

The American Fly Fisher

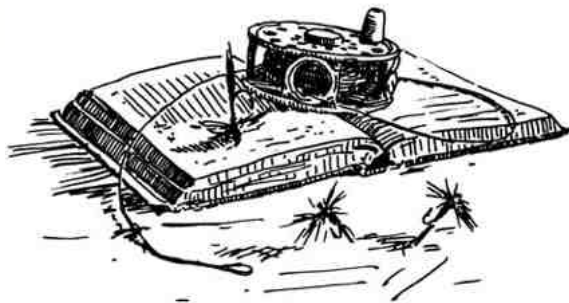
Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



SPRING 2012

VOLUME 38 NUMBER 2

Contemplating Competition and Other Facets of Our Sport



I FLY FISH. Of course I fly fish. I also do a little yoga. I'm not very good at either, in part because I don't practice enough to get good at them. In fact, in both cases, I've been not-practicing-enough for many years.

When I do fish or take a yoga class, I attempt to let go of how mediocre I am, enjoy the moment, and perhaps improve a little. I try not to judge the quality of my experience by comparing my performance to those around me. I don't want to compete with others or even with myself. These activities are meant to be meditative, after all. Aren't they?

Still, while many of us might claim that we angle contemplatively, few could claim never to have felt an inkling of competitiveness with our fishing buddies. And when the sport becomes a game as well—as it does in formal fly-fishing competitions—the pitting of angler against angler in pursuit of a prize changes the tenor of the day on the water. In “A Great Want of True Angling Sentiment: Is Competitive Fly Fishing Fatal?” (page 13), Paul Schullery attempts to address what history has to say about competitive fly fishing, then relays his own experience as a participant in the Jackson Hole One-Fly.

When one isn't busy competing (or not) with one's fly-fishing pals, one can contemplate our sport through books such as Nick Lyons's *Spring Creek*. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of its release, an anniversary that has not gone unnoticed by Dennis LaBare, whose life has been greatly affected by the book. In “Twenty Years of *Spring Creek*” (page 21), LaBare shares his experience of reading Nick Lyons, then meeting Nick Lyons, and eventually finding his own way to this mythic place.

In the last issue (Winter 2012), we ran Part I of Jim Hardman's “Synthetics in Fishing Tackle: What's in the Mix: Natural Rubber, Gutta-Percha, and ‘Modified Stuff,’” in which he introduced us to gutta-percha, mud, and hard rubber. Hardman—a retired

manufacturer of industrial adhesives and associated dispensing machinery—gets more into the “modified stuff” in Part II (page 2), which covers celluloid, Bakelite, phenolics, and modern-engineered plastics. Among the examples noted of celluloid reel seats is one found on a rod built by John Landman, a rod maker who has recently appeared in the pages of this journal and can be found in this issue as well.

“The Invisible Man: John G. Landman,” by Clarence Anderson, appeared here in Spring 2009. That article addressed the rod maker's supposed obscurity until the publication, in 1997, of A. J. Campbell's *Classic Antique Fly-Fishing Tackle*. Campbell's recognition of Landman encouraged more research, and much information unknown to Campbell was subsequently brought to light, as discussed by Anderson in “The Invisible Man.” Now, a “plethora of fresh data . . . have surfaced since the appearance of my (premature!) examination of Landman,” Anderson writes. “These more recent findings quite overturn most of the previous speculation about the nature of Landman's work and demonstrate conclusively that Landman's *modern* obscurity is merely the kind of historical accident proving, yet again, that fame is fleeting.” Read Anderson's latest findings in “John Landman Revisited” (page 8).

In book news, Coch-y-Bonddu Books recently published Terry Griffiths's *The Essential Kelson: A Fly-Tyer's Compendium*, featuring flies tied by Marvin Nolte. We are pleased to share a review by John Betts on page 20.

And each year, we like to thank our members for their support and recognize our donors, sponsors, supporters, volunteers, authors, lenders, and friends (page 23). Thank you. We couldn't do this without you.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR



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The American Museum of Fly Fishing promotes an understanding of and appreciation for the history, traditions, and practitioners of the sport of fly fishing. It collects, preserves, exhibits, studies, and interprets the artifacts, art, and literature of the sport and uses these resources to engage and benefit everyone.

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ON THE COVER: *James Hardman uses this Landman rod's reel seat as an example of celluloid's appealing resemblance to ivory in the second part of his article "Synthetics in Fishing Tackle: What's in the Mix." Meanwhile, Clarence Anderson takes a closer look at John's Landman's role in the development of modern rods in his article "John Landman Revisited." Photo by James Hardman.*

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Synthetics in Fishing Tackle

What's in the Mix: Natural Rubber, Gutta-Percha, and "Modified Stuff"

Part II

by James Hardman

In this two-part article, James Hardman offers us a history of the stuff that reel side plates and fly-rod grips are made of: man-made or -altered stuff. Part I introduced us to gutta-percha, mud, and hard rubber. Part II covers celluloid, Bakelite, phenolics, and modern-engineered plastics.

CELLULOID

Cellulose nitrate, or celluloid (originally a trade name), was developed as a substitute for ivory and found widespread acceptance as an early moldable plastic. John Hyatt, who pioneered the process of manufacture, also developed the production equipment to make celluloid a commercial success. Hyatt, by the way, held 250 patents, including those for Hyatt roller bearings. The man was a creative genius.¹

Celluloid was adopted for use in many molded items, including cuffs and collars (Figure 1), dentures, and ivory-colored knife handles (Figure 2). It has been extensively used in fishing tackle for reel seats on fine rods and in handle grasps on reels.

The earliest commercial form of celluloid, based on cellulose nitrate, was introduced in about 1870. It was prone to shrinkage and easily burned. We have all heard warnings of the fire hazard when storing old nitrate film. Indeed, cellulose nitrate, in the more heavily nitrated structure of gun cotton, was known for its flammability, and derivatives were used in early smokeless powders. Flammability wasn't really a problem with reel seats, but shrinkage that was due to the evaporation of residual camphor or other diluents was definitely a problem.²

It should be noted that Celluloid was sold under other trade names, including Pyroxylin, Xylonite, Parkesine, Pasbosene, and Pyralin.

Illustrations/figure credit goes to James Hardman unless otherwise noted.



Figure 1. A trade card for early Celluloid, a trade name for cellulose nitrate. Celluloid was developed as a substitute for ivory and here was advertised for waterproof shirt collars and cuffs.

One of the great attractions for celluloid was its ability to imitate ivory. Ivory was held in high esteem as a hallmark of quality, and substituting celluloid gained early acceptance.

One of the hallmark indicators of genuine elephant ivory is the presence of stratification or grain lines in a cross-hatch pattern. Indeed, unique to elephant ivory are these lines of Retzius, which



Figure 2. Celluloid (cellulose nitrate)—and later, cellulose acetate—found widespread acceptance for use in knife handles.



Figure 3. An old ivory cue ball with lines of Retzius; the cross-hatching pattern is indicative of elephant ivory.

intersect. Figure 3 is a picture of a billiard ball, an old ivory cue ball, alive with age cracks and the lines of Retzius.³

To provide these lines in celluloid, manufacturers soon learned to laminate thin sheets of celluloid with coatings of silver nitrate between the layers. After heating and forming under pressure, this form of celluloid starts to imitate ivory pretty well. The knife handle in Figure 4, labeled FRENCH IVORY, is an example of this product.

Celluloid reel seats are one of the hallmarks of Kosmic rods (Figures 5 and 6). The public reception had to be positive. Landman manufactured large numbers of rods, sold through various retailers, with celluloid reel seats spiral grooved for the 1890 patent rotary-locking bands. Celluloid was easy to machine, had acceptable weight, and was attractive in appearance. The reel seat on the Landman rod in Figures 7 and 8 has remarkable grain with strong contrasting boundary lines. Von Lengerke & Detmold ([VL&D], New York), Von Lengerke & Antoine (Chicago), and Abbey & Imbrie surely understood buyer perception, and all routinely offered quality rods with celluloid reel seats. Celluloid looked like genuine ivory, and it helped sell rods. The magnificent reel seat and handle on the Shipley boat rod in Figure 9 attests to the beauty of these rods.

Imitation became so effective that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish genuine ivory from celluloid. Early folding Civil War-era notepads were genuine ivory, and in later years (after 1870), they were manufactured from celluloid. Discriminating between them can be difficult (Figure 10).

Molded celluloid found application in bait-casting lures during World War I. The May 1917 issue of *National Sportsman* carried an advertisement for an Al Foss Oriental Wiggler made from Pyralin, a modified cellulose nitrate. Heddon introduced their Luny Frog lures in about 1927 and their Spook translucent casting lures (Figure 11) in the early 1930s, also molded from Pyralin. The Luny Frogs were handsome lures, but they could, and did, shatter when cast onto rocks. The translucent Super Dowagiacs were less prone to breakage; diluents were apparently added to improve impact resistance.

In spite of high hopes and good intentions, Pyralin did have its drawbacks. In warm, high-humidity storage, it could

shrink and even crumble apart. Collectors of early Heddon Spook lures and early Pflueger reels with Pyralin grasps understand these dangers all too well and recommend storage in a cool, dry place.

Cellulose acetate started supplanting the use of cellulose nitrate in some applications before World War I and proved very practical to mold with the advent of injection molding machines. Tennessee Eastman introduced a line of molding compounds based on cellulose acetate in 1929 under the trade name Tenite.⁴ Known for innovation, Heddon started using Pyralin threads in their screw-locking reel seats in about 1932 but by 1939 had switched over to Tenite.



Figure 4. A celluloid knife handle with laminations to give the look of genuine ivory, here marked FRENCH IVORY.



Celluloid and its derivatives, including cellulose acetate, gained wide acceptance in reel grasps starting in the late teens. Meek reels had long been fitted with bone grasps (primarily from cattle shin bones), which polished well and yellowed in time akin to aging ivory. The bone was often stained with a yellowish dye to create the image of quality ivory, much the way the W. W. Case Co. did with their bone-sided pocket knives. Bone made beautiful grasps, but like horn had a tendency to crack and split over time. Celluloid and cellulose acetate grasps, either molded or machined from rod stock, promised better dimensional stability and, when turned from striated round stock, gave every appearance of ivory (Figure 12).

Both celluloid (cellulose nitrate) and cellulose acetate were easily colored in manufacture. The triple grasps on the Talbot tournament reel in Figure 13 are an example of the tasteful use of color in reels.

Tenite (cellulose acetate) has been widely used in lures and plastic rod components for many years. Along with its derivatives, including cellulose butyrate and cellulose propionate, these polymers are still being used today.

In spite of accurate historical resources and the vast information highway that is the Internet, some inaccuracies persist. Regarding celluloid, the following quotation appears on the Internet page of polymer history offered by the University of Southern Mississippi:

The very first derivative of cellulose came about when a scientist reacted cellulose, in the form of cotton, with nitric acid. The result was cellulose nitrate.

Often times, as soon as something is invented, the first thing we do is figure out a way to use it to kill people. Such is the case with cellulose nitrate. Cellulose nitrate, also called gun cotton, turned out to be a powerful explosive. It soon replaced common gunpowder as the explosive charge in the ammunition for rifles and artillery. It worked so well that in the First World War, we were capable of killing ten million people in only four short years.

In all fairness to cellulose nitrate, it was also used for peaceful purposes. You see, even back then, there was concern that Africa's elephant herds were disappearing

Figure 5. Kosmic (U.S. Net & Twine) fly rod with a celluloid reel seat.

Figure 6. Note the striations in the celluloid. These laminations were added to give the appearance of genuine ivory.

Figure 7. Early Landman (VL&D) fly rod, snakewood and lancewood, celluloid reel seat.



Figure 9. Superb Shipley, Philadelphia, rod with celluloid handle and seat. From the collection of William Holbein, with permission.



Figure 8. Landman (VL&D) reel seat. Note the wide variations in thickness of celluloid laminations; genuine ivory would have had more uniform striations.



Figure 10. Civil war notepads were initially made of ivory; in later years, they were made of celluloid. They look much alike, and identification is often difficult.

far too quickly, and a replacement needed to be found for ivory in billiard balls. . . . (It) was quickly used to make the balls for the world's pool halls. The only problem was every once in awhile one of these would explode during the break.⁵

There is usually a seed of truth in most exaggerations, and this instance is no exception. Pioneer John Hyatt humorously told of a letter from a billiard saloon proprietor in Colorado who reported that a billiard ball, upon violent contact, had produced a report similar to that of a percussion cap, causing patrons to pull their guns. Hyatt explained that this was a matter of chemical purity and that it was not a recurring problem.⁶

Celluloid cue balls don't detonate. Nor do celluloid reel grasps or fly-rod reel

seats and spacers. But celluloid will easily burn; if removing a butt cap from a rod with a celluloid reel seat, apply heat to the hot-melt adhesive with great caution.

BAKELITE, PHENOLICS, AND MODERN-ENGINEERED PLASTICS

The turn of the twentieth century also saw the development of phenolic resins, introduced as Bakelite, a molded product based on the condensation reaction of phenol and formaldehyde.

These remarkable materials are really the first true synthetics, created strictly from man-made chemicals. Although commonly called Bakelite after Leo

Baekeland, the originator, there have been countless modifications to the original phenol-formaldehyde and resorcinol-formaldehyde blends. Incorporation of fillers and reinforcing fibers have minimized the tendency to chip, and over the years phenolics have been used in radio cases, electrical switches and insulating boards, automotive and electronic gauges, radio tubes, television sets, kitchen utensils, and certainly fishing tackle.

