three pieces were written by members of the club. Taken together, these various essays, including the club history above, give a very good picture of the glory days of the TSC, as well as its gradual decline. They are equally good for the social history of the club, naming some of the more prominent members (relatively wealthy American businessmen, initially from the Philadelphia area, later mainly from the states of New York and Connecticut). What is most interesting is to read all the essays in one sitting; you get different tellings of the same events and are thus able to form good pictures in your mind's eye.

I know of only one set of these documents in a library: that of the Anglers' Club of New York.

History of the Tobique Salmon Club

1. Developments from 1890 to 1929

The Tobique Salmon Club's membership was comprised mainly, but not entirely, of relatively wealthy American businessmen, formerly from the Philadelphia area, but later mainly from the states of New York and Connecticut. The purpose of the Club was to provide a salmon fishing vacation retreat for its members. By-laws governed the number of members and guests that could be at the camp at any one time, fishing hours during the day, and so on. The Club was run in a formal, businesslike manner. The members, presumably motivated by reasons of self interest, were keenly interested in preserving the salmon fisheries of the Tobique and, as well as taking direct measures on the Tobique River to preserve the run, lobbied both at Fredericton and Ottawa to obtain results favourable to maintaining the run, and consequently their fishing. It is probably fair to state that there was some resentment by local residents of the Club's exclusive fishing rights but this resentment was not carried too far since many residents of the valley depended upon the Club for part or all of their earnings. Local resentment apparently decreased as time went on and the number of individuals and clubs controlling fishing rights increased. Although the Tobique Salmon Club was not the only fishing club on the River, it was certainly the most important, at least in terms of the amount of river it controlled and the number of people it employed.

The Club had several arrangements by which it controlled the fishing rights of the River and some of its tributaries. At the time the Club was organized, the New Brunswick Railroad Company owned the largest portion of the land, and hence the riparian rights, in the Tobique River Basin. The Company rented the fishing rights to the Club for \$1.00 per year which also included a parcel of land at "The Works" (the confluence of the Campbell and Little Tobique Branches). The Crown owned

THE TOBIQUE, THEN AND NOW

By

Burton S. Moore

Pacific Salmon and the Myth of Uncatchability

by Paul Schullery

Russell Lee



*The Sacramento River, June 1942.
Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information
Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, LC-USF34-072918-E.*

IN FEBRUARY 1850, a wealthy British outdoorsman visiting Sacramento, California, sent a long letter to *Bell's Life in London* about his adventures hunting and fishing in the Sacramento Valley. On 22 June 1850, the *Spirit of the Times*, the leading American sporting periodical of the day, reprinted the story, "Salmon Fishing and Deer Stalking in California" by "An English Sportsman." Among many other experiences, the writer told of successfully fishing for salmon in the Sacramento River. Fishing with "Blacker's London trolling rod, with a stout reel and line," and using an unspecified "bait," he had made only a few casts from his hired yacht in midstream when he hooked a fish.

I immediately jumped into a small boat and called the cockney to join me and pull for his life and we started in pursuit. After going down stream some 200 or 300 yards, he dashed up again with lightning speed, and after about an hour's hard fighting, I landed him safely.

He was in the finest condition, fresh run and weighed 36 lb. On the same day, I killed five more, weighing respectively 15 lb., 23 lb., 32 lb., and 43 lb.¹

Only a couple of sentences later, still talking about what he regarded as the same type of fish, he said, "High up the river I have caught seven and eight a day with a fly."²

It is in brief and all-too-vague reports like this one that we find the written origins of fly fishing for Pacific salmon. The 1850 writer described the capture, using bait, of several fish so large they were certainly chinook salmon—the largest Pacific species—then immediately referred to taking other salmon on the fly farther upstream. Can we assume that these others were also the same species? Perhaps not; at this time neither anglers nor naturalists were especially clear on who was who among the West Coast's migratory salmonids. Elsewhere in his article, the English Sportsman did refer to "salmon

trout weighing 5 lb. to 20 lb.," so he was at least aware of one distinction among the local salmonids.³ As the century wore on and more and more anglers tried to catch these fish, *salmon trout* was one of the terms sometimes applied to steelhead, as distinct from the five species of Pacific salmon. But even then, the term was used loosely.

So what did this man catch on flies? Was he really successful in taking the big chinooks on flies, or did he just not care enough or know enough to make a distinction between species? Without more information, we can't know for sure. But he does represent a very early round in a chronic, repeating so-called milestone in western angling history: the "discovery," generation after generation, that some of these "salmon" would take flies.

What makes this episode and the ones that followed it all the more curious is that for more than a century, starting at this same time, the reigning centerpiece of the folklore of Pacific salmon fly fish-

ing was a charming but poorly documented story, retold countless times in countless forms, which established the common knowledge among sportsmen that these fish simply would not take a fly.

BIRTH OF THE MYTH

The earliest published version of the story that I have seen appeared in an article penned by “Chinook” and titled “The ‘Genus Salmo’ and other fish taken in the Rivers of the Pacific,” also in the *Spirit of the Times*, on 17 July 1852:

After reaching fresh water, the salmon of the Columbia no longer feeds, as is the case with the European salmon, and no persuasion will ever persuade it to rise to the fly, a circumstance perhaps, we are partially indebted to the peaceful settlement of the boundary question; for it is said that the officers of the British Man-of-War *Modesto*, which was sent at about that time to look around, became highly disgusted, and that Capt. Gordon wrote home to Lord Aberdeen that the d---d country wasn't worth having, for the salmon would not bite.⁴

Another early version of the story appeared in 1886, in Captain L. A. Beardslee's chapter, “The Salmon and Trout of Alaska,” in the book *Fishing with the Fly*, edited by Charles Orvis and A. Nelson Cheney. Beardslee told the story like this:

When the news that the Yankees had purchased Alaska, and thus become owners of the land north as well as south of British Columbia, was communicated to the Scotch Admiral of the English squadron at Victoria, Vancouver's Island, he ejaculated, “Dom the country! Let'em have it; the blausted saumon won't rise to a floi.”⁵

This tale, with its hilarious dismissal of a vast, resource-rich portion of the North American continent as worthless because its salmon didn't measure up to a British gentleman's sporting whims, has flourished ever since. With each retelling, the rank and identity of the speaker change, the land being disregarded moves around (in the two examples I've given, Chinook was talking about the U.S.–Canada boundary, and Beardslee was talking about the whole land from British Columbia to Alaska), and the wording of the quotation seems never to be precisely repeated from one telling to the next.

But perhaps the most amazing thing about the story isn't its durability or even its flexibility. The most amazing thing about it, at least from today's perspective, is its finality.⁶ Ever since that time, opin-

ionated people beyond counting have been absolutely and irrevocably convinced that no Pacific salmon—ever, anywhere—would take a fly. Such a confident pronouncement seems absurd to us.

For just one modern example of why it seems absurd, consider me. Although I've cast over them on a number of West Coast streams, my serious experience fly fishing for the Pacific salmon with flies is limited to a few days in a few Alaskan locations. But even in that brief and rankest of amateur experiences with these fish, I have caught all three species that I have fished for: sock-eye, chum, and pinks.⁷ The pinks were such aggressive feeders that I could hardly have avoided catching them; they attacked the fly like bass chasing fluorescent frogs. How could an inveterate tackle-fumbler like me catch these fish so readily when very smart, very experienced nineteenth-century anglers believed that catching them wasn't even possible for the most expert anglers?

Well, there were in fact some pretty powerful reasons. Anglers could believe such a thing for so long partly because there is just something in human nature that is susceptible to grand myths and willfully simplistic pronouncements. We outdoorsmen, and most other people interested in natural history, have always had a weakness for attractive yet fundamentally silly nature lore: pickerel are spontaneously generated by pickerel weed; bears can't run downhill; eels grow from dewdrops; cats always land on their feet; lightning never strikes twice. We've got a million of them, and at the same time that we poke fun at the old ones that we've abandoned, we're busy making new ones that are just as bad.

I've already alluded to another reason why our angling forefathers struggled with the catchability question. Like so much wildlife in the 1800s, many fish had several informal names. Local tradition quickly established quirky neighborhood names for the fish in nearby rivers. A “spring” salmon might be a species or it might just be a seasonal label applied to whatever showed up then. A “salmon trout” might be a steelhead, or a resident rainbow, or a sea-run cutthroat,



Clinton Hart Merriam, 1901.
Ruthven Deane Collection, Library of
Congress, LC-USZ62-98680.

a Dolly Varden, or something else.⁸ Or not. Who knew? Hardly anybody. Who cared? Almost nobody. This meant that any report of anyone catching anything was muddled by uncertainty.

It's not like the experts and professional naturalists were a lot of help with this problem. The later nineteenth century saw a great surge in taxonomical trophy hunting, as scientists divided well-known animal species into finer and finer subdivisions. Each new species required a name, and a name was an opportunity to provide either one's self or one's colleagues with nomenclatural immortality.

I date the symbolic peak of this tremendously involved exercise in creating new species to 1918 and one of my favorite stories in the history of wildlife biology. In that year, Clinton Hart Merriam, one of the foremost zoologists in America, published a monograph in which he divided the grizzly bears of North America into eighty-six species—an exercise in fantasy biology that has since collapsed in on itself so totally that we now recognize only two probably distinct species.⁹

In the great explorations and scientific surveys of the American West, each new species “discovery” was promptly published. Fish species names proliferated

FOREST AND STREAM

and were laid on top of the welter of common names. Getting any of it right was usually dependent on the uneven or nonexistent reading habits of the local sportsmen. Looking back on all this confusion today and trying to piece together an accurate account of which fishermen were actually catching which fish requires us to rely on the cooler heads who sometimes intervened in those days and on our own best guesses.

Many of us have watched this same confusion play itself out on modern streams. In Yellowstone National Park, I've watched anglers land cutthroat trout, take one look at their vaguely brownish-yellowish flanks, and declare them "brown trout." Another sad fact we must admit about ourselves is that many of us really don't know much about the fish we catch, and we know even less about the fish we catch when we're on vacation. A lot of cutthroat trout are kind of brown; that's good enough for the casual angler, who doesn't even know why anyone would consider such species distinctions worth bothering with.