The Lenz reel in Figure 14 has phenolic side plates and gearbox covers. Complex shapes, especially those with offset raised bosses, make molding more cost-effective than machining from the solid. With suitable reinforcing agents, these materials have proven durable indeed; many Julius Vom Hofe B Ocean

reels and the Intrinsic in Figure 15 have black phenolic side plates. When reinforced with layered linen cloth, the pattern of the linen weave is distinctly visible. Modern reels manufactured by companies like Ocean City or Penn (Figure 16) typically have gearbox covers molded from modified phenolics.

Phenolic (resorcinol) adhesives are used to glue up bamboo strips in the manufacture of cane rods; naturally dark in color, they typically show as dark glue lines in the bamboo. Some rod makers add coloring agents to better blend with the color of the cane.

Molded phenolics have been used in a multitude of tackle accessories, from the Hardy Neroda fly boxes and gut leader storage canisters to bait-casting lures and reel-seat spacers in rods. These polymers are highly resistant to water and are simply not affected by salt exposure.

What is a test for early Bakelite? Moisten a Q-Tip with Scrubbing Bubbles or Formula 409 bathroom cleaner and touch it to the sample. If the area of contact shows yellow, it's Bakelite. I am told that this test will not harm surface finish, but it would be prudent to test in a concealed area.

MODERN CONSTRUCTION

The world of modern-engineered plastics has expanded greatly since World War II, and new materials have certainly found their way into fishing tackle. Molded nylon is a material of choice for gears, screws, rim switches, drag-adjustment knobs, handle grasps, internal molded parts, and even click springs in reels. Molded nylon grip caps on rods are wear and abrasion resistant; they absorb shock, and they are inexpensive.

Delrin, the "poor man's nylon," is an exceptional modern material of construction; it machines well and is highly water and wear resistant. Bogdan reels are fitted with Delrin brake shoes and grasps.

Rulon, a filled PTFE (Teflon), is used in Orvis disk drags. These remarkable poly-

Figure 11. Heddon Super Dowagiac, one of the early Spook lures. First molded of Pyralin (a modified cellulose nitrate), they were subject to breakage. Later Spooks had greater impact resistance.

Figure 12. Meek (Horton Mfg. Co.) bait-casting reel with celluloid or cellulose acetate grasps. Cellulose acetate started to displace celluloid in the early 1900s but didn't hit full stride until the late 1920s.

Figure 13. Talbot tournament casting reel with colorful celluloid or cellulose acetate grasps.

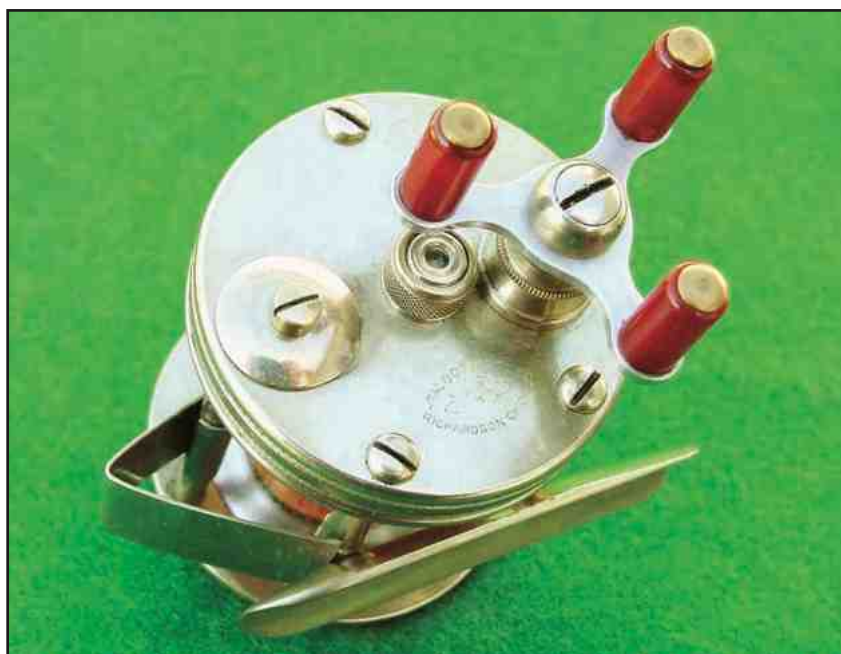




Figure 14. Lenz fly reel: a unique design with a drag control built into the crank; the side plates, including the integral gear-box cover, are molded from a phenolic resin. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.



Figure 15. Julius Vom Hofe Intrinsic with phenolic side plates. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

mers continue to evolve and find new applications. Some Loop reels are seemingly molded entirely of plastic; from frames and spools to support rollers, there are few metal parts to be found.

Fiberglass and graphite composites dominate modern rod construction. The development of these materials and their application is a story in itself. This article emphasizes the earlier compositions, but the trend should be apparent: the future belongs to synthetics. Just thumb through a mail-order catalog or walk the sporting goods aisle in a K-Mart or Wal-Mart: you will marvel at the current use of plastics in fishing tackle. From rods with molded foam grips to tackle storage boxes, synthetics have arrived. How many wooden lures are manufactured today? Apart from Rapalas and a few balsa bass bugs, wooden lures are a rarity.

Even the classic synthetics are disappearing. Everything “traditional” is being reevaluated. Metals such as aluminum are being alloyed to resist corrosion, and some reels are being machined from titanium. We belong to a new world—a world of cost reduction, a world of change—and, like it or not, change will continue.

asked me why I was rubbing his reel on my pant leg and then smelling it. I explained that I was checking to see if it was hard rubber. That meeting started an enduring friendship and, in truth, my learning to fly fish.

My thanks also to Jim Brown, Steve Vernon, Dean Smith, Fred Grafeld, Roy Jinks, Dick Littlefield, Jim Shaffer, Per Brandin, Yoshi Akiyama, Walt Carpenter, the late Stan Bogdan, Steve Bogdan, Bob Selb, Fred Kretchman, Jim Schottenham, John Gland, Bruce Craddock, Clarence Anderson, my sons Jim and Tom, and so many others who have helped dig out information.

And warmest appreciation to my father and grandfather, whose conversations at the dinner table provided insight into both the men and the practices of the rubber-molding industry.



Figure 16. Phenolic construction dominates modern trade reels, such as this Penn light multiplier. This molded polymer offers superior strength and sunlight and saltwater resistance. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to my good friend Hoagy Carmichael, who

ENDNOTES

1. John H. DuBois, *Plastics History, USA* (Boston: Cahners Books), 1972 (chapter on celluloid, cellulose nitrate, and cellulose acetate).
2. M. Kauffman, *The First Century of Plastics* (London: The Plastics Institute, 1963).
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5. “Early Synthetic Polymers,” Polymer Science Learning Center, Department of Polymer Science, The University of Southern Mississippi, 2005, www.pslc.ws/mactest/early.htm. Accessed August 2007.
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John Landman Revisited

by Clarence Anderson

TWENTY YEARS OF regarding Martin Keane's *Classic Rods and Rodmakers* (Winchester Press, 1976) as the last word on the subject (rather than the seminal *first* word) led me in 1997 to view with skeptical surprise A. J. Campbell's characterization of John Landman as "a gifted rod-designer whose legacy was a rod so striking in appearance that its likes have not been seen before or since."¹ That Landman was also "the single most obscure" rod maker provoked no surprise at all, as not only was his name unknown to me, the neophyte, but far more significantly, it was not even mentioned by Keane!² (Nor, for that matter, was it mentioned in Ernest Schwiebert's equally authoritative *Trout* of 1978 [E. P. Dutton].)

Campbell's rediscovery of Landman's significance in the evolution of modern rod design stimulated others to begin searching for references to him in the sporting literature of the period with the predictable result, a dozen years later, that much information unknown to Campbell in 1997 has been brought to light. But that development is actually less remarkable than the plethora of fresh data that have surfaced since the appearance of my (premature!) examination of Landman, "The Invisible Man: John G. Landman," in the Spring 2009 issue of this journal.³ These more recent findings quite overturn most of the previous speculation about the nature of Landman's work and demonstrate conclusively that Landman's *modern* obscurity is merely the kind of historical accident proving, yet again, that fame is fleeting.

"Obscure" would have been the last epithet applied to Landman by the *Outing* magazine reviewer who, describing in the September 1918 issue his recent experience with two surf rods, one a Landman, expressed confidence that "every fisherman knows what a John Landman rod is, so this particular one needs no comment of mine"⁴ [emphasis mine]. And when prolific sporting author and cofounder of the Anglers' Club of New York, Perry Frazier, in a 1911 *Forest and Stream* examination of the virtues of pinned ferrules, wished to name examples of "famous rod-makers" using them, the four he selected were Hiram Hawes, Ed Paine, Reuben Leonard, and—no surprise to his contemporaries, however much it may surprise today's readers—John Landman!⁵

Driving a stake through the heart of Campbell's Thomas & Edwards (T&E)

hypothesis—the ingenious and superficially convincing theory that Landman, who supposedly "had no facilities" for rod-shaft construction,⁶ traded his "sweatshop" metalwork for T&E blanks—is the following blandishment published in the May 1913 *Sporting Goods Dealer*:

John G. Landman—Veteran Rod Maker

John G. Landman is probably the most picturesque figure in the world of fishing rod manufacture today. He has enjoyed 40 years of well-earned success and has built up a reputation that today gives an accent of finality to any opinion that he may express relative to the modern scientific building of fishing rods. The plant operated by John G. Landman and his energetic son is located at 59 Cedar Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. Any day a visitor will find Messrs. Landman, senior and junior, both there hard at work with their assistants. This intimate supervision of the "masters" gives their products that personal touch and finish which is nowadays sought for by the more critical anglers. A dealer handling John G. Landman's fishing rods is never questioned by his customers. When he is asked what high-grade line he carries and mentions the name John Landman, a sale usually follows, if quality alone is sought by the sportsman.⁷

Sporting Goods Dealer was a limited-circulation trade periodical, and surviving issues of it are now extremely rare, but indefatigable researcher Mary Kelly somehow found and copied, but did not

publish, this brief encomium on the life of Landman; what purpose or circumstance inspired the *Dealer's* editor to compose it is unknown. The reference in *Sporting Goods Dealer* to "40 years of well-earned success" possibly represents a rounding off of Landman's time in the rod business, but even if thirty-seven or thirty-eight were assumed to be the actual number, taking the beginning of his career back to the mid-1870s, there can be no doubt now that Landman indisputably was, as described, a "veteran rod maker" who did not *need* the assistance of latecomers such as Fred Thomas and Eustis Edwards. Talented as the latter indisputably were, *they* are not known to have constructed eight-strip rods, which was one of Landman's specialties.

The *Dealer's* description of Landman's "plant" demolishes all doubt as to exactly who was building John G. Landman rods, but to drive the last nail in the coffin of the hypothetical T&E connection (which continues to enjoy wide currency thanks to huge sales of Campbell's 1997 tour de force), there is also this myth-busting advertisement in the January 1921 issue of *Forest and Stream*:

FOR SALE: Complete contents of my fishing rod factory, with tools and machinery for making split bamboo rods. Large amount of raw material and hundreds of glued stock ready for mounting. John G. Landman, 59 Cedar Street, Brooklyn, N.Y.⁸

FISHING EQUIPMENT

FLY TYING MATERIAL AND SUPPLIES.
Everything for tying your own flies. Price list free. A. Willmarth, Roosevelt, N. Y.

FOR SALE.—COMPLETE CONTENTS OF
my fishing rod factory, with tools and machinery, for making split bamboo rods. Large amount of raw material and hundreds of glued stock ready for mounting. John G. Landman, 59 Cedar street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Forest and Stream, January 1921, vol. 91, number 1, page 45.

Going Fishing?

The time to buy is before the fishing season opens. **WE CARRY THE FAMOUS SAHDALA REEL, USED BY THE SUCCESSFUL SURF-CASTERS, WINNER OF ALL THE BIG TOURNAMENTS.** It has the **OUTING O. K.** Also a full line of split bamboo rods, tarpon tackle, lines, reels, and tarpon sundries.

"John Landmans"
Tarpon and Tuna
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Special attention is paid to mail orders. On all purchases of over \$2.50 the charges are prepaid within 50 miles of New York; on purchases of \$5.00 and over charges are prepaid within 150 miles of New York, excepting on Canoes, Portable Houses, Aero Sleds and outdoor gymnasium. Beyond 150 miles, at expense of purchasers.

Let us send you complete catalog covering all kinds of good sporting goods. Address

F·A·O·SCHWARZ
303 FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK

Outing magazine, October 1916.

Appearing in the magazine's classified section on page 45, this notice was of course placed by Landman's son and partner, John Jr., and ran only once, suggesting a prompt sale or a change of heart—very possibly the latter, because John Jr. survived another fourteen years. A researcher fortunate enough to have access to a complete run of *Forest and Stream* and searching diligently for any mention of Landman could easily overlook so inconspicuous a notice as this, so it would be unreasonable to fault previous investigators for failing to discover it. (A rumor of this advertisement reached my ears while gathering data for "The Invisible Man," but searches of scores of issues failed to find it; only when the January 1921 issue was digitized by Google about a year ago did it finally reveal itself.)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AT LAST!

To the list of tackle retailers marketing Landman rods that was enumerated in "The Invisible Man" may now be added two major outlets—FAO Schwarz (surprisingly) and the Thomas E. Wilson Sporting Goods Co.—and a minor one, Golcher & Company of San Francisco, about which little more can be added, except that the firm was principally a firearms distributor and importer in the 1890s and early 1900s. Schwarz and Wilson are critically important because, for the first time in his career (so far as is presently known), Landman was identified by name as the maker of rods offered by these dealers—a marketing maneuver that would be pointless unless customers could be expected to recognize the name and associate it with a quality product.

In 1913, probably to the surprise of many customers, the venerable FAO Schwarz toy company of New York

began to offer a complete line of tackle, including Landman rods, at its famous Fifth Avenue storefront.⁹ There is some evidence that the Schwarz tackle department—managed by W. M. Finch, a well-known tournament caster—emphasized sales of Landman's surf-casting rods, one of which was used to establish a world-record cast by a Schwarz customer, Dr. Carleton Simon.¹⁰

Given the fabulous descriptions by Fred Mather and Genio Scott, among many others, of offshore fishing in New York Bay and along the coast of Long Island before the Jersey shore was colonized by the petrochemical industry, it is hardly surprising that Landman catered to the saltwater trade. The disappearance of

tackle advertising by the mid-1920s suggests that Schwarz's foray into the tackle market had run its course by that time.

Another important new retail outlet for Landman rods was established either shortly before or shortly after the elder Landman's death in 1917: the Thomas E. Wilson Sporting Goods Co. of Chicago. This bold newcomer with the temerity to challenge long-established Von Lengerke & Antoine (VL&A), one of Landman's principal wholesale customers since the 1890s, burst hell-for-leather into the crowded tackle market in 1914 with grand ambitions backed by the capital of "a titan of American business in the 20th century."¹¹ Wilson's management exhibited a refreshing new attitude toward the rod makers whom old-line tackle retailers had usually subjected to anonymity, and unlike VL&A—which relied heavily on John Landman but never (so far as is known) breathed his name—the Wilson company was obviously proud to offer "Landman Finest Quality Hand-Made Fly Rods" in its impressive catalog for 1917.

For more than a dozen years, Wilson's prominent advertising in the leading sporting periodicals made it seem a strong contender against the older tackle retailers, but by the late 1920s, management had evidently decided more money was to be made in athletic goods and withdrew from the tackle market altogether. Because of the rarity of relevant catalogs, the impact of Landman's marketing arrangement with Wilson on his old relationship with VL&A is unknown, but it would be rather surprising if the Windy

FISHING TACKLE

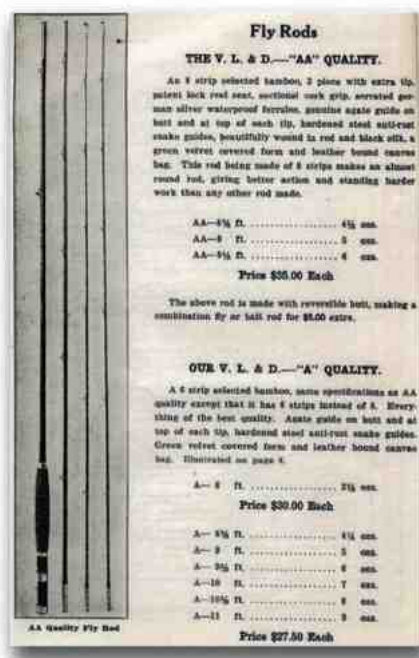
Landman Finest Quality Hand-Made Fly Rods

Landman's Split Bamboo Fly Casting Rods are made entirely by hand. The mountings are German silver and of special design.

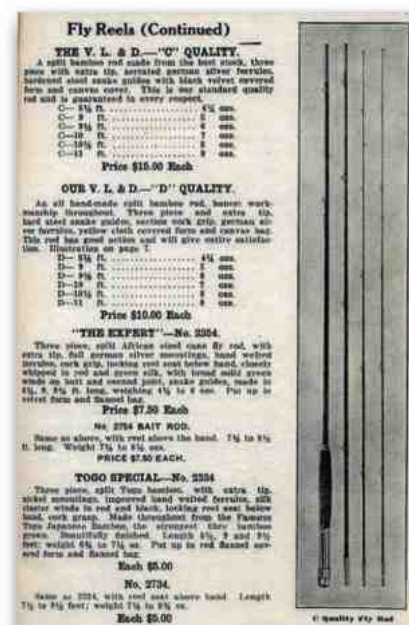
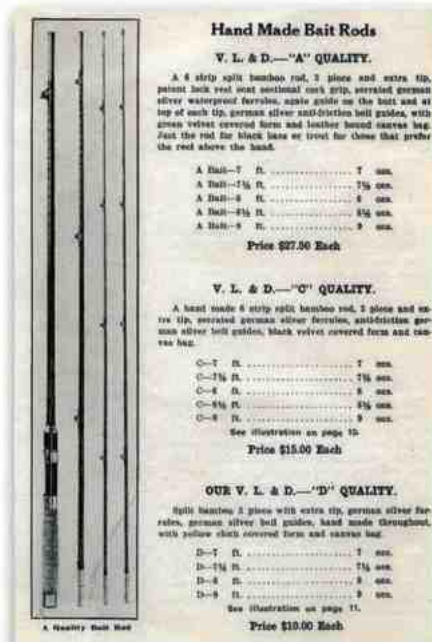
The Bamboo is selected with the greatest care and all the enamel is retained. They are fully guaranteed and the action, material and workmanship will be found exceptional. Three-piece construction with an extra tip. Every strip of bamboo is carefully matched for strength and action and receives from six to eight coatings of waterproof varnish. Ferrules are serrated. Hardened tool steel snake guides and German silver tips. Well wrapped with finest silk. Sectional velvet cork hand grasp. Put up on finest velvet covered wood form with canvas bag. Supplied from stock 9 or 9½ feet in length and weighing 5 to 6 ounces.

H10.—Landman Fly Casting Rods..... Each, \$18.50

Thomas E. Wilson & Co., Catalog #3, 1917, page 5.



Von Lengerke & Detmold fishing tackle catalog, Spring 1916.



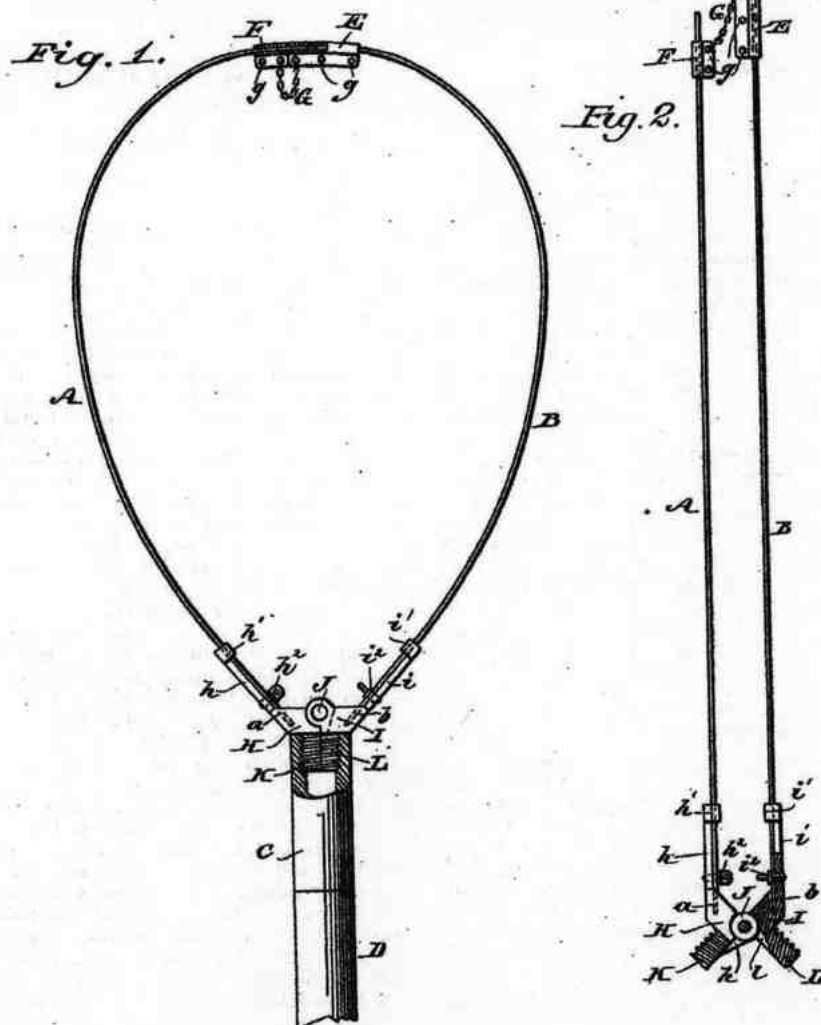
(No Model.)

J. G. LANDMAN.

HINGE SCREW COUPLING FOR FISHING NET FRAMES.

No. 403,680.

Patented May 21 1889.



Landman's earliest patent.

LANDING-NET MANIA

Landman's locking reel seat proved to be remarkably successful, and after the expiration of his patent in 1914, it was copied by Fred Divine and Ed Paine, as noted in "The Invisible Man." Not noted in the article (because I did not know it at the time) was that the 1890 patent was not his first: on 21 May 1889, Landman had been awarded no. 403680 for a "Hinge-Screw Coupling for Fishing-Net Frame," a device for joining a collapsible frame to its removable handle. Set the world on fire this invention did not, but it

did ignite, a few years later, a legal and bureaucratic controversy that resulted in the publication of an important ruling, referenced later in many similar disputes, by the highest authority in the Patent Office, the patent commissioner.

The fracas began when a patent application submitted 24 September 1889 by James Reed (a Boston tackle dealer not to be confused with William Reed of Chicago, whose patented serrated ferrule appears to have been "borrowed" by Landman, as hypothesized in "The Invisible Man") was rejected because to the examiners it appeared, initially, to in-

fringe Landman's three-month-old patent. Reed appealed that rejection on the grounds that he had been manufacturing his similar device *before* Landman's patent had been granted and could prove it.

Following an exhaustive review of judicial and administrative precedent, as reported in *Decisions of the Commissioner of Patents* (1891), the commissioner ruled—to simplify a dauntingly complex exercise in applied logic—that no conflict, or "interference," existed because the two mechanisms were *not* "substantially the same invention." Although Reed's design differed sufficiently from Landman's to

qualify, in patent terminology, as “novel,” he had described it in language so broad and inclusive as to embrace not only his own but Landman’s idea as well, and therein lay the legal conundrum that precipitated this imbroglio. Reed eventually secured his patent and added his brainstorm to the multitude of collapsible nets then crowding the market. Landman may have sold rights to his coupling device to another net maker (as yet undiscovered), but if so, it would be amazing if his royalties recouped legal expenses incurred in this feud. What he did not do, it would appear, was undertake manufacture of the net himself.

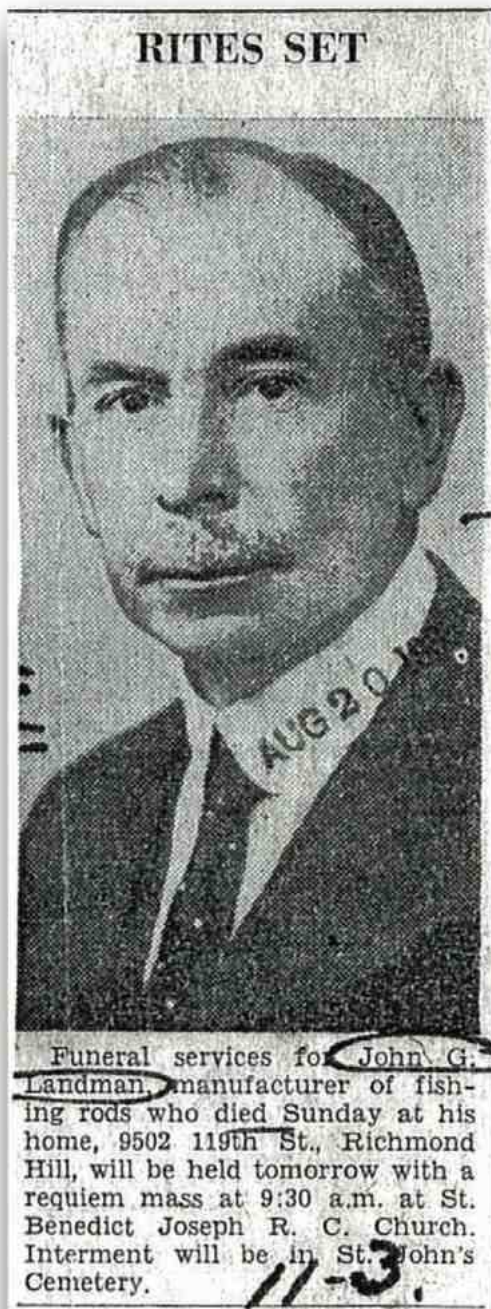
This legal and, no doubt, personal setback did not discourage Landman from devising yet another variation on the same theme (“Landing Net Frame”) within a few years, for which he was awarded Patent no. 649581 on 15 May 1900. Despite the superficial resemblance of his reengineered mechanism to that of Meisselbach’s hugely popular “Harrimac” net, which dominated the collapsible market for decades, no infringement issues arose, and so far as is known, Landman’s 1900 patent sunk into the same obscurity that had engulfed his prior effort. The decade between 1889 and the turn of the century was the period in which Landman’s rod business most flourished, and one must marvel that he invested such time and energy in perfecting an idea that, even if successful, probably would have netted him minimal profit.