REDISCOVERIES

Forest and Stream is now regarded by sporting historians as the granddaddy of modern outdoor magazines. Although preceded by several important periodicals, such as *Spirit of the Times*, quoted earlier, *Forest and Stream* was for general purposes the most authoritative outdoor periodical of its century. Much like the *New York Times* is the "newspaper of record" for American politics and culture today, *Forest and Stream* was, almost from the time of its launching in 1873, the foremost reporter and commentator for the society of American outdoorsmen. Any important development—whether in game management, outdoor publishing, firearms

manufacture, tackle technology, wildlife conservation, natural history, or any other related subject—was fully and competently reported, in good part because for many years of its long life, *Forest and Stream* was under the brilliant editorship of George Bird Grinnell. Now sadly forgotten by several generations of sportsmen, Grinnell was one of the

to his vast network of information sources and his many connections with the scientific community, newsworthy developments having anything to do with the sporting scene routinely debated in *Forest and Stream's* pages.

And, ironically, considering that *Forest and Stream* was published on the opposite coast, it was most often in its pages that we can now watch the periodic rediscovery and flourishing of fly fishing for Pacific salmon.

Almost as soon as *Forest and Stream* appeared, it featured the occasional flurry of articles and letters from the West Coast about salmon fishing. Writers in the 1870s proclaimed their success at catching Pacific salmon with flies; other writers questioned if they were catching salmon or steelhead, which were generally known to take flies. But in the 5 August 1875 issue of *Forest and Stream*, the editor made the following firm statement:

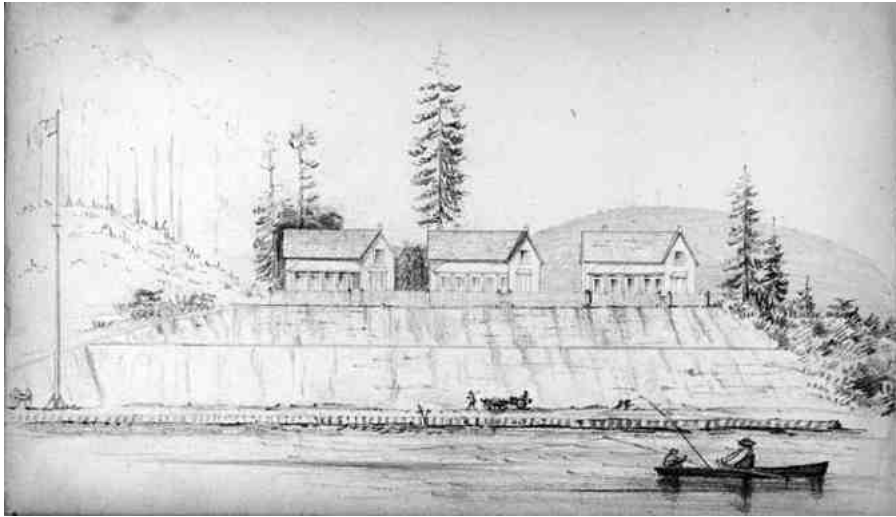
It used to be denied that the salmon of the Pacific would take a fly, but the ignorance on this subject arose principally from the fact that strangers did not try them at the proper seasons and places, while the resident anglers, like our friend "Podgers," et al., who were in the habit of taking them with flies, were altogether reticent on the subject. The files of *Forest and Stream* give all the information necessary to an intelligent understanding of the matter, describing fly-fishing from Puget's Sound to San Francisco.¹¹

This statement was followed with an extended reprinting of a letter from Livingston Stone, a nationally prominent fisheries authority and member of the U.S. Fish Commission. Stone described witnessing an acquaintance catch a 20¼-pound salmon from California's McCloud River, "just in front of our house."¹²



George Bird Grinnell and his wife Elizabeth on Grinnell Glacier in Glacier National Park, Montana, 14 March 1925. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-93186.

giants in the American sporting tradition. A leading naturalist and anthropologist, a widely traveled sportsman, cofounder with Theodore Roosevelt of the Boone and Crockett Club, author of long list of popular and authoritative books, and celebrated father of Glacier National Park, Grinnell did more than almost anyone else to shape the sporting community we belong to today.¹⁰ Thanks



Cleveland Rockwell's sketch of officers fishing in front of Fort Canby.
Oregon Historical Society #bb003565.

Whether even Stone made a distinction between salmon and steelhead at that date is not clear from his letter, but those who write about these episodes today, looking back with our greater knowledge of the species involved, tend to discount almost all such reports. I don't. I'm still skeptical about many of the early accounts and assume most of them involved steelhead, but let's be fair about this. Stone was an acknowledged fisheries expert, and among the many reports coming in from a variety of California rivers about salmon taking flies, his story must rank high on any credibility scale.¹³

I have no choice but to assume that some nonsteelhead were being taken by at least some of these fishermen in the 1870s, because we now know that given the right circumstances, all five species of Pacific salmon do take flies, and because the odds seem overwhelming that some of these anglers just had to luck into the right circumstances now and then.

That said, I also enjoy the perspective offered by Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson, and Pat Trotter in their pioneering book *Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon* (1985). Discussing the early years of fly fishing for steelhead on California's Eel River, starting in 1890 when San Francisco fly tier John Benn made the river his home, Ferguson, Johnson, and Trotter described how these early steelheaders probably were alerted to fly fishing for the salmon that ran in the same river.

Fly fishermen, still under the influence of eastern and European techniques, usually fished steelhead with small, brightly dressed wet flies. It must have been a sight to behold when a gentleman angler would suddenly find himself contending with a 40-pound chinook salmon that had grabbed his No. 10 Professor and chugged off across the

pool. Most of these encounters ended with the salmon parting the gut leader with a casual shake of the head.¹⁴

There's no reason to imagine that similar encounters didn't occasionally happen wherever enough people cast enough flies into salmon rivers.

SALT

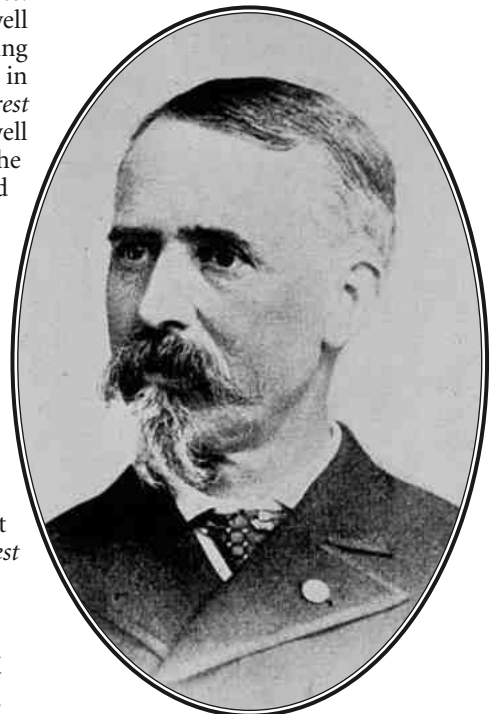
But the fly fishers of the 1870s did leave us some firmer evidence of their success, and it was in a direction that would dominate much of West Coast fly fishing for salmon for several decades: salt water. In 1876, Cleveland Rockwell was a member of a survey party working at the mouth of the Columbia River, in Baker's Bay. In a story published in *Forest and Stream* on 30 October 1879, Rockwell described rowing his dingy from the survey ship to a rocky shoreline. He had an unfamiliar "two-handed English salmon rod of ash with lancewood tips, one hundred yards of braided line, and the best flies, all furnished me by a valued friend."¹⁵

Like many other narrators of sporting adventures, Rockwell claimed primacy, stating that "no salmon had ever been known before to take a fly on the Columbia river."¹⁶ He soon hooked a fish and gave us a breathless account of the slapstick struggle that ensued (I quote from the original *Forest and Stream* article).

What a thrill of excitement accompanied striking the hook into the solid tongue of that first salmon! and how my heart rushed up into my throat as the alarmed fish made his first frantic rush for liberty! There was an old log or spar with a ring-bolt in the end, projecting above the water and its bottom

fast in the mud, and this spar was not two rods from the rocky bluff. With what agony of apprehension I saw my salmon making for the spar with the line singing through the water! Turn him I could not, though the good rod was nearly bent double, and holding the rod with one hand I seized an oar with the other and tried to scull the boat near enough to pass the rod over the spar as the fish went behind it. Alas! the salmon was too fast for me, and in a desperate moment as the salmon was drawing my tip around the spar, I cast the whole rod as far as I could throw it the other side of the spar, where it sank in [word unclear] fathoms of water. I stood for a moment in despair at what I had done; then took up the oars and pulled for the schooner. After getting my sailing master in the boat and a long pike pole, to which I lashed my salmon gaff, we pulled off again to the scene of disaster, and almost immediately succeeded in fishing up the rod. The line had been run out clear to the barrel of the reel. Of course I had lost my first salmon and probably half my line, and slowly and in sorrow I reeled it in, when whizz! out flew the handle from my fingers, and away went my salmon fresh for a second heat.

The salmon and I fought it out on "that line" all around [sic] the harbor, and half the military post was down on the shore to see the fun, and when finally I thrust the gaff into his shining belly and lifted him into the boat, a cheer went up from the shore, which with the salmon thrashing around in the boat made me feel quite proud over the adventure. He weighed twenty-five pounds.¹⁷



Cleveland Rockwell, ca 1885.
NOAA People Collection, image ID theb3570. Oregon Historical Society.



*Four of Letcher Lambuth's coho flies, tied with polar bear hair.
From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*

If Rockwell's friend who loaned him the tackle was there watching that day, we can only imagine what he said when he saw Rockwell pitch his expensive English salmon rod and reel into the ocean.

But Rockwell's bumbling triumph presaged several generations of gradually more sophisticated saltwater fly-fishing exploits up and down the West Coast. By 1919, when A. Bryan Williams published his book *Rod & Creel in British Columbia*, he could include a brief, separate chapter devoted entirely to "Fly Fishing for Salmon." It was almost entirely about cohoes (Williams said "spring salmon," or chinooks, were "occasionally" caught as well), which, by then, were well known for taking flies.¹⁸ He said that trolling flies had long been the favored method, but that casting flies to the best locations had become more popular.

The best places, however, to fish for salmon in salt water are at the mouths of any small creeks up which they go to spawn. If there has been a dry spell the cohoes and some springs congregate there waiting for enough water to go up. Not only can you catch salmon but an occasional big trout can be caught. The end of September and beginning of October is the time to try such places.

As soon as there has been a good freshet most of the fish go up the streams and you can then get them in fresh water.¹⁹

This last observation is a tantalizing one that we will return to later. Other writers in the early 1900s echoed these sentiments. Anglers were working their way to a better understanding of how and—perhaps more important—where and when to fly fish for saltwater salmon.

It seems generally agreed that it was in the 1930s that this sport reached a kind of maturity. In those years, Seattle angler Letcher Lambuth, one of the most innovative West Coast fly fishers of the time, began studying various species of ocean baitfish in an aquarium and developed a series of streamers to match them. The American Museum of Fly Fishing has a number of Lambuth's polar-bear hair coho streamers, and it is easy to see why their long translucent wings were a big improvement over traditional wings of feather or bucktail. Some of Lambuth's reminiscences of his fishing in the 1920s and 1930s were finally published in 1975.

At the height of the run the fish will frequently be jumping in every direction

as far as the eye can discern the splash- es. Frequently the jumping fish will not take the fly. We explore for those disposed to feed by casting to the side from the slowly moving boat, allowing the line to swing into the wake and then stripping in. Sometimes the fly is taken when thus trolling. More often, as the fly is stripped in, the bow wave of the fish suddenly appears near the fly and the ensuing few seconds as the angler manipulates the fly and the fish makes up his mind to strike are moments of exciting suspense. Suddenly there is a boil or splash, a surge as the hook is set, and the reel whines.²⁰

The periodic rise and fall of interest in this fishing since the 1930s has been well described in the Ferguson/Johnson/Trotter book. In fact, that book itself is one of the most important steps in the popularization of saltwater fly fishing for salmon. Its authors not only documented the many developments in recent fly fishing for salmon in salt water, they advanced the sport with, among many other things, a concise photographic field guide to the relevant natural ocean food items of salmon, complemented by a huge selection of corresponding fly patterns. Saltwater fly fishing for salmon is now



widespread, as fly fishers have thoroughly explored many of the coastal travel routes of the migrating fish and continue to refine both techniques and tackle.

But in our greater story of the Pacific-salmon-won't-rise myth, all of this exciting saltwater fly fishing is little more than an aside. I suspect that Captain Gordon and his contemporaries, though they might have been curious about the exploits of Rockwell, Lambuth, and many other saltwater fly fishers, would not have been moved by them to reconsider their position on the worthlessness of Pacific salmon. Catching salmon in the ocean wasn't the point for those British sports. In the most strict, traditional sporting terms, catching them in salt water was irrelevant. It didn't really count.

If we are seeking to track the myth that salmon won't "rise to a floy," we are necessarily concerned with the traditional old world and eastern American definition of a rise. When those proper gents spoke of salmon rising to a fly, they meant in rivers. Even more important, they meant "rising" the way Atlantic salmon rose—up through some considerable distance in the water column, to the kinds of flies, cast in the kinds of ways, that the traditional Atlantic salmon anglers had for so long deemed "right."

Pacific salmon were, indeed, very often unwilling to do any such thing, and before considering how Americans responded to that problem, we require a digression into theoretical natural history to consider some of the complications of comparing Atlantic salmon and Pacific salmon as sportfish.

LIFE STORIES

A variety of natural history factors have been invoked to explain why, under so many circumstances, Atlantic salmon and steelhead are more willing to move considerable distances to take a fly than are the Pacific salmons. These factors provide reasonable conjecture rather than demonstrable conclusion, but that's the point, isn't it? This is all a guessing game.

All of the fish mentioned—Atlantic salmon, steelhead, Pacific salmon—stop feeding when they leave the ocean and enter rivers on their spawning migrations. Like every other "rule" in nature, this one isn't perfect. I have friends who

have caught steelhead with great numbers of freshly eaten insects in their stomachs. But it is generally true that the metabolic processes associated with the consumption and digestion of food cease when these fish enter fresh water. This complete cessation of feeding was well known even in the early days of Pacific salmon sport fishing. In his *Sportsman's Gazetteer and General Guide* (1878), Charles Hallock invoked the "fact furnished by J. W. & Vincent Cook, proprietors of the Oregon Packing Co., on the Columbia River, who have stated that out of ninety-eight thousand salmon examined by them in 1874, only three had anything in their stomachs, and these three had the appearance of having just left salt water."²¹

Considering the predisposition of these fish not to eat, we should all be amazed that we ever catch any of them in

after fish rising to what are obviously nonfood items (at least we might presume that it's obvious to the fish that a stick or a leaf isn't food) and either nudging them or taking them in and spitting them back out.²³ We are left wondering if such behavior is brought on by the steelhead equivalent of ennui, or some vague need for target practice, or some other evolutionary imperative at work.

As far as why Atlantic salmon and steelhead seem more willing to take flies under more circumstances than do Pacific salmon, students of their natural history might suggest that it can't be entirely a coincidence that those two species are the ones that, if they can survive the hazards of the spawning run, will live to spawn again, sometimes even three or four times. One of the very few unexcepted absolutes in salmon natural history is that every individual among

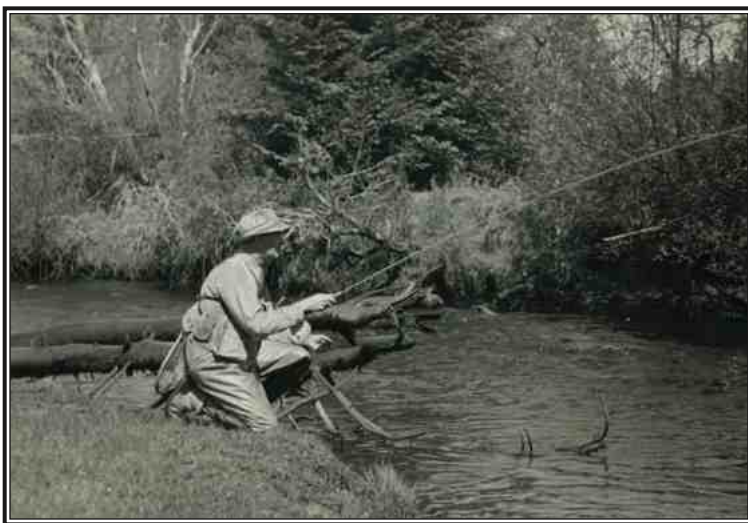
the five species of Pacific salmon dies after spawning. Perhaps, a plausible conjecture suggests, the fish species with the prospect of an extended biological future are less likely to have quite as complete a behavioral disconnect from feeding impulses as are fish species that are racing sure death to the spawning grounds.

Other conjectures connect the relative willingness of the Pacific salmons to take a fly to their individual life histories. Coho salmon, for example, usually spend two years in fresh water before migrating to the ocean. It has been proposed

that this gives them a deeper habit or "memory" of river feeding that lingers through their saltwater phase and is reactivated when they again arrive in their home river. Cohoes have been, after all, the species most often celebrated among fly fishers.

Cohoes were the species that A. Bryan Williams emphasized as most promising for saltwater fly fishing, in his 1919 book mentioned earlier, and he emphasized them again for freshwater fly fishing:

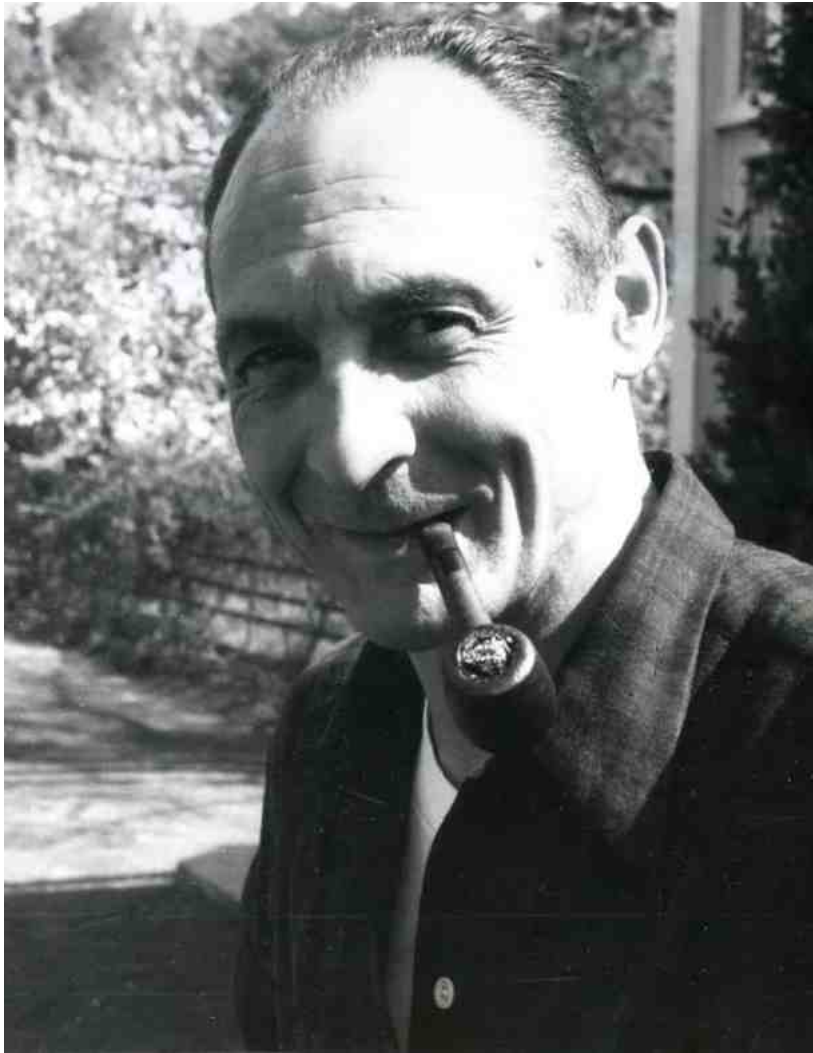
In fishing a pool for salmon it is best to start at the head of the pool and fish down. Cast across stream at an angle of 45 degrees and let it sweep round with the current slowly, giving the fly a moderate amount of movement. Get the fly down as deep as possible as a general rule. There are, however, times when a fly worked quickly on the surface will kill better, but such cases are the exceptions.²⁴



Letcher Lambuth.