FIVE DECADES IN THE TRADE

Unlike many grimly realistic movies of the early 1930s, the sporting periodicals, and especially the advertisements therein, betray scant evidence of hard times: the Great Depression. Nevertheless, it would be hard to believe these

years were good ones for the Landman rod business. Catalogs, advertisements, or other evidence confirming the continued production of Landman rods into the era of bread lines and soup kitchens have not, so far, been reported. Nevertheless, the *Brooklyn Eagle*’s 1935 obituary for son John identified him, as it had his father in 1917, as a “manufacturer of fishing rods,” so perhaps he persevered in the family business, on some reduced scale, until near the end.¹³ If so, and giving credence to the timeline presented by the *Sporting Goods Dealer*, the math is unequivocal: for half a century, Landmans, father and son, remained active in American rod making, and if not celebrities of the stature of Leonard, Thomas, and Paine, were very far from obscure among reasonably well-informed anglers.¹⁴

John G. Landman was, like his father before him, a “manufacturer of fishing rods,” as noted in this notice of his funeral services that ran in the Brooklyn Eagle in 1935.



ENDNOTES

1. A. J. Campbell, *Classic & Antique Fly Fishing Tackle* (New York: Lyons Press, 1997), 112.

2. Ibid.

3. Clarence Anderson, “The Invisible Man: John G. Landman,” *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 2009, vol. 35, no. 2), 2–9.

4. “Surf Tackle,” *Outing* (September 1918, vol. 72), 399.

5. Perry Frazier, “Pinned Ferrules,” *Forest and Stream* (23 December 1911, vol. 76, no. 24), 905.

6. Campbell, 112.

7. Quoted in Campbell, 112.

8. *Forest and Stream* (January 1921, vol. 91, no. 1), 45.

9. Tod E. A. Larson, “Toy Reels? The Fishing Tackle of F. A. O. Schwarz,” *The Reel News* (July 2009), 4.

10. R. H. Corson, “Surf-Casting Record Comes to America,” *Sporting Goods Dealer*, January 1922.

11. Tod E. A. Larson, “The Reels of Thomas E. Wilson & Co.,” *The Reel News* (July 2006), 4.

12. Thanks to Kelly’s acquisition of the catalog, but more importantly, thanks to the very great generosity of Dr. John Elder (who

acquired most of Kelly’s huge collection after her death) in sharing it with me and providing photocopies from it.

13. *The Brooklyn Eagle* (3 November 1935).

14. Throwing light, indirectly, on the commercial viability of the family business is the value of the elder Landman’s estate: \$76,000—a respectable sum in 1917. This figure excluded the value of the rod shop and contents (attached to the home at 59 Cedar), previously transferred to Junior. (For this information, I am indebted to Ed Johnson, a Landman descendant, who discovered Senior’s will.)

“A Great Want of True Angling Sentiment”: Is Competitive Fly Fishing Fatal?

by Paul Schullery



Anglers making their way toward the boats docked on Grafham Pier in Grafham, England, ready to begin the 1986 B and H National Fly Fishing Championships. Image copyright Des Colhoun. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence, <http://www.geograph.org.uk/reuse.php?id=734471>, accessed 18 August 2011.

COMPETITION AND ITS ever-implied companion aggression have been the subject of countless scientific and popular commentaries, in which we humans are likened to, distinguished from, or merely informed about the competitive urges of many other species of animal. Like love, competition has many admirers and more than a few detractors. Competition, we are told, is the creator of fitness—as individuals, as mates, as communities, as markets, as corporations, as teams, as schools, as nations. Competition is the driver of progress, the breaker of hearts, the maker of champions, the meaning of life. No wonder we talk, write, and think about it so much. It is an inordinately complex matter. Whether or not each of us decides to believe that it is an inherent or essential part of human nature, it is an undeniably important part of modern human life.

Competition in sport has likewise been through the critical and popular opinion mills. For some social commentators, competitive sports have been seen as society's safety valve, giving us a way to let off aggressive steam that would otherwise increase the murder rate and overpopulate the jails. For others, those same competitive sports are the training grounds of citizenship, teaching us to honor a hundred locker-room banners about teamwork, being tough and getting going, and getting along. Then there are those for whom competitive sports are spectacles and pageantry, with all the complicated social functions such things entail. For others, competitive sports are a way to make a living. Finally, competitive sports are the new opiate of the masses, functioning primarily to keep us from thinking about anything that matters. Take your pick; they all sound relatively true to me.

SPORT OR GAME OR BOTH?

Attempts are regularly made to distinguish between sports and games. Half a

century ago, Roderick Haig-Brown, certainly one of the wisest and far-seeing of writers on outdoor sport, emphasized the importance of the distinction. His mini-essay on the subject has an integrity, breadth, and skepticism that deserve quoting at length:

All boys want to compete, and it is well that they should, but if they are to enjoy sport, as opposed to athletic contests, they must learn early to distinguish between the two. Sport is something enjoyed purely for its own sake, relaxing, healing and increasing; it is infinitely complex, limited in its scope only by the individual limitations of the man who pursues it; competition between men has no place in it and can only debase it. Athletic games and contests are competition between men; easygoing sportsmanship once had a part in such affairs, sometimes still has; but for the most part it is lost in ruthless efficiency and something called the will to win. Sport is carried on generously within the limits of simple and largely unwritten rules developed to make it more interesting; the hunter or fisherman who does not stay within these

This article appeared in slightly different form as a chapter in Paul Schullery's *If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing* (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 2008).

rules kills his sport. Athletic contests are carried to the extreme limits of rules rigidly designed to prevent manslaughter and reduce cheating; the modern athlete who does not take every possible advantage of the rules is considered a deficient performer. There is room for both diversions in a boy's life or a man's life or a nation's life, but there should be no confusion between them.¹

I've pointed out before that we tend to use the term *sport* quite casually, and very few of us adhere to any distinguishing language for making it clear whether we are talking about organized games or outdoor sports.² The lines are hardly clear, anyway. *Sports Afield* is almost all about hunting and fishing. *Sports Illustrated* is almost all about games.

I'm sure that some people would say that this loss of clarity of definition is part of the modern problem; that it's in good part because modern recreationists, like some of Haig-Brown's "boys," were never taught the difference, so they now see no meaningful distinction between NASCAR and fly fishing. Merely that Haig-Brown thought all this involved only men suggests how rapidly the social view of sport and games has changed since his time. But I hope that the people who worry about that loss of clarity keep worrying about it and keep speaking out. The stakes are high here, and there is an important conversation to be had on how we wish to define fly fishing (if not NASCAR) in the future.

Though I will admit that I, too, am alternately appalled and saddened by some of what I see in modern fly fishing's drift into ever-flashier competitive events, that's not quite what this essay is about. I am concerned here because in today's debates over competitive fly fishing, history is being invoked carelessly to "prove" some viewpoint or other about the rightness of competition. History gets abused that way all the time, of course, in arguments over every imaginable subject. Most of us wouldn't know good historical research if it came up

and bit us on our breathables, but we love to think it's on our side.

So we might as well check and see what history has to say on the subject. Maybe it actually *is* on someone's side.

FLY FISHING AS A COMPETITIVE SPORT: WHEN AND HOW?

My long-standing interest in competitiveness among fly fishers was renewed by reading a defense of fly-fishing competitions in *Fly Fisherman*, in which the author said that "Europeans have enjoyed fly-fishing competitions for centuries."³ My attempt to communicate with the author and learn more about this genuinely fascinating statement was

unsuccessful, so I can't be certain of his intentions, but I gather from the context of the remark that this long history of fly-fishing competition was seen as proof that fly-fishing competitions are okay today. After all, if our forefathers have been holding such competitions for centuries, surely today's competitions are nothing but an honorable part of a long tradition.

The critical reader may have already noticed a flaw in this attempt to invoke history to defend competitive fly-fishing events. Just because we've done something for hundreds of years doesn't necessarily mean it was okay then, much less now (think witch burning or slavery). But we can overlook that flaw for now and consider fly-fishing history specifically.

First, let's each recall our own experiences fishing with friends. Few of us could claim that we have *never* felt a competitive moment when fishing with our pals. Competition plays a role in countless fishing tales in our literature, and though some of them are a bit unseemly, most fall within the realm of what we would still consider good sportsmanship. We had better start by admitting that we like to catch the most fish, and that often means outfishing someone else, and that it feels good to do that.

Three and a half centuries ago, no less ardent a gentleman-fisher than Izaak Walton himself endorsed this mild and very localized form of competition. While describing what made a good angler, he said, "... it is diligence, and observation, and practice, and an ambition to be the best in the art, that must do it. I will tell you, scholar, I once heard one [such angler] say, 'I envy not him that eats better meat than I do, nor him that is richer, or that wears better clothes than I do; I envy nobody but him, and him only, that catches more fish than I do.' And such a man is like to prove an angler; and this noble emulation I wish to you and all young anglers."⁴

What makes this comment by Walton especially interesting is that he is the authority that today's anti-competition commentators most often invoke to demonstrate that fly fishing's



From Isaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*
(London: Henry Kent, 1759), facing page 215.

tradition has no room for such things as fly-fishing tournaments or one-fly contests, much less a fly-fishing world championship. That sort of thing, they say, is not in the “Waltonian” tradition.

And, although they may have missed this one finer point of Walton’s view, they are still correct to invoke him that way. Even admitting that Walton was not much of a fly fisher, in his beautiful book he forever expressed much of the still-prevailing sentiment of angling as a gentle and nonbelligerent enterprise. As he did so, he wisely acknowledged that anglers do like to outfish each other.

We don’t dare lean too hard on the 350-year-old pronouncements of a man who died long before the appearance of a society that could create and then support professional athletics on a multibillion dollar scale. He was certainly speaking to us in his book, but let’s be careful to read him within his own context. Whether Walton’s mild advocacy of some good-natured rivalry among anglers justifies NASCAR-on-the-South-Platte is another matter, and no doubt each of us will draw his or her own conclusions.

But if you are among those seeking Waltonian support for professional competitive fly fishing, you may read all the rest of Walton’s writings without finding anything else to help you, and you will find much to suggest that you are off track. For Walton, angling was about quiet, and solitude, and gentleness, and beauty. If you can make that combination work with a little competitive edge added, more power to you. But it strains the historical record to get more than that from him, just as it strains the historical record to say with absolute certainty that Walton wouldn’t love a day zooming around in a good bass boat. We just don’t know.

This is not to suggest that competition, or competitiveness, seemed to be much on the minds of Walton’s contemporaries, or on the minds of most of the angling writers between his time and the early 1800s. Despite the earnest assertion by the fellow in *Fly Fisherman*, I have found no historical evidence of formal angling competitions—that is, organized competitions as opposed to a couple guys making a casual streamside wager between themselves—until the 1800s. And even then, it looks like fly fishing was about the last type of sport fishing to join the contest.

Nineteenth-century anglers were at least as diverse in their personalities and passions as we are today. The most hardcore overachievers—William Stewart and David Webster come to mind right off—were not only driven to outfish the rest of the world, they were just as driven

to outcompete their fellow fishing theorists (Stewart: “If the sport of angling lies in the capture of fish, it seems evident that the more fish the better sport”⁵).

There was not only competition in catching fish; there was competition between experts over whose special tactics were the best at catching fish—which was to say, whose book, flies, or other proprietary tackle were most worth buying; commerce was just another kind of competition.

Whether or not they engaged in formal fishing competitions, these Stewart-type anglers were by nature and personality ferociously intense about it all. The great increase in fishing-book production in the nineteenth century exposes more of the quirks and styles of that century’s anglers, but I imagine that similarly disparate types fished the rivers of England in every previous century as long as fish hooks were known.

This reality—that there have always been personality types inclined to aggressive interaction with other fishermen—may be a sort of left-handed concession to those who want to believe that modern fly-fishing competitions are a natural outgrowth of the sport’s traditions. But it’s a fairly feeble concession. Just because human nature includes certain traits doesn’t prove those traits must necessarily be accommodated or celebrated in a given activity. If even Father Izaak endorsed a little friendly rivalry, who could doubt it? Among the many personality types on the stream on any given day—out there with the overachievers, the underachievers, the hustlers, the jocks, the fashion-plates, the navel-gazers, the club-joiners, and all the rest of us who are usually several of these things at once—will surely be some William Stewarts, out to destroy the competition.

Today’s professional fly-fishing competitions are a lot more flashy and commerce driven than were Walton and his buddies, vying to catch the most dace—and maybe making the loser buy the first round of ale that evening. But the difference between then and now is relative rather than absolute. The size of the audience, the formality of the rules, and the worth of winning are much greater now, but the procompetition crowd might well ask, “So what? If all we’re doing is haggling over price here, why bother? What’s the difference?” Interesting question.

IT ALL STARTED

So we’re a diverse crowd, and some of us are by nature competitive. No questioning those things. The historical existence of formal competitions among fly fishers is a different question entirely.

The British sporting historian Charles Chenevix Trench has described the rise of match fishing in the U.K. this way:

It all started during the nineteenth century in the English industrial north and midlands, where there were thousands of keen working-class anglers to whom trout-fishing was inaccessible owing to cost and distance. (In contrast, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish artisans had trout-fishing almost on the doorstep, so match-fishing has never been popular in the Celtic fringe.) Most of the rivers and canals they fished were polluted by their factories, so the fishing was not very good. Competition gave it just that excitement which can hardly be found solely in angling for small roach. At first competitions were local, on a pub or small club basis, enlivened by sweepstakes, winner take all. Inevitably, a National Federation of Anglers was formed in 1903; and in 1906 the first N.F.A. Annual Championship was held.⁶

None of this was about fly fishing, though we ought to recognize that fly fishing has inspired its own kind of competition. Casting competitions were held in the U.S. as early as 1860.⁷ In fact, because of the evolving tackle available at the time, this is when competitions would first have become meaningful, which further suggests that even fly fishers needed only the right tackle and opportunities to very quickly find ways to formalize at least some aspects of the sport into competitive events.