From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

fresh water. However, folk wisdom has long suggested, first, that the feeding instinct or impulse may still be triggered now and then, even though the fish's system has no use for the food, and second, that fish attack things for reasons other than the need for nutrition, including protection of a territory or a mate, simple annoyance, or, if I may be even less formal, just for the hell of it. Whatever we may or may not know about the physiology of salmon, we know less about the personalities of individual fish, and in that great imponderable of individuality is a mystery best expressed by Lee Wulff, whom I quoted in my book *American Fly Fishing: A History* (1987): "Why does a salmon rise? Why does a small boy cross the street just to kick a tin can?"²² Lee Spencer's wonderful and hugely patient observational studies of steelhead in Oregon's Steamboat Creek reveal fish



Roderick Haig-Brown at the Campbell River, 1953.

Just a few years after this was written, a nineteen-year-old Roderick Haig-Brown caught his first coho on a fly, in a small tidal stream on Vancouver Island; it took a “full-dressed Silver Wilkinson Atlantic salmon fly.”²⁵ Judging how often cohoes were mentioned by the few West Coast fly-fishing writers of that time, there had to have been other anglers with similar experiences.

The cohoes tend to be the most commonly mentioned species in these early accounts. Chinook salmon, on the other hand, migrate from fresh water into the ocean at a much younger age, then spend proportionately more time in salt water. Thus, according to this hypothesis, any tendency for river feeding is more thoroughly muted in them. The big chinooks were certainly the species that those British sports most wanted to hook, which further explains why they were so disappointed. The chinooks looked up through 10 feet of river water and saw the pretty little Atlantic salmon flies swinging over, but had absolutely no reason or

need to go all the way up there to get them.

At the opposite extreme from the chinooks, the little pinks, whose entire life span is only a couple years, go the shortest distance into the ocean from their home rivers and spend the least amount of time there. They tend to spawn in lower reaches of their rivers, still close to the sea, and perhaps retain the feeding urge for all those reasons. At least such reasoning came to my mind as these eager little salmon attacked my hot pink woolly bugger that day north of Juneau a few years ago.

Theories abound; proof is hard to come by. When those early fly fishers started trying to catch Pacific salmon on flies, all they knew was that it was really hard and that sometimes, for some reason they didn't yet understand, flies worked. Seeing tremendous numbers of those big, shiny, tantalizing fish rolling into the rivers each year was no doubt exasperating and drove many anglers to just give up. But for others, the sight of that

potential sport just made them try harder. The fish looked so perfect; how could it not be possible to catch them on flies?

CAPTAIN GORDON WAS RIGHT . . . SORT OF

Reading the accounts of all those years of Pacific salmon fly fishing now, it appears that in order to achieve any level of consistency at fair-hooking the fish, they had first to more or less abandon the notion so precious to Atlantic salmon anglers: that there should be a way to cast a fly so that the fish will rise to it. We can track the growing success of Pacific salmon fly fishing by following the step-by-step development of tackle and techniques that signaled the abandonment of that hope and accepted the reality that these fish required more personal service. The history of Pacific salmon fly fishing in rivers is largely the history of getting deeper quicker and of developing a working knowledge of each river's salmon runs, holding waters, and all the other quirky factors that seem so important in almost any kind of sport fishing.²⁶

In their historical review, Ferguson, Johnson, and Trotter say that success required specialized tackle all the way from the angler's hand to the fish's mouth.²⁷ As bamboo rods replaced the older solid wood rods, and as manufacturers began to cater to the needs of big-river anglers who needed more power, fly fishers had the wherewithal to reach the fish. As flies were reconsidered and tied to sink (whether with lead wrapped around the hook; with the early bead-heads, such as Jim Pray's Optics; or by some other means), it was possible to approach deeper and deeper fish.

But Ferguson, Johnson, and Trotter place the real emphasis for success on new lines. The replacement of silk lines with modern synthetic lines with built-in fast-sinking densities “dredged” pools deeper than anglers had imagined possible only decades earlier.

It must also be said that the West Coast fly-fishing crowd dedicated themselves to cultivating some extraordinary fishing skills as part of their long dedicated quest to reach and catch both steelhead and salmon. And in that, the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club seems to have been the most influential presence, gathering many of the most talented and inventive fly fishers in the region and providing the laboratory they needed to refine their considerable abilities; but the San Francisco Fly Casting Club and the Portland Casting Club were also very important.



Fly photos by Sara Wilcox



*A few of Jim Pray's Optics.
From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*

It is no disrespect to all these accomplishments, however, to suggest that those early British sports were right. No amount of fly fishing in the nineteenth-century style was going to catch them more than the occasional Pacific salmon. The beautiful big salmon those chaps could see finning in deep holes and rolling in the open currents just weren't susceptible to the established methods. And because such methods were practiced with a nearly religious conviction by those anglers, I seriously doubt that they would regard themselves as having been proven wrong by today's Pacific salmon anglers, even though today's anglers can bring plenty of fish to the fly. The old practices of Atlantic salmon fishers did not develop in a sporting culture that prized innovation, much less such utter breaks with tradition as lead-core shooting heads and fluorescent fly patterns. Fly fishing wasn't just a matter of catching fish on a fly. It was a matter of catching fish on the fly in the right way.

Even in recent years, I've seen eastern American Atlantic salmon fly fishers turn their noses up at the lead-core lines and other specialized gear required to take Pacific salmon; this still isn't just about hooking fish.

And there are other differences between these salmon-fishing traditions.

The Atlantic salmon is a very expensive fish, and its fishing is in good part an elite or at least exclusive social practice, centuries deep in guides and lodges and fiercely restricted fishing rights. Pacific salmon on the West Coast of the United States were and are almost all swimming in public rivers, and the fly fishers who figured out how to catch them were not a particularly upscale crowd. Many of the proudest parts of the Atlantic salmon tradition, such as its glorious craft of fly tying, grew out of the sport's high cost. If there is a corresponding symbol of West Coast salmon fly tying, at least before the last thirty or so years when fly tiers have adapted and adopted older traditions so beautifully, it may be Jim Pray's Optics, which look more like the product of a plumber's workshop than a fly dresser's cabinet.

The social lessons here are mixed, of course. Exclusivity provides the economic conditions and incentives that keep Atlantic salmon rivers alive, whereas the overused Pacific salmon rivers of the West Coast have long suffered, sometimes fatally, from the tragedy of the commons.

Other parts of this story drift into ethical ruminations. Although all the Pacific salmon are known—at least some of the time—to voluntarily or even aggressively

inhale a fly, that's not the only way we catch them. Now that we have the equipment to reach them even in deep water, we also have the ability to simply feed a fly right into a salmon's mouth. Repeatedly drifting a fly through a group of salmon can and does result in salmon being involuntarily hooked in the mouth—they are "fair-hooked" without having taken any active part in the process. Traditional sport fishing for almost all fish species implicitly required the fish's active participation; the fish had to be tricked into wanting to eat the bait, or lure, or fly. We're doing something different here.

A variation on this new ability to hook a nonparticipating salmon is casting the fly beyond the group of fish so that the line, rather than the fly, drifts again and again through the fish until the line or leader enters a fish's mouth. As the bellying line drifts downstream, it draws itself sideways across the back of the fish's jaws until the hook reaches the jaw's hinge and becomes embedded. Again, the fish is "fair-hooked" because the fly, embedded just outside the fish's mouth, is close enough for both traditional sporting ethics and, usually, whatever laws are in effect about such things. In Alaska, this tactic has the charming name of flossing.²⁸

I've flossed an Alaskan salmon or two myself. It didn't seem like an important sin, and the fish was really exciting to play and land, but I knew I wasn't quite meeting my own definition of fly fishing. We owe it to ourselves and to the salmon to think hard about what we're doing in these situations. Such adjustments and compromises of older rules are often the way fly fishing evolves, and such evolution is often an edgy and even controversial matter.²⁹

A NEW WORLD, FOUND AND LOST

To best appreciate the progress that fly fishers made in figuring out how to take Pacific salmon in the first half of the twentieth century, there's a book you really ought to read. It is odd that as small a specialty in fly fishing as Pacific salmon fly fishing should include an authentic literary gem in its modest library, but Russell Chatham's *The Angler's Coast* is just such a book. First published to apparently slight sales in 1976, the book was lavishly reprinted in 1990.³⁰ The first edition is getting hard to find, but I recommend the second edition anyway, both because it is handsomely produced and because it contains many, many photographs that demonstrate beyond any doubt that the old myth should have died in the 1950s.

Myths don't work that way, of course. They hardly ever die, certainly not abruptly. They may outlive their usefulness and fade, but they tend to hang on for a long time in dusty corners of our collective memory, just waiting their chance to reassure, entertain, or mislead us again. In any case, mere proof of a myth's falsehood has never stood much chance against the mysterious cultural durability such beliefs have.

But at least for anyone who cares to know better, Chatham's book is the answer. Although the salmon-fishing stories in his book are to a great extent autobiographical, the central figure is Bill Schaadt, who between the 1940s and 1980s became, and not just in Chatham's view, "perhaps the greatest fly-fisherman who ever lived."³¹ The stories of Schaadt's exploits on California's Eel, Russian, Smith, and other rivers, profusely illustrated with photographs of anglers grunting to hold up enormous chinook

salmon, indicate a problem solved. The fish, the big ones that weighed 30, 40, and even 50 pounds—the descendants of the ones that Captain Gordon had eyed so wistfully and hopelessly—were all taken on flies.