The right tackle appeared by the mid-1800s or so. With the popularization of reels, silk lines, and modern metal guides on rods, fly casters were no longer restricted to the length of line that could be attached to the end of the rod. John Betts’s researches have traced the development of false casting and line shooting as nineteenth-century anglers availed themselves of the new and much more versatile equipment.⁸ This equipment was essential to competition. Until a reel held abundant extra line for shooting, until a line could be shot (which is to say, until silk lines replaced knotted horse-hair lines), and until a rod could allow the line to pass smoothly through its guides while being shot, distance casting as we know it today was not possible. Distance casting was an essential ingredient in the mix needed to generate an interest in competitive casting, which has flourished ever since. Distance casting—and accuracy casting at distances beyond a couple rod lengths—constituted virtually all of the important components of competitive fly casting as it arose in the later 1800s.

But keep in mind that competitive fly casting wasn’t a fishing contest. Casting

contests were independent of the streams and lakes where fishing took place. The contestants, some of whom were among the best-known fly fishers of the late 1800s in both England and America, were exercising a specific set of skills with, to use Haig-Brown's words, "extreme limits of rules" that controlled the entire process. Casting contests, to further follow Haig-Brown's terminology, took an element of the *sport* of fly fishing and turned it into a *game*.

Meanwhile, it was back on the real streams and lakes where competition, even in the nineteenth century, came up against the resistance and disapproval of people who saw fishing as something less adversarial. I have the impression that in the matter of competitiveness among anglers, nineteenth-century fishing writers tended to divide themselves into the two general categories that we still assign to them today. The instructional ("practical," to use Stewart's term) writers were more likely to be all for the rapid harvest of fish and outfishing the other guy. The experiential (the storytellers) tended to take a less aggressive and demanding stance toward the fish, the river, their fellow anglers, and themselves.⁹

Stewart will serve as the type specimen of the former group. He was thought of as fanatical. One angler who knew him "remarked that a day out with Stewart was 24 hours of creeping and crawling."¹⁰

No one exemplified the second group better than Stewart's fellow Scot, the poet-scholar-angler Andrew Lang, whose 1891 book, *Angling Sketches*, remains one of the most charming of the era's fishing memoirs. Lang was a proto-Nick Lyons, self-deprecating, humorous, and wise.

His protestations of his own unworthiness as an angler, whether real or just a pleasant literary stance, placed him firmly in the camp of those of us who are simultaneously suspicious and perhaps a little jealous of the masterful fish catchers of our generation.

Lang did not feel a need to be expert at catching fish to perceive problems with competitive fishing. As a firsthand witness, he lamented the rise of late-nineteenth-century match fishing chronicled by Trench:

That men should competitively angle shows, indeed, a great want of true angling sentiment. To fish in a crowd is odious, to work hard for prizes of flasks and creels and fly-books is to mistake the true meaning of the pastime. However, in this crowded age men are so constituted that they like to turn a contemplative exercise into a kind of Bank Holiday. There is no use in arguing with such persons . . .¹¹

Notice that there is more than one complaint here. The match fisher lacked "true angling sentiment." Fishing lost much of its Waltonian charm (Lang would have been intimately familiar with Walton's book) when practiced in big crowds. Competition was no substitute for contemplation. The competitive anglers, crowding this or that water, ruined the fishing for the more contemplative types as well as for themselves.

There are also whiffs of class distinction here. The anglers, including presumably Lang, who could afford some privacy were better able to enjoy the luxuries of contemplative angling, whereas the working-class crowd had to take what

they could get, which usually meant very small fish in the least desirable waters. Anglers who had enjoyed fishing relatively quiet public waters for many years were no doubt horrified by the abrupt appearance of the great heaving masses, turned out of a Sunday for a good fishing match. BASS and NASCAR couldn't be far behind.

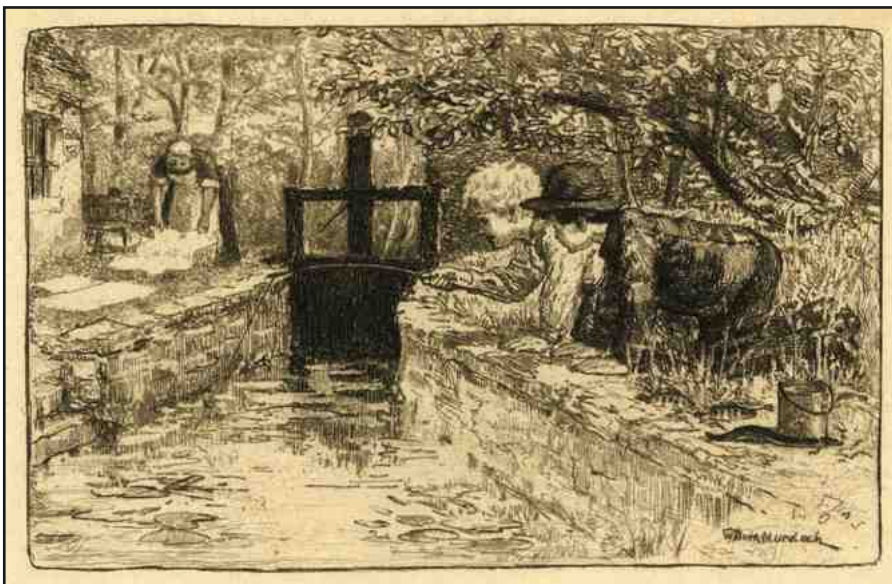
THE VARIETIES OF THE COMPETITIVE IMPULSE

There is another intriguing byway in our consideration of the competitive, or at least scorekeeping, aspects of sport fishing. As Tony Hayter's fascinating biography of Frederic Halford reveals, by the late 1800s and the rise of what we might still call the "scientific" school of anglers (they certainly saw themselves as such) symbolized by Halford and his dry-fly associates, a documentary rigor was an integral part of the sport. Halford's crowd often kept precise journals that remind me of Arnold Gingrich, who, sixty years later, would include an essay, "Trout by the Score," in his book, *The Well-Tempered Angler*. Scorekeeping has rarely been more subtly competitive than in these notes, in which the anglers were happily keeping track of their quest for success; the competition was, of course, still against one another, but it was just as much against the trout, the stream, and their previous catches. They were competing not only among themselves, but each with himself. Leave it to fly fishing's greatest quantifiers to find so many ways to refine and enjoy their inherent competitive spirit.

But for the most part, the complaints that have been expressed about competition in sport fall into two main categories. There are the objections to the formalizing of competition—the making of the sport into a game. And there are the objections to unbridled competitive urges among anglers who are not formally competing.

Lang's criticism of the former group will serve as an example of the type. The great American fly-fishing writer Theodore Gordon provided us with an equally heartfelt criticism of the latter group in an article about Catskill fishing published in *Forest and Stream*, June 1908:

There were many fishermen this year. Some men sit in a barroom all day, after engaging a couple of local anglers to fish for them. Their ideas of what constitutes sport are peculiar, but they usually return with a large number of trout. Doubtless they enjoy a fine reputation at home. Greed and the spirit of competition should have no place on the trout



From Andrew Lang, *Angling Sketches*
(London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), frontispiece.



Above: An artist's rendering of the Anglers' Club of New York's annual Stream Championship Contest and Outing in 1931. Points were calculated by multiplying the length in inches and the weight in ounces of each fish caught, and the winner's name, along with the year of his victory, was engraved on the Outing Championship Cup, seen at the right. The contest, which first took place in 1921, was held that year at Edward Hewitt's camp on the Neversink River in New York. Images from the Anglers' Club Bulletin, vol. X, no. 2, June 1931.



OUTING CHAMPIONSHIP CUP

stream. It is amusing, however, to see a number of men trying to get ahead of each other and to fish all the best water first. We are not here to run foot races or to get the best of the other fellow. Take it easy, fish slowly and very probably you will have as much success as anyone.¹²

Here Gordon falls well within the Waltonian camp. The pressure to catch fish, and to demonstrate one's prowess as a fisherman, leads to deception. The competitive urge not only takes the fun out of sport and causes general anxiety and an adversarial atmosphere on the stream, but probably adds nothing to your success. Might as well take it easy. As Walton's Ecclesiastical quote so famously put it, study to be quiet.

SO MUCH FOR HISTORY

I doubt that anyone who has invoked fly fishing's long literary and ethical tradition in support of today's high-visibility commercial fly-fishing competitions knows much about that tradition. In the first four hundred or so years of the written record, up until the middle of the twentieth century, the sport's most revered philosopher-thinkers—as distinguished from the sport's most admired technicians—without exception counseled a low-key approach to competition, if they approved of it at all. Among these folks, from Walton to Haig-Brown,

the ideal angler was the one who did all he could to ensure that others had a chance at the best spot and in other ways sacrificed personal opportunities to give the advantage to fellow anglers.

Are these long-dead graybeards the people we should listen to today? They weren't lawmakers, you know; they were just advisors. Every generation of anglers before us had its share of people who pretty much ignored the day's philosophers and went for the competitive approach. Who is to say that the philosophers were right anyway?

We each get to make that judgment call. But whatever we decide, let's not fool ourselves into thinking we have some simple, monolithic History on our side. And let's remember that the people who have most favored competitiveness in fly fishing tended to be the guys who won most of the competitions, rather than the guys who took a larger, longer view of what fly fishing might mean in our lives.

For many years now, I've fished with Bud Lilly. Fishing with Bud is special because, thanks to his quiet generosity, you often get home from a day of "fishing with Bud Lilly" before you realize that you were the only one who fished much. Bud hardly made a cast. The casts he made may have been memorable and surely were more effective than yours, but at the time you probably didn't even notice how few of them there were.

Bud epitomizes that Waltonian tradition—and the once-a-guide-always-a-guide ideal—by enjoying a day's fishing in good part through the shared rewards of his fellow anglers' successes. And while few of us would argue that this is, indeed, a high and rarified form of fly fishing, just as few of us would be able to pull it off. We might rationalize our failure by saying, "Well, sure, if I spent as much time on the river as Bud Lilly, I could afford to be that generous too." But in our hearts we know that if we can't "afford" it, we're choosing to live a smaller life and participate in a smaller sport, and that everybody should be that generous.

The Waltons, Haig-Browns, and Lillys may have raised the bar impossibly high for most of us, but we can at least appreciate the ideal that they've established. If we're going to compete at something, maybe we should compete at being uncompetitive.

TAKING IT PERSONALLY

History can only carry us so far in this kind of rumination. There are too many localized and highly specific little twists and turns in the inquiry. So I must take you out on the river now, and work my way through one of my own experiences with competitive fly fishing.

I'm going to do this by quoting to you from a letter I wrote to a fishing friend,

Bob DeMott, based on my notes after participating in the Jackson Hole One-Fly. I use the device of a letter because of its informality and because of its immediate specificity to the unique events that occur on any day astream.

I can tell you right off that I'm not going to try to trash this competition. The One-Fly is a justifiably honored and respected competition whose leaders have done a lot of soul searching about what they're up to. The event has raised a great deal of money to support good conservation causes in the Jackson Hole area at the same time that it has allowed many, many fly fishers to have a great time fishing a lot of beautiful water for a lot of beautiful fish. I won't even engage the skeptical argument that they could raise more money if all the participants were to stay home and just mail in the equivalent of their air fare and lodging expenses. I was pleased, even delighted, to participate, and I was excited to watch some terrifically skilled fishermen in action. The underlying commitment to fairness exhibited by the organizers impressed me, and I was grateful for the opportunity to exercise my own personal biases and skepticisms on a thoughtfully run competition. I doubt that I could have found one that would challenge my thinking more or better clarify the ambivalence many of us feel about competitions.

I was invited to participate in the One-Fly as a member of the Grand Teton National Park Foundation team. The foundation is a nonprofit organization that raises money for the care of Grand Teton National Park, a cause dear to my heart. My friends in that park knew I loved to fish; they probably thought I was better at it than I am, but it was very nice of them to involve me.

Knowing I was going to participate, Bob DeMott asked me to let him know what I thought of the whole experience. My letter was as much an attempt to explain it to myself as to him.

Dear Bob:

I see that lately *Fly Fisherman* has been running a dialogue in its opinion and letters departments among people who feel one way or the other about these competitive events, and judging from the growth in the events, I guess they're going to be with us at least for a while, so I don't think there's any hope of making them go away even if we decided that they are definitely all bad. So far I haven't felt any strong urge to enter that debate, though I do see some pretty feeble thinking on the part of the pro-event types, who are very full of self-justification and (surprisingly enough) even try to invoke history to back them up.

Though there was a lot of cheerful protestation among the people I talked to, who all maintained that this really was just for fun, it was pretty obvious that even those who said that most loudly had a competitive streak and didn't want to lose. It's very hard not to care about how you do, and the competitions, whatever else they may or may not do, can't help setting you up to respond competitively when you're put in that position. So that was there, and it was really plain.

This is very largely a crowd of comfortably well-off guys (and a number of women) who are accustomed to competition in their work lives, and who are probably also in most cases big fans of professional sports. If you take fly fishing and attach to it a modestly scaled-down version of the spectacle-enhancing attributes of NASCAR or the NFL (we were all issued matching shirts with logos and stuff, really high-grade stuff), you're going to set up the same spectacle-oriented mood. If you keep score, you're going to trigger some of those same conditioned responses in us that a tight NFL game does. So sure, you can stand back from all this staging and posturing and say, "Well, it's all in good fun," and that's going to be more or less true, but you've generated something outside the traditional approach that a few dozen generations of anglers had to fly fishing, and that's where people will disagree over what's "good."

At the end of the day, we would all be delivered back to the motel that was headquarters for the whole event. [My wife] Marsha, who spent both days doing her own fun things, would come to pick me up, and she said it was hilar-

ious watching all these guys unload and immediately get out their cell phones right there in the parking lot to call up someone and tell them how they did and how many points they got.

Perhaps the biggest surprise, as far as things to think about, had only indirectly to do with the competitiveness. It had to do with how the competitiveness plays out in a catch-and-release fishery. Of course, like most of these events, catch-and-release may greatly mitigate the potential for resource harm, though the people with a moral objection to catch-and-release would just see competition as yet another layer of outrage added to our cruel treatment of the fish ("You keep score of your torturing rate?!"). But what I saw on the second day of fishing, though it wasn't all that different from what I would see on any guided trip, really struck me as indicative of something troubling.

I have to explain the situation first. All the fishing was float fishing. Each boat had two anglers, each from a different team, and one guide. We traded off the front and back of the boat, and the guide divided his time between us when we stopped to wade. The guides were really great, as practically every guide I've ever had has been. They were having fun, though I am sure they were feeling the competition too.

Anyway, as soon as we stopped to wade fish, I noticed how thoroughly our guide had been scouting the river the previous days. He would march one or the other of us to a spot, not a stretch of water but a spot. He would say, "Stand there, cast right up past that snag, about 6 inches out. There's a 17½-half-incher there." We wouldn't always catch the



A cartoon commemorating the 2007 World Fly Fishing Championships in Finland. ©Seppo Leinonen, www.seppo.net. Used with permission.

fish, usually didn't, but when catch-and-release produces this level of familiarity with a stream, something rings hollow in the term "wild trout." The trout aren't domesticated or tame, but they're getting a little too familiar for me to want to be fishing for them.

This is just a reality of catch-and-release fishing anyway. If you fish a stream very often, you can actually get to know the fish as individuals. You're no longer fishing to see what the water has, you're fishing to take a fish, a certain fish, you know is there. I know that in many waters I fish, I'm fishing for fish that were caught the day before. But they're strangers to me, and I can, so far, live with that familiarity. It's the modern world, and I do have places I can escape it and have a chance of catching a fish that has never been caught before. So it doesn't seem out of control most of the time.

In the little freestone streams where I do most of my fishing, this hasn't happened to me. I haven't made that kind of effort to census the local fish, and I still am fishing spots that I know are generally likely to hold fish. I'm not sure I'm interested in fishing for a fish I know I've caught three times before, named Orville, who resides under just that bush, and who demands a 5X tip-pet. That's too tame a *situation*, whether the *trout* is wild or not.

So. Add that revelation to the uneasiness of knowing that the guide and I are there to produce inches of fish, and we're essentially trying to high-grade the fishable population for those fish that will serve us best in the contest. It made for an intellectual restlessness about the whole enterprise that I didn't enjoy feeling.¹³

When a sport is changing, or even when a sport appears to be changing and its practitioners disagree over the realness and magnitude of the change, restlessness is vitally important. It keeps us thinking and watching, keeps us questioning ourselves.

We can and will each convince ourselves that our own approach to this restlessness is the best one. If we are open-minded enough, we will convince ourselves that it is the best one *for us*. Ted Leeson summed this up beautifully in *The Habit of Rivers* (1994):

It is curious to see how each fisherman will fix the limits of his own sport. Some use only the dry fly; others fish only to the rise, still others cast only feather-light rods or tiny patterns. No two anglers I've ever fished with defined their boundaries in quite the same way or devised quite the same rationale for what they did. We each map the borders of a world and fish in an envelope of our own making that is both intensely personal and flagrantly arbitrary. If pressed, we can give "reasons" for where we drew

the lines, though often enough these are equally capricious and persuasive only to the like-minded.¹⁴

We do this all the time. We like or dislike strike indicators, weighted flies, weighted lines, bamboo rods, and countless other elements of theory, tactic, and ethic, and we construct personally convincing narratives of how we want to go fishing. Too much of the time the narratives attempt not only to be "reasons," but also to be proof of the superiority of our specific take on the whole sport.

If nothing else convinces us that we are deeply competitive, our need to justify ourselves this way should. If we become Waltonian anglers only to prove that we're above the fray and somehow superior to our fellow anglers—to feel good about ourselves rather than to do good because it's the right thing—then we're betraying the sport as surely as we could in any other way.

WHAT I CAN'T KNOW, AND WHAT I HAVE TO DO WITH IT

I can't know what Walton, Gordon, or Haig-Brown would make of the very concept of a "world champion" of fly fishing, but I suspect they'd find it a little silly. On the other hand, lots of people apparently just love the whole competitive scene, and as long as they stay out of my way, I'm not sure how much right I have to object. After all, maybe I'm missing something in the competitions—something besides the pretty shirts and gravy train of cool tackle—that makes those people all seem so happy in the pictures. I need to remember that great question that one of Sterne's characters asked in *Tristram Shandy*: "And so long as a man rides his hobby-horse peaceably and quietly along the King's highway, and neither compels you or me to get up behind him,—pray, Sir, what have either you or I to do with it?"¹⁵

That admitted, it isn't the preening, self-congratulatory rat-race image of the competitions that interests me most anyway. What I'm curious about is what the Gordons and Haig-Browns seem to be expecting of me instead.

Here's the question. Is the traditional zero tolerance for competition just another one of fly fishing's unattainable ideals? Most of us know we'll never cast like the Rajeffs, or tie flies like the Harrops, or do much of anything else like the real experts. Is it the same with questions of sportsmanship? Assuming the Waltons and Haig-Browns were right, how seriously should we expect to live up to their high standards? How often did *they* live up to them?

While admitting that it wouldn't hurt any of us to be a little nicer on the stream, I'm also prepared to admit that I'm probably not ready for the leap to full noncompetitive saintliness. I really like it when I outfish my big brother; he has a gift for original excuses that I would miss if we abandoned our mild and entirely jovial competition. Besides, as an almost-altruistic angler, I have the written permission of fly fishing's historical heavyweights not to care too much when my brother happens to outfish me. Unlike the world championship, altruism pays both ways, whether you're the winner or the loser.

And that, I would insist, sounds like a pretty good code to live by.



ENDNOTES

1. Roderick Haig-Brown, *Fisherman's Spring* (New York: Morrow, 1951), 118–19.
2. See also my discussion of the distinction between sport and game in *Cowboy Trout* (Helena, Mont.: Montana Historical Society, 2006), 51–55.
3. John Wilson, "A Case for Competitions," *Fly Fisherman* (February 2004, vol. 35, no. 2), 22.
4. Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* (London: John Lane, 1897), 223.
5. William Stewart, *The Practical Angler* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1857), 7–8.
6. Charles Chenevix Trench, *A History of Angling* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1974), 227–28.
7. Cliff Netherton, *History of the Sport of Casting, People, Events, Records, Tackle and Literature, Early Times* (Lakeland, Fla.: American Casting Educational Association, 1981), 7.
8. John Betts, "Fly Lines and Lineage," *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 2000, vol. 26, no. 4), 18. See also Paul Schullery, "Distance Matters," *American Angler* (April 2007, vol. 30, no. 3), 24–25, for more on the development of fly-fishing distance-casting methods.
9. I discussed the distinction between these two kinds of writing in "Occasions for Hope in the Hook and Bullet Press," in *Royal Coachman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 172–85.
10. N. W. Simmonds, *Early Scottish Angling Literature* (Shrewsbury, England: Swan Hill Press, 1997), 33.
11. Andrew Lang, *Angling Sketches* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1891), 81–82.
12. Theodore Gordon, *The Complete Fly Fisherman*, ed. John McDonald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 229–30.
13. Letter from the author to Robert DeMott, 4 January 2004.
14. Ted Leeson, *The Habit of Rivers* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1994), 34.
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Griffiths's *The Essential Kelson*: A Fly-Tyer's Compendium

by John Betts

MODERN BOOKS ON salmon flies are usually spectacular coffee-table productions and, unless they are carefully constructed, the images can overwhelm the text. Creating a balance in which the pictures and text support each other is hard to achieve. The task is made simpler if the people involved are accomplished, reflective, and well grounded in their subject. *The Essential Kelson*—compiled and edited by Terry Griffiths with flies tied by Marvin Nolte and published by Paul Morgan at Coch-y-Bonddu Books—is just such a work, the excellence of which is possible because the people who produced it were on the same page at the same time. If these individuals had not been as generous, open, and persistent, an “essential” Kelson might have been brought into being somewhere by someone, but would not have been the book before us.

George Kelson (1835–1920) was a well-known sportsman and athlete who performed at the top of his game at every opportunity. Griffiths, Nolte, and Morgan have done him justice by performing at the top of theirs.

Kelson was not the first to describe and illustrate salmon flies. The patterns he dealt with were reaching maturity when he produced his book, *The Salmon Fly*, in 1895, upon which his reputation in the field of dressing Atlantic salmon flies is based.

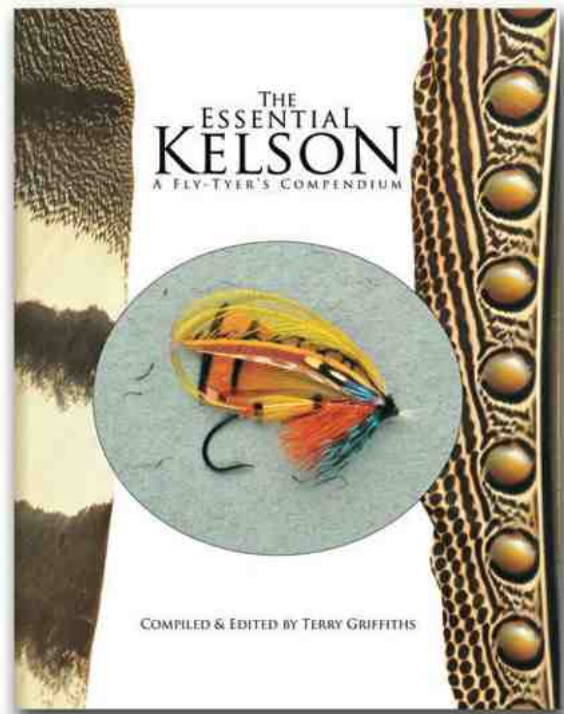
As a fly-dressing book, *The Salmon Fly* is probably the most thorough and thoughtful volume that has ever been written on tying flies. To date it has no equal, nor do I suspect it ever will, that age having long since passed. The entire book, which covers much more than dressing flies, is a reflection of the society in which it was produced.

If one were a contemporary of Kelson's, the light of his instructions would be perfectly clear. Sadly, time and evolving practices have dimmed that beacon of guidance, risking its loss. While it makes little difference to the dedicated tier, it will make more of one to the beginner and those of a more mature but relaxed attitude.

Often overlooked, but pointed out in the text, is the fact that Kelson's instructions are for tying in one's fingers without a vise—or bobbin, for that matter. A bobbin is awkward in hand tying, and not using one is easier and more efficient than one might think. With practice, this technique can produce the most elegant of all flies in any style. It's worth mentioning that Kelson also tied by candle, spirit and oil lamps, and sunlight. Though available to and used by him, electric light was not readily available until late in his life.

Tying in one's fingers turns the fly every which way, illuminating parts that are never seen when a vise is used. Combining this with the older forms of lighting, it would have been easy to see which materials and arrangements had “life” and which didn't. The superb color photographs that go with the detailed instructions and notes in *The Essential Kelson* give us a good idea of what was and can be realized again.

Kelson's text is written in the style of the late 1800s and by today's standards may seem to be made up of ornate curlicue clauses. In fact, if one is patient for just a little bit, all is revealed.



The Essential Kelson is a marriage of many skills that are more than a century old and the modern technologies that now make them accessible. I have no doubt that Kelson enjoyed producing *The Salmon Fly*, and I'm equally sure he'd be delighted to see what it has led to. He was always one who came to play and wanted others to join him.

Credit is due to the compilers and producers of *The Essential Kelson* for the care they have taken. The tender shoots of precise instruction can easily be damaged when teasing them apart if full focus on the task at hand is diverted elsewhere. All of the people who were and are involved in this book never lost sight of their specific objective: the selection of the most important part of an immense range of subjects. The temptation to overreach in a full-color book on salmon flies and tackle by trying to include every beautiful possibility is hard to resist. Fortunately, Griffiths, Nolte, and Morgan remained levelheaded, and by doing so, were able to create a work that is the essence of George Kelson.



The Essential Kelson: A Fly-Tyer's Compendium

Compiled and edited by Terry Griffiths

Including seventy-eight Kelson flies tied by Marvin Nolte

Coch-y-Bonddu Books (Machynlleth, Powys, U.K.), 2011

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Twenty Years of *Spring Creek*

by Dennis LaBare

FLY FISHERMAN MAGAZINE began publishing in 1969, but it was seven more years before soon-to-be New York fly-fishing publisher Nick Lyons assumed the helm of a column found at the end of each issue. For twenty-three years, Nick offered his experiences, both piscatorial and philosophical, to anglers who read to the very end of each issue or to nuts like me who started at the back. “The Seasonable Angler” drew on the thoughtful side of the quiet sport. Nick remained faithful to this regular assignment from the 1976 Spring Special issue through the December 1998 issue. If you’re a *Fly Fisherman* reader, you’ll notice that the column title stuck, even after he’d moved on.