There is, by the way, something enormously reassuring about photographs in a book like this. Even if you trust the author completely, somewhere in your darker doubts must linger a question: Could things like this really happen? They sure never happen to most of us;

It took about a century from the time of the first pronouncements that Pacific salmon wouldn't take a fly to the time that anglers perfected methods for taking even the biggest and least accessible of those fish. The methods weren't mystically complicated, but they took a lot of hard work to find. Pacific salmon fishing didn't reward passionate devotion to traditional angling methods. It didn't require aristocratic fly rods and reels or elegant, time-honored fly patterns. Instead, it demanded the vision to develop the

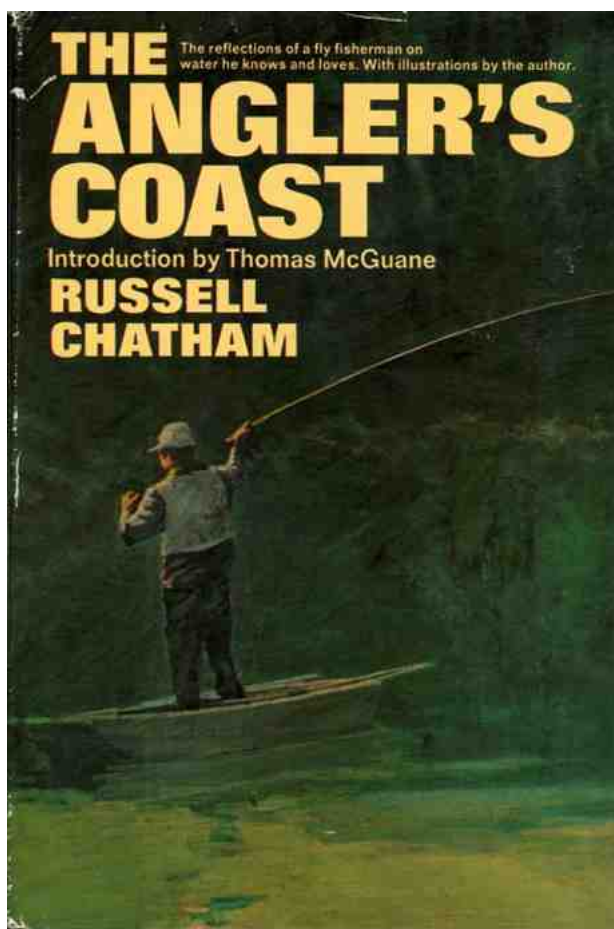
special casting skills, the variety of very heavy (even lead-core) lines tailored to each individual reach or hole in the river, and the smart persistence that most big difficult-to-reach fish require. By the time of Schaadt, Chatham, and their growing number of companions and counterparts up and down the coast in the second half of the 1900s, the Pacific salmon was neither unreachable nor uncatchable. The fishing was still often difficult, but no more so than Atlantic salmon fishing could be. It was just different.

Sad to say, it would turn out that difficulty of catching the fish wasn't the worst thing these anglers had to worry about. It was the destruction of the river habitats and the overdevelopment of the river valleys, things that have more or less ended the terrific fly-fishing opportunities that are so well chronicled in Chatham's book. In a very short time, the stories he told went from a simple celebration of good times among nature's abundance to being a eulogy for a beautiful spectacle stolen from us. It's nice that fly fishers worked out their methods before the rivers were ruined, but it just makes the loss all the more tragic.

TRUTH

The historical loose end in this tale is the origin of the myth that Pacific salmon wouldn't take flies. What, if anything, did Captain Gordon say, and why did he say it?

When Roderick Haig-Brown caught his first fly-caught coho, mentioned earlier, his companion immediately told him that he had just disproved what that "other Englishman" had said long before (British-born Haig-Brown had emigrated to Canada only a year earlier). For decades, Haig-Brown encountered the



Cover of *The Angler's Coast* by Russell Chatham (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976).

could fishing anywhere, ever, have been this incredibly good? Photographs settle those questions and bring a happy solidity to the story. The startling photographs in the 1990 edition of *The Angler's Coast* revealed a significance in Chatham's text that I had not realized I was missing. When I saw all those pictures, the book became—in addition to its high value as an adventure story and its eloquence as a testament against the blind greed that has destroyed so many wonderful California rivers—a historical document of grand proportions, rather like Eliot Porter's book of photographs of Glen Canyon before the dam was built.

story again and again. He said “it didn’t sound like very good history to me,” but it was thirty years later, in the 1950s, when he finally traced it to an unpublished manuscript in the British Columbia provincial archives.³² The manuscript was something of a memoir left by Roderick Finlayson, who had been in charge of Fort Victoria, on Vancouver Island, in late summer of 1845, when Captain Gordon (whose ship was actually named the H.M.S. *America*) visited. According to Finlayson, he and Gordon deer hunted, but it appears likely that Gordon never actually tried fly fishing for Pacific salmon. Finlayson said their deer hunting was unsuccessful.

The Captain felt very disappointed and was anything but happy. I said to him I was very sorry we had missed the deer etc., and also remarked how beautiful the country looked. He said in reply—“Finlayson, I would not give the most barren hills in the Highlands of Scotland for all I see around me.” . . . In the morning we had a nice salmon for breakfast. The Captain seemed somewhat surprised and asked where the salmon was had. Oh, we have plenty of salmon was the reply. Have you got flies and rods, said the Captain. We have lines and bait was the answer and sometimes the Indians take them with the net, etc. No fly, no fly, responded our guest. So after breakfast we went to fish with the line, from a dingy. When we came back we had four fine salmon, but he thought it an awful manner in which to catch salmon.³³

In a later, privately published version of the same episode, Finlayson apparently modified the tale somewhat. In describing the occasion of their fishing experience, Finlayson reportedly wrote about Gordon as follows:

Another day he was preparing his rod to fish for salmon with the fly, when I told him the salmon would not take the fly but were fished with bait. I then prepared fishing tackle with bait for him, and he went in a boat to the mouth of the harbour, where he caught several fine salmon with bait. His exclamation on his return was, “What a country, where the salmon will not take the fly.”³⁴

This version indicates that Gordon did have fly-fishing gear with him, and perhaps this indicates that Vancouver Island wasn’t the only place he tried to catch Pacific salmon. If so, then his offhand dismissal of the salmon of this vast sport fishery was at least based on a little more experience than his conversation with Finlayson.

Still, if this is all there is to the story, and if the myth was somehow launched

by Finlayson relating this conversation to others who put it into print, then it’s a pretty thin origin story. Not only did Gordon never directly connect the British empire’s keeping of the territory to the quality of fishing, but he wasn’t even faintly qualified to make the statement in the first place, having fly fished so little, if at all, for Pacific salmon.

But there must be more to learn. How, precisely, did this casual comment by Gordon become so well known? According to “Chinook,” quoted at the beginning of this article, Gordon eventually wrote to the Earl of Aberdeen, foreign secretary and later prime minister of England (who, according to Finlayson, was Gordon’s brother) and specifically made the statement in writing in that letter. Maybe that letter was published, or perhaps the Earl of Aberdeen made reference to it in some writings or speeches of his own. There is much more searching to do. So far, such a search is well beyond my means, and the various British friends I have pestered about this question insist that they have actual lives and aren’t willing to occupy themselves permanently looking for this particular needle in the British archival haystack.

In the meantime, British fly-fishing historian Reverend Robert Spaight has tossed a wonderful monkey wrench into the works by suggesting that the statement may not even have originated with Gordon and may predate Gordon’s visit to Vancouver Island by as much as a decade. According to one historical account, the statement might have been made by William Lamb, the Second Viscount Melbourne, who was both uncle of and first prime minister to Queen Victoria.³⁵

This causes me to wonder if the myth of the uncatchable salmon is, like so many other things about the sport of fly fishing, without a single point of origin—at least without a point that we can definitely identify. By the 1830s or 1840s, any number of gentlemen anglers from either Europe or eastern America might have had a chance to cast a fly on those wonderful Pacific-coast rivers. Their combined informal lament over the reluctance of all those big beautiful salmon to cooperate may just have worked its way into the public conversation over time. Perhaps it was only the most notable of those people whose comments were written down, and thus only those comments survived to modern times.

But it sure would be nice to know where it all started.

ENDNOTES

1. An English Sportsman, “Salmon Fishing and Deer Stalking in California,” *Spirit of the Times* (22 June 1850), 209.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. “Chinook,” “The ‘Genus Salmo’ and other fish taken in the Rivers of the Pacific,” *The Spirit of the Times* (17 July 1852), 254. I suspect that the story probably gained its widest currency among nineteenth-century angling readers from being told by Thaddeus Norris in *The American Angler’s Book* (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler, 1865), 33. Norris was, however, one of the early hopefuls, noting of Pacific salmon that “they are never known to take a fly. This may be for the want of the proper kinds of pools that make a fly-cast; there is no doubt, however, that it will yet be found, that there are casts on some of those rivers where a proper combination of fur and feathers will entice them” (p. 208).

Genio Scott, author of the likewise well-read *Fishing in American Waters* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1875), 483, also included a brief rendition of the story. Between Norris and Scott, a great many American anglers must have been assured of having been exposed to the story, even had it not been told many times by later writers.

5. L. A. Beardslee, “The Salmon and Trout of Alaska,” in Charles F. Orvis and A. Nelson Cheney, eds., *Fishing with the Fly* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), 20–21. I continue to accumulate later renditions of the story but see no need to cite them here.

6. Beardslee, “The Salmon and Trout of Alaska,” 41; he actually broadened his claim and his stupendous inaccuracy by asserting: “No Alaska trout will take a fly” (p. 41).

7. Paul Schullery, *Real Alaska: Finding Our Way in the Wild Country* (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 2001).

8. I’m sure there has been much improvement in public understanding of fish species since the late 1800s, but I still encountered a number of confusing informal terms among anglers when I first visited and fished the Pacific Northwest in 1974.

9. Paul Schullery, *Lewis and Clark among the Grizzlies: Legend and Legacy in the American West* (Guilford, Conn.: Falcon Press, 2002), 54–57.

10. For a good introduction to many aspects of Grinnell’s amazing career, see John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, 3rd rev. ed. (Corvallis, Ore.: Oregon State University Press, 2001). Grinnell still awaits a full “life-and-times” biography.

11. Editorial note, “Fly Fishing for Salmon on the Pacific,” *Forest and Stream* (5 August 1875), 411.

12. *Ibid.*

13. I cite a number of these problematic salmon-on-a-fly accounts from the 1870s in *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1987), 54–55, 169–71. Among the ones worth considering because they bear on the question of salmon and steelhead and fly fishing are Monmouth, “Humboldt Bay Salmon Fishing,” *Forest and Stream* (12

February 1874), 1–2; “In the *Overland Monthly* for February 3d,” *Forest and Stream* (19 February 1874), 29; “Salmon Fishing on the Noyo River, On the Northern Pacific Coast of California,” *Forest and Stream* (2 December 1875), 267; *San Francisco Chronicle* (given as source from which article was copied), “Salmon Fishing in the Novarro River, California,” *The Country* (26 January 1878), 187; David Starr Jordan, “Rainbow Trout and Steelhead,” *Forest and Stream* (12 June 1884), 386; “Clackamas River Salmon Angling,” *Forest and Stream* (28 November 1889), 369; and W.F.B., “Oregon Salmon Angling,” *Forest and Stream* (30 January 1890), 29. I have not made a systematic effort to gather these early salmon-fishing articles published in the various sporting periodicals of the time. These are just a few that have come my way in the process of reading generally in the periodicals. I assume that there are many more. Some historian of Northwestern angling should pursue this topic and give us a deeper understanding of just what the fishing was like in that period.

14. Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson, and Pat Trotter, *Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Amato Publications, 1985), 16.

15. C.R. (Cleveland Rockwell), “Salmon Fishing on the Pacific,” *Forest and Stream* (30 October 1879), 769. The article was republished in the *Pacific Quarterly* (October 1903, vol. 10, no. 4).

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. A. Bryan Williams, *Rod & Creel in British Columbia* (Vancouver, B.C.: Progress Publishing Company, Ltd., 1919), 19.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Letcher Lambuth, “Salt Water Fly Fishing,” *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 1975, vol. 2, no. 2), 15. There is no better introduction to many of the most important early- and mid-twentieth century fly fishers of the West Coast than Jack Berryman, *Fly-Fishing Pioneers & Legends of the Northwest* (Seattle: Northwest Fly Fishing, LLC, 2006). This book includes an excellent profile of Lambuth (152–159), including information about his coho flies. Although in discussing the West Coast fishermen, Berryman concentrates primarily on steelhead fly fishing, he necessarily discusses the development of the rods, lines, and flies for steelhead that were also eventually of great use for salmon.

21. Charles Hallock, *The Sportsman's Gazetteer and General Guide* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1878), 366.

22. Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History*, 162.

23. Lee Spencer, personal communication and draft manuscripts provided by Spencer to the author, September to November 2003.

24. Williams, *Rod & Creel in British Columbia*, 20.

25. Roderick L. Haig-Brown, *The Master and His Fish* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 56.

26. For a good overview of the different

life histories of the fish, see Ferguson, Johnson, and Trotter, *Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon*, 19–24.

27. *Ibid.*, 12–18.

28. *Flossing* is the term also used to describe using an actual fly-type lure, often a salmon-egg imitation, attached up the leader some inches from a bare hook. When the salmon (or trout, for which they are also used) take the imitation, the current similarly drags the line through its mouth until the hook is caught on the outside hinge of the jaw.

29. Speaking of Alaska, someone wanting to compile a history of the development of fly fishing in Alaska would have a lot to work with, what with all the memoirs of outfitters and other twentieth-century adventurers in that glorious wilderness country. For one great example, over its many years of publication, the pages of *Alaska* magazine have been the mother lode of biographical material about pioneering guides, lodges, and notable anglers.

But what about the beginnings of Alaskan fly fishing? Who were the first, what did they catch, and how did they catch it? Imagine carrying the first fly rod into the Kenai, or the southeast, or any of a hundred other fabulous fishing regions. Imagine swinging the first fly through those huge runs of salmon and steelhead. Someone should track down the stories of those lucky fly-fishing pioneers.

It isn't at all uncommon to find mentions of fly fishing in the most formal scientific reports of early western survey parties as far back as the 1850s. After all, a fly rod was an efficient way to collect specimens. But I have had much less luck finding similar details on fly fishers in the early Alaska literature. Both L. M. Turner, *Contributions to the Natural History of Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 105, and Edward W. Nelson, *Report upon Natural History Collections Made in Alaska between the Years 1877 and 1881* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 317, mention fly-caught fish in Alaska. Both apparently either fly fished themselves while there or observed others fly fishing. My reading of Alaskan exploration and early travel literature is sizeable but hardly comprehensive enough to have exhausted the possibilities for early accounts of fly fishing in the region.

It would be both rewarding and fun for someone with access to the earliest Alaskan literature (scientific, travel, local newspapers, and so on) to track down this story.

30. Russell Chatham, *The Angler's Coast* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1976; Livingston, Mont.: Clarke City Press, 1990).

31. Chatham, *The Angler's Coast*, 1990, xvii. See also Berryman, *Fly-Fishing Legends*, 62–69, for another profile of Bill Schaadt.

32. Haig-Brown, *The Master and His Fish*, 57.

33. *Ibid.*, 58. A somewhat different transcription, though essentially similar in the important points, is provided by Leigh Burpee Robinson, *Esquimalt: "Place of Shoaling Waters"* (Victoria, B.C.: Quality

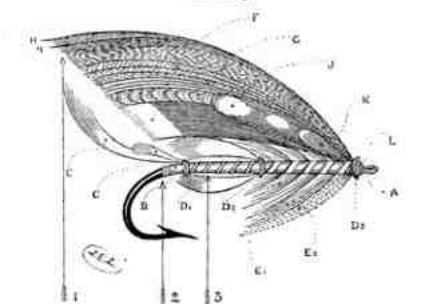
Press, Printers, 1948), 30. It seems that even writers conscientious enough to have found their way to the Finlayson journal can't agree on the exact language of the quote. The Finlayson journal seems not to have been published until much later, so in its unpublished form it seems unlikely to have been the source of such a widespread public knowledge of the quotation. See Barry M. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810–1914: A Study of British Maritime Ascendancy* (Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), 73, especially notes 43 to 45. It seems possible from the context of this discussion by Gough that perhaps Finlayson retold the story and quoted Gordon's comment on salmon in a letter or report to his superior in the Hudson's Bay Company, yet another avenue for future research.

I don't mean to understate my own efforts to settle this. My check in many issues of the *London Times* for the period surrounding the dates of the Finlayson account revealed a number of interesting and detailed reports on the boundary controversy but not a word about this salmon anecdote. I did not, however, check numerous other possible outlets in the British press of the day, to say nothing of the American press, so there is a wealth of additional material to explore. The several regional Canadian historical scholars whom I asked were willing to help and directed me to a number of possible sources, but none were productive.

34. Captain John T. Walbran, *British Columbia Coast Names, 1592–1906* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972 reprint of 1909 edition), 210.

35. Rev. Spaight has referred me to James Morris, *Heaven's Command: An Imperial Progress* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), 30, where Morris states as follows: “No, in 1837 England seemed to need no empire, and the British people as a whole were not much interested in their colonies. How could one be expected to show an interest in a country like Canada, demanded Lord Melbourne the Prime Minister, where a salmon would not rise to a fly?” If Lord Melbourne made this statement in 1837, as Morris implies, then we do indeed have a whole new search on our hands.

ANALYTICAL DIAGRAM, illustrating parts and proportions of a Salmon-Fly.



From Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly* (London: Wyman & Sons, Limited, 1895), 17.

The Taxidermy of Rowland Ward, Ltd.

PIKE ARE NATIVE to Ireland, with the fossil evidence extending back approximately half a million years. Many of Ireland's numerous lakes and rivers are home to *Esox lucius* and have produced some enormous pike. The current records are 42 pounds, 12 ounces for lake and 42 pounds for river fishing.

In the 1930s, one Alexandre Orlowski spent some time pike fishing in Ireland. Unfortunately, the details of Orlowski's life are a mystery, including his fishing habits. During his time in Ireland, it is not known what methods or tackle he used, but he did fish at least two lakes. Lough Conn and Lough Attymass (*lough* is Irish for *lake*) are located in County Mayo, on the northwest coast. Lough Conn covers approximately 14,000 acres and is still well known for its pike and trout fishing. Attymass seems to be less known, and there is little information available regarding it. On 24 October 1935, Orlowski caught a 10-pound pike out of Lough Conn. The following year, on June 2, he caught a 7-pound fish from Lough Attymass. He must have considered both fish special because he had them both mounted. Neither fish is all that remarkable in terms of size; 7- and 10-pound pike are not uncommon today. The fact that Orlowski had them mounted suggests that he was an infrequent visitor to Ireland or, if he traveled to the Emerald Isle often, he may have fished there only rarely.

James Rowland Ward was born in London in 1847. He showed an aptitude for art and an interest in natural history at an early age. When he was fourteen, he started an apprenticeship at his father's taxidermy studio. He readily took to the work. After ten years, he was commissioned to produce a number of life-size sculptures for a wealthy businessman; he used the revenue to open his own taxidermy venture. It soon became a highly successful business with an international clientele.

Ward was known for his creativity and attention to detail. He pioneered many techniques still in use today, such as creat-

ing exhibits that reflect natural habitats. Rowland Ward Ltd., as the company became known, was located in the Picadilly section of London. In addition to taxidermy, Ward also published books on natural history and game animals. He also developed a means of analysis through measurement to quantify the size of various game species. Despite Ward's death in 1912, the company continued, eventually dropping taxidermy in the mid-1970s and focusing solely on publishing.

At some point, the pike caught by Alexandre Orlowski were taken to Rowland Ward Ltd. Each fish has a small plaque stating "A.O.," the date the fish was caught, the body of water, and the weight. Orlowski donated the pike mounts to the museum in 1974. A retired antiques dealer living in Castleton, Vermont, Orlowski was preparing for an auction and offered the pike to the museum first.

What is interesting and a bit unusual about these mounts is that they are head mounts only, with each fish having its head turned to the side. It is not clear if these are the original mounts or if they were redone by Rowland Ward Ltd. It is possible that this was a Ward innovation, blending nature with artistic appearance. Regardless, it is a fitting style of presentation for a fish known for its ferocity and ravenous appetite. All attention is focused on the elongated snout and rows of teeth. It also implies mystery and vivacity. The fish seems to be *coming* from somewhere and is captured in midmotion. This is a sharp contrast to the standard presentation of a fish stretched straight and lifeless. The artistic elements of the Rowland Ward pike mounts for Orlowski demonstrate the difference between trophy taxidermy and taxidermy as a demonstration of reverence for nature.

Photos by Nathan George



Orlowski's 10-pound Lough Conn pike.



Pike caught by Alexandre Orlowski,
Lough Attymass, 7 pounds.

—NATHAN GEORGE

Fly-Fishing Festival

Jim Hardman



More than 275 people came to explore the wares and goods of the forty vendors who were present at the 2008 Fly-Fishing Festival held August 16 on the museum grounds. After a very rainy summer, it was one of the best Saturdays of the season, and we were grateful for the opportunity to share the museum and joys of fly fishing with the community and visitors to Manchester. The day couldn't have happened without the help of the staff, their family members, and volunteers who gave up their Saturday to pitch in. A special thanks to Ron Wilcox, Bill Cosgrove, Tim Delisle, and Rose Napolitano, who set up, tore down, flipped burgers, and manned the entrance booth.

Left: Tents, vendors, and visitors filled the museum's grounds at the Fly-Fishing Festival in August.

Jim Hardman



Kim Murphy



Clockwise from left:

Hiroshi Kono of Mar Creation displays handcrafted rods and tackle, all made in Japan.

From fishing gear to handwoven silver creel baskets, a wide variety of antiques and crafts were available for sale.

Scott Barkdoll from the Skywoods Canoe Company demonstrates the art of caning, which he uses in his canoe building.

Yoshi Akiyama



Kim Murphy



Watercolorist Dave Tibbetts presents his work.

Kim Murphy



Guest appraiser, museum member, and festival vendor Bob Selb (right) traveled from Pennsylvania to participate in the day's activities.

Jim Hardman



Bill Newcomb visits Deputy Director Yoshi Akiyama at the AMFF kid's fly-tying table.

Sara Wilcox



Fred Kretchman demonstrates his handmade rods at the casting pond.

Jim Hardman



Jim Schottenham (left) and Richard Lodge of the Old Reel Collectors Association show off their reel exhibit.

Kim Murphy



George Butts, member of the Green Mountain Fly Tyers, shows us how it is done.



THE ART BOOK has become a popular genre in angling literature. One can find art books on our bookshelves, and especially on our desks and tables, where we can pick one up to capture the essence of fishing adventures. All of us have admired angling art books by Winslow Homer, Frank W. Benson, Ogden Pleissner, A. Lassell Ripley, and many contemporary artists. Photography art books about angling are fewer in number, with Ralph Wahl's work standing out.

Good prose can stir our imaginations, but the visual arts have a profound way of exciting us. Paintings, etchings, and drawings are especially provocative; so too is photography. Yet there are distinct differences between paintings and photography in capturing images of angling. Unlike a photographer, for whom the depth of focus of a photograph limits the scene, a painter has the liberty of collapsing a scene to create a desired image and can use his or her skills to manipulate color and light. A skilled photographer can create profound images but must often wait for the right color and light.

Some people criticize angling art in a way similar to a popular criticism of illustrative art, claiming that sporting art is not "true art." On the surface this is absurd, but there is a more subtle message. Most sporting art is "action" oriented—portraying a contest between a man and a fish—often with depiction of the prize. Certainly, the landscape—the "true art"—is in the picture, but often as background.

There have been a few painters who, for the most part, have taken a different approach to sporting art, especially Frank W. Benson. Benson's paintings rarely depicted a dead fish; seldom seen was a fisherman with a rod in his hands (even his waterfowling scenes rarely showed a dead bird or a gun). Benson painted "riverscapes" that praised those angling

places. He emphasized the river as the focus of the scene with trees, mountains, and rocks, and often included men who worked on the rivers, such as guides, boatmen, and cooks.

Another difference between angling paintings and photography is that the painter often chooses to portray the river or stream to suit his feeling or sensibility, whereas the photographer is by definition realistic. Thus, in the case of the latter, the river has a name and shows a real place. The painter may title his piece after a river or pool, but it may or may not resemble that exact place.

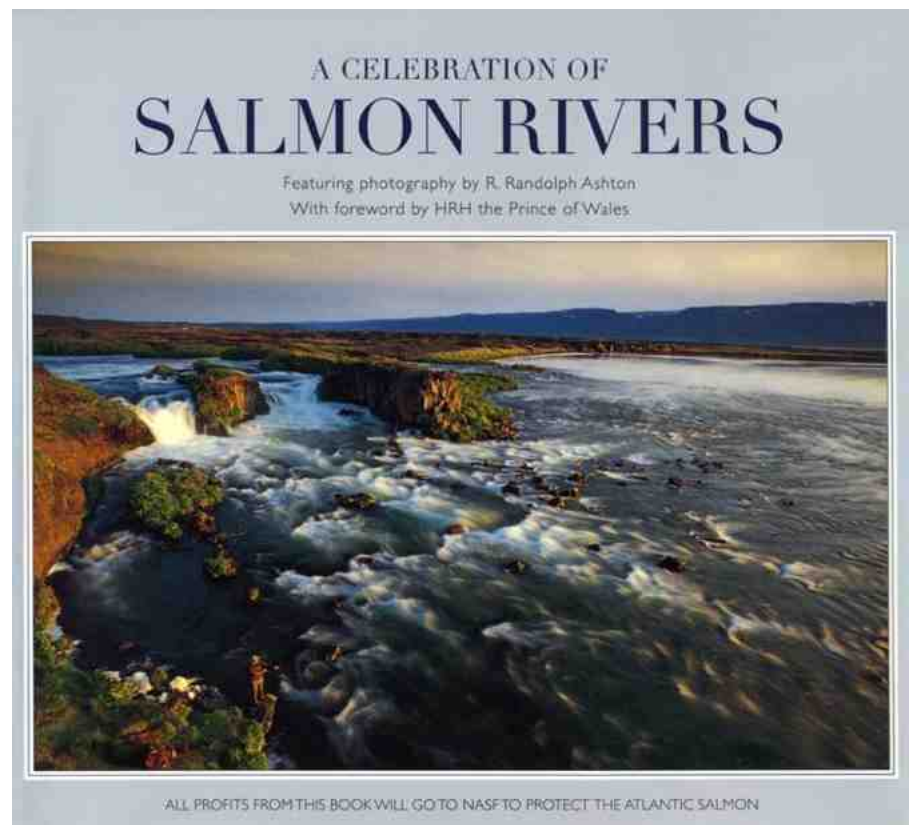
I am happy to report the donation of a photography art book that beautifully showcases real rivers with real names and real places. In *A Celebration of Salmon Rivers*, edited by John B. Ashton and Adrian Latimer (the latter of Paris, France, friend of the museum, and donor of the book), the photography (mostly by R. Randolph Ashton) is superb. The fifty-four rivers in eleven countries are vividly portrayed, each with three to five photos of scenes of different water flows, shorelines, hills, mountains, and skies, truly praising those beautiful places where salmon rest.

Each river is accompanied by brief but carefully prepared prose, written by fifty-seven anglers who intimately know their rivers. Here are a few quotes to whet your appetite:

All rivers have a defining mood and the mood of the Haffjardara [Iceland] is cheerful; the bucolic landscape, the healthy stock of sea run fish, and the light human footprint; the world as it should be. (Thomas McGuane, p. 49)

Down through the centuries men and women have fallen in love with this river [Exe, southwest England], but none have described the pleasure they have experienced on the Exe more eloquently than Ted Hughes who . . . described salmon as "sensitive glands in the vast disheveled body of nature, as meteorological stations responding to rain, storm and wind." He believed fishing for salmon heightened one's depth of awareness and consciousness. (Ian Cook, p. 124)

The SPEY [Scotland] TAKES NO PRISONERS. I know it as a fearsome water, heavy, serious, gurgling, even menacing. When you advance into its turbulent torrent your nerves are steeled. The water is clear, with a slight tinge of the color of the whisky produced at the 30 some distilleries along its banks. (Michael Wigan, p. 155)



The Moise is a BIG, brawling river . . . [cutting] its swath of rapids, waterfalls, and heavy runs through the Quebec wilderness. (Donal C. O'Brien Jr., p. 35)

All five of the cataracts [the Laxa in Adaldal, Iceland] plunge into productive salmon pools but they are turbulent and snag-strewn and set among precipitous paths, wildflower-decked islets and the debris of ancient rock falls. (Michael Charleston, p. 59)

The early Britons called the river [Dee, Ireland] "Deova"—"The Goddess" or "Holy River." To the fish, insects, birds and other creatures supported by its pure and precious waters, it unquestionably is. (Alan Sanders and Gordon Wigginton, p. 120)

The foreword to the book was written by HRH the Prince of Wales, an ardent salmon angler for more than fifty years. The introduction was written by Orri Vigfusson, founder and chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund. Proceeds from sales of the book will support the NASE.

—GERALD KARASKA

John B. Ashton and Adrian Latimer, editors
A Celebration of Salmon Rivers
Photography by R. Randolph Ashton
Ludlow, Shropshire, U.K.: Merlin Unwin Books Ltd., 2007

257 pp.

Available in the United States and Canada from Stackpole Books, 5067 Ritter Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055; (800) 732-3669 or (717) 796-0411; www.stackpolebooks.com

\$59 (hardcover)



From Izaak Walton, *The Complete Angler* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1889), 361.

CONTRIBUTORS



Charles B. Wood is a longtime collector of books and related materials on salmon fishing. He has fished for salmon in Canada, Scotland, Iceland, Norway, and Russia, but some of his best catches have been rare or unique books or manuscripts on the subject. He is slowly working toward the publication of an illustrated catalog on some of the highlights of his collection, to be titled *Bibliotheca Salmo Salar*.

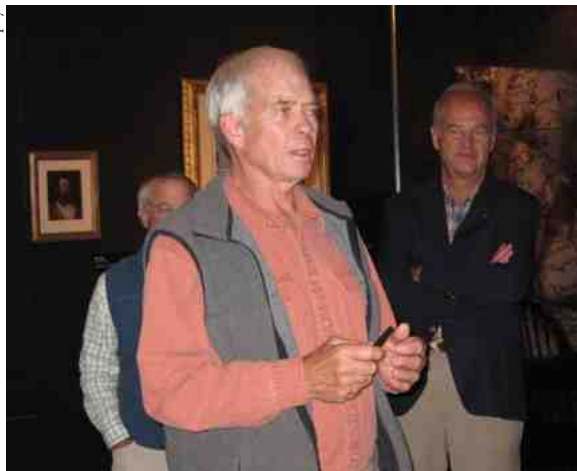


Paul Schullery was executive director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing from 1977 to 1982. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of forty books, including several relating to fly fishing and fly-fishing history. His most recent books include *Cowboy Trout: Western Fly Fishing as It Matters*; *The Rise: Streamside Observations on Trout, Flies, and Fly Fishing*; and *If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing*. In June 2008, he was among those honored by the federal Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee for extraordinary contributions to the recovery of grizzly bear populations in the United States.

Museum News



Kim Murphy



Noted author Peter Bergh takes folks through a guided tour of Ogden Pleissner: The Sporting Grand Tour during a wine-and-cheese event in September.