Nick also began a solid book-writing, editing, and publishing career. With a doctorate in English from the University of Michigan, he taught at both Michigan and Hunter College and maintained a faculty position at Hunter through 1988. But the publishing bug had bitten, and in 1977, leveraging his executive editorship at Crown Publishers, he created Nick Lyons Books. The thoughtful, introspective side of Nick didn’t let his executive obligations keep him from his own writing, and he continued to produce exquisite prose.

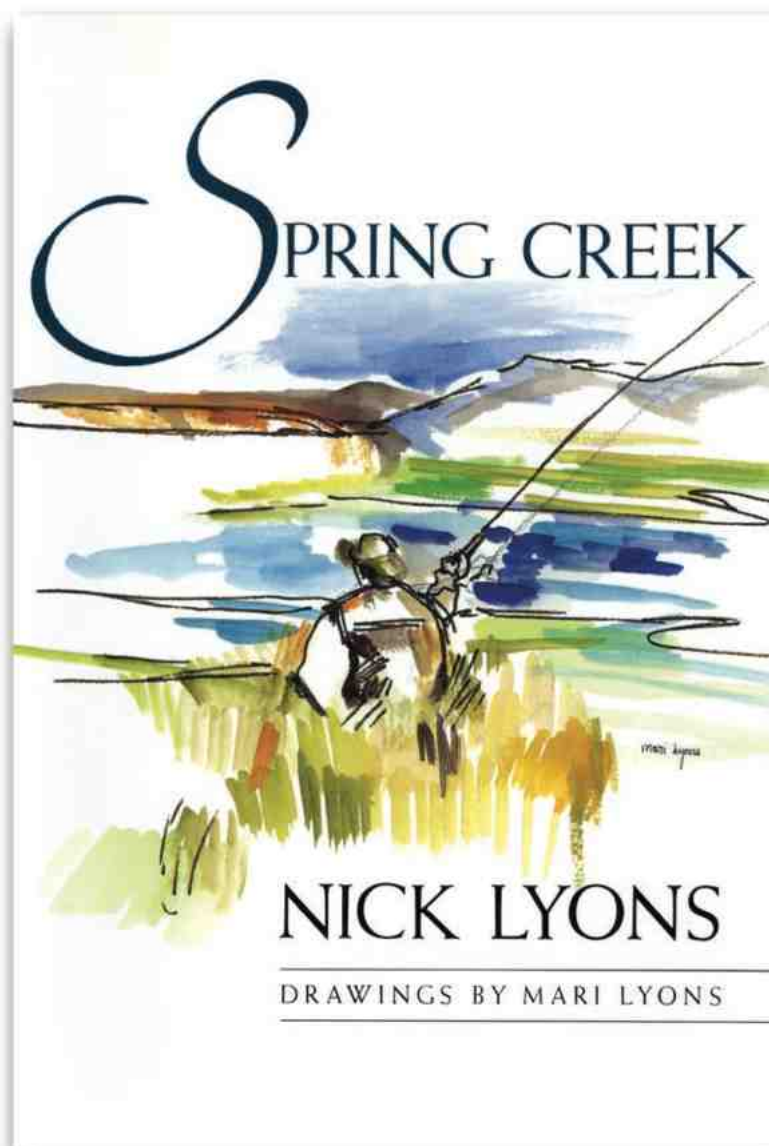
Which brings us to 1992 and the publication of his wonderful book, *Spring Creek*, beautifully illustrated by his artist wife, Mari. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of its release.

A small, artful work, it caught the attention of this angler more than anything else Nick had written. *Spring Creek* is about spending more than a month on a large spring creek, fishing every day—no crowds or other distractions—with its owner, who knew it intimately. Was this perfection or what?

When I first ventured to Letort Spring Run in August 1969, not far from my then-suburban Baltimore home—even meeting Vince Marinaro on his property that day—I was embarking on a fly-fishing journey of my own. The next year, my lifelong angling friend Bruce Craddock took me to the famed Falling Spring Branch. It was Bruce who loaned me *Spring Creek*, soon after its publication, and after a quick read, the jewel was filed in my mind permanently.

For years, we wondered about the name and location of “Spring Creek,” its identity hidden within Nick’s enchanting prose. We were both born-and-raised spring-creek fishermen—how could we find and fish this place? As the busy years passed, Bruce and I would ruminate again and again on the idea of finding and fishing Spring Creek. As our maturation in the community of fly fishing grew, we felt we might somehow be getting closer—maybe we’d meet that key person, perhaps get a lucky break. The years continued to slip by.

At Bruce’s continual urging, I began an initiative for the conservation of our beloved Falling Spring Branch twenty-some years after he introduced me to it. The project and I (as its point man) became nationally known for our accomplishments on this famous spring creek. I dreamed that this might result in an insider calling me one day and inviting me to fish Spring Creek. I envisioned Bruce and myself heading out together, triumphantly, to fish this seemingly mythical place. No such luck. Spring Creek, as we would eventually learn,



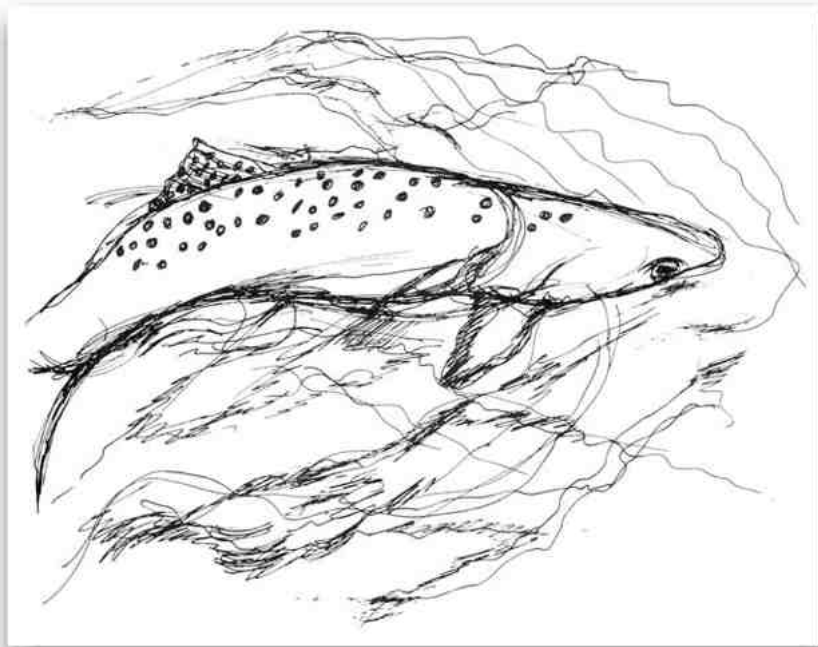
flowed within the confines of two enormous western ranches—very private ranches—owned by substantial, discreet people who, you could say, weren't looking for any uninvited company. "Closely held" might describe it best.

During the development of Falling Spring Greenway, I had asked certain of fly angling's biggest personalities to lend their names to an honorary/advisory board to help build our credibility and fund-raising ability—you know, the prominent, accomplished folks listed in the left margin of the letterhead that we'd send out begging for money. Conversations with some of them about Spring Creek produced only vague references; some expressed the wistful desire to go there themselves. The mystery deepened. Busy with life, Spring Creek slipped further back on the clipboard but never went away.

As we read *Spring Creek* back then, we could readily identify with the environment and with the challenges of fishing such water. In fact, it was completely familiar to us, though it was obviously new and challenging to Nick: ultraclear water; long, delicate leaders; impossibly spooky and selective trout; and, of course, laser-accurate casting. Nick, while not a novice fly angler by any stretch, had to adapt to these demands, and adapt he did. Spring Creek was that kind of place, basically: adapt or go home.

But besides this adaptation, Nick got something else, something we missed. He got to consciously observe himself, and he conveyed to us in fine style his evolution as a fly angler. For just as had happened unconsciously to both Bruce and me when we were teenagers, there was a force working upon Nick on Spring Creek. It is a force that slows you, directing you to a more deliberative, observationally intense way of angling. As kids, we didn't realize this was happening to us. In retrospect, we might have appreciated noticing. Nick, as a perceptive adult, recognized what was happening to him, slowly but surely, as he fished. He thought about and absorbed the lessons of Spring Creek and its wild trout, as well as those of his friend Herb, Spring Creek's owner. Bruce and I never enjoyed this satisfaction. Our skills were developed in the crucible of command performance, something youth and blissful ignorance could not resist.

Even in the selection of his tackle, Nick was evolving. The lovely, easy action of his favored cane rod, at Herb's urging, gave way to graphite with substantial backbone. The winds he described on that open landscape were a challenge for him; for Bruce and me, narrow corridors of overhanging vegetation, floating weed



Renowned artist Mari Lyons often accompanied her husband Nick on his fishing travels across the country. Inspired by the landscapes she encountered and the fluid grace of fly fishing, Mari produced hundreds of sketches over the course of several years.

Many of these, including the above image, can be found in Spring Creek.

beds, and complex crosscurrents inviting drag were our curses. Line control and accuracy were king, and so the tools had to change.

When Bruce and I finally had our chance to fish Spring Creek, it did not come by way of the romantic notions with which we'd amused ourselves; perhaps that was the fairness of reality. It came through the ordinary avenue of a western fly shop that, amazingly, offered very limited days on Spring Creek. It did not matter. The owners, for their own reasons, and as it should be, opened Spring Creek to the public, if ever so briefly, and we as the public, for a price, could sample its delights. We jumped at the chance. Finally, a dream come true.

Because Nick was graciously one of the willing who served on our Falling Spring Greenway Honorary/Advisory Board, I called him to exalt in our good fortune. He shared our enthusiasm, sending some of his flies and even a small, hand-sketched map on his personal stationery. We returned the flies; we kept the map as a treasure. Even the contents of Nick's fly box told of his evolution and immersion into the realm of highly selective trout. No more Parachute Adams or Humpys, as he described in his early experiences. What he sent were flies intended to directly imitate naturals hatching on Spring Creek or, in the case of terrestrials, falling into it. We caught fish on his flies. It sweetened the moment, and it felt like Nick was with us in spirit.

I vividly recall bumping along the ranch road just as Nick did with his friend Herb in the tan Suburban. When Bruce and I arrived at the "bluff that ended the last bench" (page 4), we got out of the truck and were nothing short of awestruck as we gazed south over the gloriously vast, open valley and Spring Creek. Stretched out enticingly before us in all its sinuous, weedy, silken-current splendor to the virtual horizon, Spring Creek was finally ours—for two days. It was an epiphany for Bruce and me: walking in Nick's footsteps; being in a place *Fly Fisherman* editor John Randolph had told me was "the best spring creek on earth"; catching large, handsome, perfectly formed brown trout in the same pools about which Nick wrote, with not another soul in sight and the beauty of the western Rockies all around us. It was all there, just as Nick told us, lo, those many years ago.

But Spring Creek, fortunately, was *not* ours or anyone else's for those two days, or for any amount of time we might have been so lucky to have spent there. It belongs, in a larger sense, and because of Nick, to all of us for the ages, for the romance and reality of Spring Creek can be experienced by everyone in those lovely 169 pages. I've dubbed Nick the High Priest of the Spring Creek Culture; Bruce and I are mere disciples. If you count yourself among us, you know who you are. Thanks, Nick! Long may you reign!





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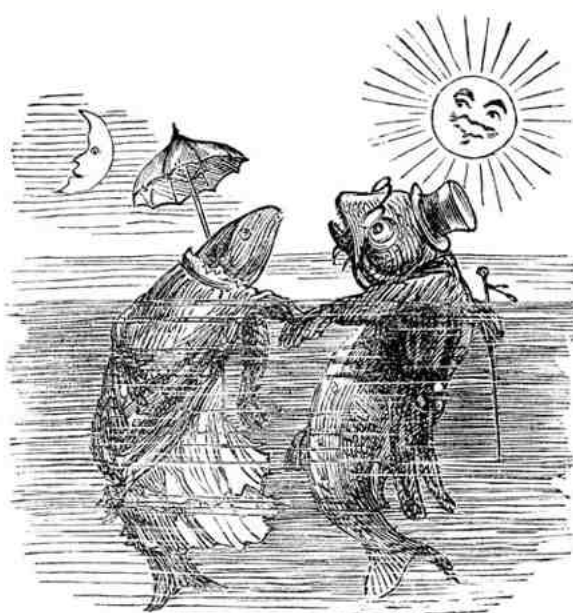
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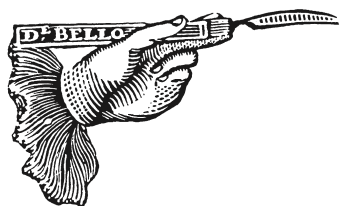
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From Genio Scott, *Fishing in American Waters*,
(New York: The American News Company, 1875), 17.



LETTER

I was surprised and pleased to see the Fall 2011 issue highlighted women in fly fishing. I have been a great advocate of women in the sport, and my private casting classes now comprise almost as many women as men.

I know well many of the ladies featured, but if I was asked who are the two top all-around lady fly fishers in the world, it would be Cathy Beck and Sarah Gardner, who was missing from this issue.

Sarah can cast a 3-weight or a 12-weight rod equally well and is versed in fresh and salt water. She is also a certified coast-guard captain, runs her own offshore boat, rigs all her own tackle, and has a number of world records to her credit. More important, she has guided both women and men to world records on fly tackle.

What is most impressive is that men vie to charter her because of her expertise.