Recent Donations

Helen Shaw Kessler bequeathed to the museum three sets of Cushner-framed flies tied by Shaw. **Jean Kirk**, through Bill Lord of Manchester, Vermont, donated thirty-five flies tied by Walt and Winnie Dette. And **Alan Poole** of West Haven, Connecticut, sent us a fly box with salmon flies tied by noted New Brunswick tier Wallace Doak.

Nathaniel P. Reed of Hobe Sound, Florida, gave us eighteen double-hook salmon flies used on the Cascapedia River. **David Parke** of Norman, Oklahoma, sent some snelled English trout flies (ca. 1935).

Leon Martuch of Windermere, Florida, donated a homemade fly-tying vise made and used by Lefty Kreh. **John Graves II** of Coral Gables, Florida, sent us a fly-tying vise and several fly-fishing pamphlets (ca. 1945). And **Frank Skidmore** of Durham, North Carolina, donated a reel box for Holmes Salmon Fly Reel and No Knot leader eyelets.

In the Library

Thanks to the following for their donations of recent titles that have become part of our collection (all titles were published in 2008, unless otherwise noted):

Adrian Latimer of Paris sent us *A Celebration of Salmon Rivers* (Ludlow, Shropshire: Merlin Unwin Books Ltd., 2007). Mr. Latimer was an editor of this book, profits from which go to the North Atlantic Salmon Fund. The title is reviewed in this issue on page 24.

Skyhorse Publications sent us John Ross's *Rivers of Restoration: Trout Unlimited's First 50 Years of Conservation*.

Stackpole Books sent us Lefty Kreh's *Casting with Lefty Kreh*; Bruce Ducker's *Home Pool: Stories of Fly Fishing and Lesser Passions*; A. K. Best's *Fly Tying with A.K.: Patterns & Problem Solving with New Materials & Techniques*; Paul Schullery's *If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing*; and two books edited by Paul Schullery for the fly-fishing classics series: *Stewart on the Wet Fly: Lessons from a Master Tactician* and *Mottram on Fly-Fishing Mysteries: Innovations of a Scientist-Angler*.

Upcoming Events

January 17

Fit to Be Tied: Fly-Tying Fun for All Ages
American Museum of Fly Fishing
Manchester, Vermont

February 14

Lecture program
American Museum of Fly Fishing
Manchester, Vermont

March 5

New York Anglers' Club
Annual Dinner and Sporting Auction
New York City

April or May

Annual Spring Dinner
recognizing Vice President Dick Cheney
New York City

May 8

To Fool a Fish: The Dynamic World of Fly Fishing
Members Opening
American Museum of Fly Fishing
Manchester, Vermont

May 8-9

Annual Board Meeting
American Museum of Fly Fishing
Manchester, Vermont

Spring

Striper and Bluefish Rodeo
New York City

For additions, updates, and more information, contact Kim Murphy at (802) 362-3300 or check our website at www.amff.com.

Peter Bergh Lectures on Pleissner

Having a good tour guide can take a great exhibit and raise it to an extraordinary level. This is what Peter Bergh of Edwards, Colorado, did for *Ogden M. Pleissner: The Sporting Grand Tour* when he came to the museum for a wine-and-cheese event and lecture on September 25. Over the course of two years in the early 1980s, Bergh met with and interviewed Pleissner and his wife Marion for his book, *The Art of Ogden Pleissner*. We were fortunate to have him visit the museum and appreciate the opportunity to hear his insights and anecdotes about this great artist's life.

Corbin Shoot

While the leaves were fading here in Vermont, they were just peaking due south on the stunning 4,000-acre grounds of Hudson Farm in Andover, New Jersey, as museum staff and friends gathered for the annual Friends of Corbin Shoot on October 16 and 17. The two days were filled with clays, flurries, ducks, pheasants, and lots of tradition now that this event has reached its seventh year. Following an afternoon of sporting clays and an evening with dinner, wine, and cigars, the live shoot begins the next morning with the lighting of the cannon, and ends with a pig roast and the drawing for an original Peter Corbin oil painting. This year, the painting was *Evening Rise*. Everyone laughed and joked as the final name was pulled from the hat, and Austin Buck walked away with the prize.

We are very appreciative of the support from the event attendees, and we graciously thank everyone for coming. Special thanks goes to Peter Corbin for inspiring and organizing the event, George Gibson for his support in arranging the day's activities, Peter Kellogg for use of the Hudson Farm grounds, and Richard Riccardi for the donation of wine from Gallo Vineyards. An honorary mention goes to Griffin and Howe instructor Allen Pana, whose direction and advice with the gun helped to see that more clays were hit and more ducks never made it past the pond!



Kim Murphy

Smith, Bob O'Hara's black Lab, awaits further instructions during the Friends of Corbin shoot.

An Art Auction along the Batten Kill

The Hildene Ski Pavilion in Manchester was magically turned into a beautiful and cozy art gallery on October 24 for the debut of what hopes to be an annual event. *Angling and Art Along . . . the Batten Kill* was our first auction devoted exclusively to art and featured work of various media and styles.

Eleven artists and thirty-five works of art were represented that evening, which drew a crowd of approximately sixty-five

people, members and nonmembers alike. Our hope is to each year hold an auction that features a particular fly-fishing river and the artists who reside along its banks.

We'd like to especially thank those members and trustees who came out to support our fund-raising effort. Also, thanks to Clark Comollo of Comollo Antiques and Fine Wines for donating his auctioneering services; to Susan Cronin, artist and sculptor, who donated the proceeds of her work to the museum; and to Hildene for use of their facility.

Kim Murphy



Auctioneer Clark Comollo starts the bidding on George Van Hook's impressive oil, *Fly Fishing on the Batten Kill*.

BACK ISSUES!

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Volume 32:	Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 33:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 34:	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4

Back issues are \$10 a copy.

To order, please contact Sarah Moore at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at smoore@amff.com.

FIVE RIVERS LODGE

Hosts Jay Burgin and Mary Jacques offer access to Montana's Big Five: the Beaverhead, the Ruby, the Madison, the Big Hole, and the Jefferson. Jay also provides private access to three ranches, and the home ponds at the Lodge feature monster rainbows

you can cast to from the dock while sipping chardonnay. Jay has also put together one of the most amazing private fly shops on earth—if the pattern exists, he stocks it. Enjoy fine dining, deluxe accommodations, and all of the amenities during your stay at this jewel of Montana's Beaverhead County.

Photos by Brian O'Keefe



For more information on Five Rivers Lodge please contact:
Jay Burgin • 12530 Highway 41 • Dillon, MT • 59725
800.378.5006 • www.fiveriverslodge.com

Use the code AMFF to book your accommodations and 10% of your lodging charge will be donated to the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Save the date!

For the fifth consecutive year, the New York Anglers' Club in New York City will host our annual dinner and sporting auction on March 5, 2009, to support the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Detailed information will be sent shortly; or, for further information please contact Kim Murphy at 802-362-3300 or at kmurphy@amff.com.

We welcome any donations toward our auction and raffle. Please contact the museum if you would like to contribute.

Annual Spring Dinner Featuring Vice President Dick Cheney

The American Museum of Fly Fishing is pleased to announce Vice President Dick Cheney as the honoree and guest speaker at the annual spring dinner held in New York City.

The evening's events will include a talk by Vice President Cheney followed by a live auction to benefit the museum.

The date is pending but contact Kim Murphy at 802-362-3300 or at kmurphy@amff.com to be included on the invitation mailing list.

Looking to an Unlikely Source



An original oil painting, A Fly Dresser's Work Bench by Catherine Wood (English, 1880–1939), is accompanied by five salmon flies from Aberdeen, Scotland, in this beautiful example of William Cushner's work.

THE MUSEUM WAS honored to organize and host the well-received exhibition *Ogden M. Pleissner: The Sporting Grand Tour*. We received national (and international) coverage in *Sporting Classics*, *American Art Review*, the *Journal of Antiques and Collectibles*, *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, the *Field & Stream* website, and *MidCurrent News*. Many of our visitors enjoyed sharing their stories about Pleissner's Vermont days, but most enjoyed talking about the thrill of collecting Pleissner's prints, paintings, and watercolors. Through Pleissner's meticulous eye and ability to capture the excitement of the sport, the exhibition presented a traditional art form that documented the periods and the locales of fly-fishing history.

Our winter 2008/2009 exhibition turns to another twentieth-century artist who mastered a different form of documenting the history of fly fishing. He is an unlikely source of angling art: He never cast a fly rod. He never tied a fly. He never waded crisp cold waters to net a fish. He was William Cushner.

Cushner was born in Alberta, Canada, in 1914. At age ten, Cushner moved with his family to Brooklyn, New York, where life afforded him trips to some of the most prestigious art museums in the world. It is reported that these museum trips fostered a love and appreciation for art of all kinds. After completing his service during World War II, Cushner made his living building wooden crates. In 1949, he began to create frames that were used in public spaces (such as art galleries and offices), and during the 1950s, Cushner opened a framing gallery in lower Manhattan. As his work with art flourished, Cushner became an accomplished geometric constructionist by the 1960s, and many of his works were collected by art museums.

It was during the 1960s that Cushner and the American Museum of Fly Fishing shared a common thread—or, better put, a common *line*. Cushner was approached by Hermann Kessler, then art director for *Field & Stream*, to build a frame for a fly tied by Kessler's well-known wife, Helen Shaw. (For you museum history buffs, you will recall that Kessler approached Leigh Perkins, then the new owner of the Orvis Company, with the idea of founding a fly-fishing museum during the mid-1960s. Forty years later, our museum is still going strong!)

The inspiration that Cushner drew from the beauty of a Shaw fly carried him into his new passion. Cushner then spent the next several years acquiring flies from collectors and tiers and fly-fishing artwork from a variety of sources under the guidance of artists and anglers. Although Cushner would usually pair the two media in a common shadowbox frame, the beauty of the fly was always meant to be the main focus of every work. The first 200 works compiled by Cushner traveled to three venues in New York City and Philadelphia in 1975 and 1976. Some of these works were eventually purchased by the museum from William Cushner in 1984. Cushner continued to create and exhibit more of his art until his death in 1992.

Fly on the Wall: The Art of William Cushner exhibition features about fifty Cushner works and will be on display through April. Come visit the museum this winter, and treat yourself to this wonderful art form while learning about the fly tiers and artists contained within each box.

CATHI COMAR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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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.