—Lefty Kreh
Hunt Valley, Maryland

There is an extensive list of women who have made significant contributions to the sport of fly fishing, and we wish we could have recognized every one of them. Although the number of names selected for inclusion in our exhibit was restricted by the size of our gallery, the names of and information about countless other women are shared throughout the fly-fishing community via the Internet. We hope A Graceful Rise encourages everyone to be fascinated by the groundbreaking women of the sport.

THE BROOKSIDE ANGLER

From AMFF logo merchandise to unique gifts for any angler, the museum's store, the Brookside Angler, has something for everyone. Either visit us in person or shop online at www.amff.com.



Items commemorating the groundbreaking new exhibition A Graceful Rise include hats and aluminum bottles featuring the exhibition logo designed by Deputy Director Yoshi Akiyama.

Upcoming Events

Events take place on the museum grounds in Manchester, Vermont, unless otherwise noted.

May 5
Board of Trustees Meeting

May 6–19
Online Auction
through Bidding for Good

May 19
AMFF Tag Sale

June
Gallery Talk
Gardner L. Grant Library

July 14
Ice Cream Social

August 9–12
“Angling and Art” Benefit Art Sale
Gardner L. Grant Library

September 22
Community Appreciation Day
(Free admission all day)

October
Fall Members and Trustees Meeting

October 3
Heritage Award Dinner and Auction
New York City

October 13
Fly-Fishing Festival

November 10
Veterans Appreciation Day
(Free admission all day)

December 8
Hooked on the Holidays

Always check our website (www.amff.com) for additions, updates, and more information or contact Kim Murphy at (802) 362-3300 or kmurphy@amff.com. “Casting About,” the museum’s e-mail newsletter, offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

Museum News

Sara Wilcox

Kim Murphy



Thanks to Ken Cox, fisheries biologist from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, who told us “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” on October 22. Cox joined us in the Gardner L.

Grant Library to discuss the state of our rivers following destruction from Tropical Storm Irene, which passed through Vermont in August. Even as many residents were cleaning up from the massive flooding on land, the fish were fighting their own battle of survival with silt-filled rivers and loss of habitat created by the channeling and banking done to the riverbed. On this map of Vermont, the red portion shows the areas most seriously affected by Irene.

Recent Donations

Paul Volcker of New York City donated Popper, White (a bass fly) and two large spoon lures. **Nancy Zakon** of Key Largo, Florida, gave us a framed shadow box called *The Legends Fly Collection*, which contains fifteen saltwater flies tied by legends of saltwater fly fishing.

Nick Mayer of Lincoln, Vermont, donated his limited-edition print, *Beaver Pond Brook Trout* (17/250). **Austin W. Hogan** of Piermont, New Hampshire, sent us a magazine article by Bruce Day, Charles A. Herzog, Mike Kobos, Paul D. Narleski, and Louis C. Parker III, “The Parker-Hawes Rod,” from *Parker Pages* (Winter 2010, vol. 17, no. 4).

Two authors donated copies of their recently published books: **Clayne F. Baker** of Boise, Idaho, gave us *Poetry of Fly Fishing* (Big Herby Production, 2011), and **Patrick Ford** of Miami, Florida, sent *Fly Fishing Daydreams* (Skyhorse, 2011).

Bill Mares of Burlington, Vermont, gave us three books: a first edition of *White House Sailor* by William M. Rigdon (Doubleday, 1962), *Meet Mr. Eisenhower* by A. Merriman Smith (Harper, 1955), and *White House Sportsman* by Edmund Lindop and Joe Jares (Houghton Mifflin, 1964). And **James C. Woods** of Cambridge, New York, donated a collection of books (for a detailed listing, contact the museum).



The museum invited the community to deck the halls with trout and holly as we celebrated at our annual Hooked on the Holidays event on December 10. Many community members and families, some spanning several generations, joined us for an open house, where they colored fish ornaments, decorated trout cookies, created snowflakes, and took advantage of the free admission to view our latest exhibition, *A Graceful Rise*. The holidays are always a special time, and we are thankful that so many of you made room in your busy schedules to share yours with us!

BACK ISSUES!

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Vol. 37: No. 1	

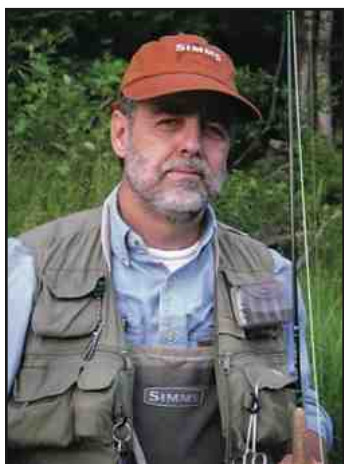
Back issues are \$10 a copy for nonmembers, \$5 for members.

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

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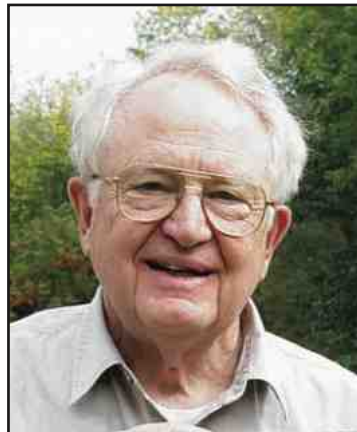
Clarence Anderson is a longtime member of the American Museum of Fly Fishing whose recent contributions to the journal include “The Dean of American Fishermen: Henry Van Dyke” (Spring 2010) and “H. L. Leonard Rod Markings: A Revised Chronology” (Summer 2010). His interest in the subject of John G. Landman remains undiminished. Anderson lives in Upper Jay, New York, near the Ausable River.



Dennis LaBare’s interest in trout streams was nurtured early by his father and during boyhood summers in Grand Lake Stream, Maine. Before retirement, he founded an environmental consulting firm that provided services in wetland science, urban forestry, site planning, regulatory support, and stream bioassessment. As a volunteer, LaBare served as board member and officer of his Trout Unlimited chapter, ran watershed monitoring programs and chapter fund-raising banquets, and served as chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited. He is a TU life member and in 1993 received the Trout Unlimited Conservation Award, Non-Professional—TU’s highest honor for a volunteer.

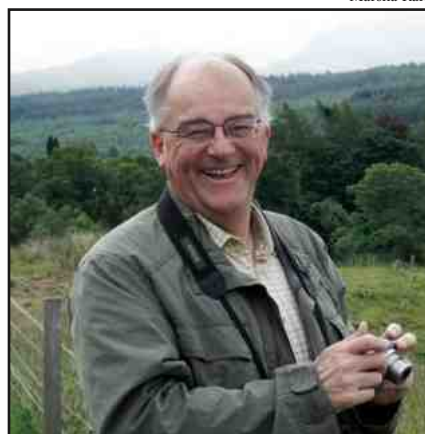
LaBare’s publication credits include *Pennsylvania Angler and Boater*, *The Angler’s Journal*, *Virtual Fly Shop.com*, and a chapter in *The Guide to Trout Fishing in Maryland and South Central Pennsylvania*. His photography has appeared in *Virginia Sportsman*. He is the author of *Tagewahnahn: The Landlocked Salmon at Grand Lake Stream* (2007).

Kathleen Achor



James Hardman is a retired manufacturer of industrial adhesives and associated dispensing machinery; he is a machinist and has studied, collected, and restored early reels for forty years. He has served on the board of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, made presentations at meetings of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club and the Northeast Antique Anglers Show, and contributed articles on early reels in *Fishing Collectibles Magazine* and the *Old Reel Collectors Association Journal*. Additional interests include the restoration of early gas and steam engines and collecting early spark plugs. He resides with his wife Patricia in Dorset, Vermont.

Marsha Karle



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 If 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 2011, Schullery was named to the “Legends of the Headwaters” honor roll by the Madison-Gallatin Trout Unlimited Chapter, Montana, for his work as a writer and historian of fly fishing. His fly-fishing memoir, *The Fishing Life*, will be published by Skyhorse Publishing in fall 2012.

Sporting Art at the American Museum of Fly Fishing

NUMEROUS POSSIBLE REASONS compel a museum to collect original works of art on canvas, panel, and paper. It may be the artist, it may be the subject, or it may be the period depicted. It may be the medium, technique, or style of the piece. The American Museum of Fly Fishing collects sporting art for all of these reasons, and we are always on the lookout to enhance our holdings of artists whose passion and appreciation for the sport of fly fishing bring a special perspective to the canvas.

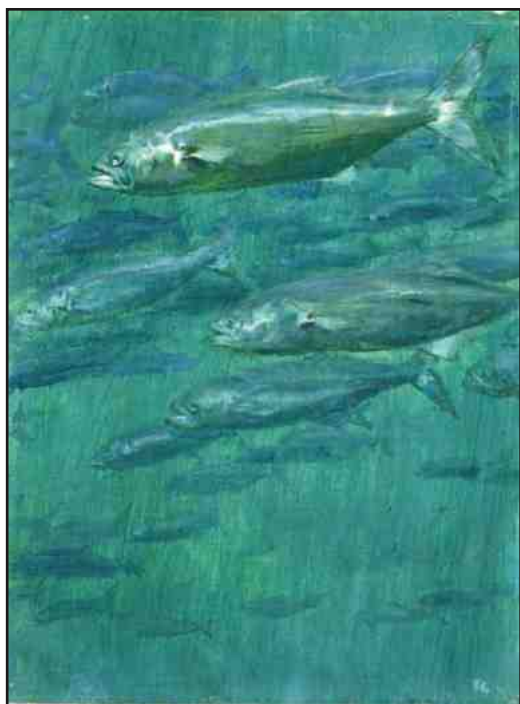
Our permanent collection holds fewer than one hundred pieces of original art. These oil paintings, watercolors, acrylics, ink drawings, and pencil sketches span the years 1875 to 2009, and highly acclaimed artists such as Frank W. Benson (1862–1951), Ogden Pleissner (1905–1983), Stanley Meltzoff (1917–2006), Peter Corbin (b. 1945), and George Van Hook (b. 1954) are represented. As each exhibition and public program is planned, we look at these works to see how they complement the program

topic; the connections we find give us an exciting opportunity to augment a theme with expertly executed art.

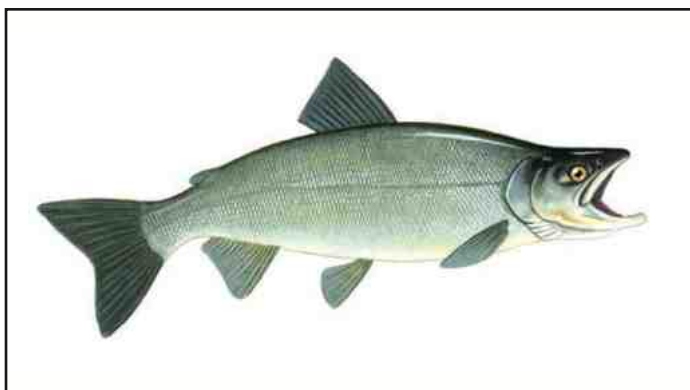
The museum has a wish list of sporting artists who are not—but should be—represented in our collection. The paintings created by these artists lend themselves to our educational mission. Some of the early artists on this list include Winslow Homer (1836–1910), Frank Dumond (1862–1951), Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896–1969), and Milton Weiler (1910–1974). There is an endless wish list of contemporary artists as well, including Arthur Shilstone, Thomas Aquinas Daly, Flick Ford, Diane Michelin, John Swan, Mark Susinno, and C. D. Clarke.

Please consider how you can strengthen our sporting art collection through the donation of art or through a contribution to our acquisitions fund.

CATHI COMAR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Above: Stanley Meltzoff was the first artist to illustrate saltwater game fish in their natural environment. Drifting Blue, oil on canvas by Meltzoff, 1974. Donated by Derby Anderson.



Above: Freshwater Fish of the Northeast was published in 2010. This book was written by David A. Patterson and was illustrated by his son, Matt Patterson. Kokanee Salmon, pencil and acrylic on paper by Matt Patterson, 2009. Donated by Matt Patterson.



Right: Florian K. Lawton (1921–2011) was known for his attention to detail and his depiction of country landscapes and urban cityscapes of northeastern Ohio. Quiet Pool, Chagrin River, Hunting Valley Ohio, watercolor on paper by Lawton. Donated by the Florian K. Lawton Foundation. (This work, along with a complete artist biography, is currently on display at the museum.)



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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, exhibitions, and public programs provide documentation of the evolution of fly fishing as a sport, art form, craft, and industry in the United States and abroad from its origins to the present. Rods, reels, flies, tackle, art, books, manuscripts, and photographs form the basis of the museum's collections.

The museum provides public programs to fulfill its educational mission, including exhibitions, publications, gallery programs, and special events. Research services are available for members, visiting scholars, students, educational organizations, and writers. Contact Yoshi Akiyama at yakiyama@amff.com to schedule a visit.

VOLUNTEER!

Throughout the year, the museum needs volunteers to help with programs, special projects, events, and administrative tasks. You do not have to be an angler to enjoy working with us! Contact Sarah Moore at smoore@amff.com to tell us how we would benefit from your skills and talents.

JOIN!

Membership Dues (per annum)

Friend	\$10,000
	\$5,000
	\$1,000
Sponsor	\$500
Business	\$250
Benefactor	\$100
Associate	\$50

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher*; unlimited visits for your entire family to museum exhibitions, gallery programs, and special events; access to our 7,000-volume angling reference library; and a discount on all items sold by the museum on its website and inside the museum store, the Brookside Angler. To join, please contact Sarah Moore at smoore@amff.com.

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