

# *The* American Fly Fisher

*Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing*



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WINTER 2017

VOLUME 43 NUMBER 1

# Flying

AS SNOWFLAKES BEGIN to fly, so too do tied creations off vises, each its own small dream of some future wild happiness.

There are plenty of flies in this issue of the *American Fly Fisher*: photos of flies, drawings of flies, stories of flies, stories of tiers. Let's start with the guy who tied some of the first purely American dry flies, Theodore Gordon.

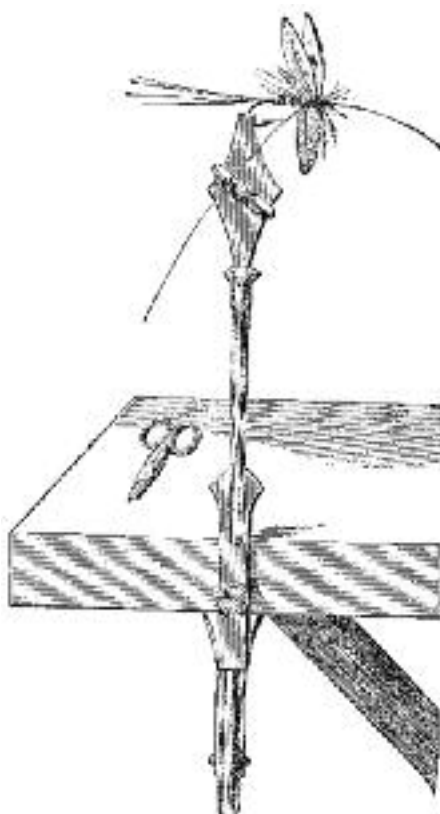
Theodore Gordon began his angling days fishing with bait, as many do. But as a thirteen-year-old, an encounter with a fly fisher on the Letort Spring Run changed his life. In "Before There Were Dry Flies" (page 12), Ed Van Put tells us about Gordon's early life, and about the day that influenced the man who influenced us all.

By now, many of you have read G. William Fowler's article about John D. Voelker (Fall 2016). When Fowler let us know that he had acquired five flies that Art Flick tied specifically for Voelker and that he was planning to donate them to the museum, well, you can imagine how pleased we were. In "Five Flick Flies" (page 3), Fowler tells the story of the friendship between these two anglers, then the history of the flies themselves, laying out the provenance that led them to our collection.

But wait! There's more Art Flick in this issue! Richard G. Bell read Harry J. Briscoe's book review of *Art Flick: Catskill Legend* in our Summer 2016 issue, and it inspired him to write about his own long-ago encounter with the tier. In this Telling Tails piece, "A Streamside Memory of Art Flick," Bell recalls both his own childhood fishing beginnings and his adult discovery of Flick's *Streamside Guide*, which led to . . . well, I'll let him tell it (page 8).

Mundt is back with Keepers of the Flame, this time writing about Dave Brandt, a Catskill icon known not only for his fly tying but also for his creation of the Tied & True tackle gauge. Read more about him on page 15.

Just shy of two years ago (Spring 2015), we included a feature about Maxine Atherton written by her granddaughter, Catherine Varchaver. Varchaver had discovered Max's book manuscript and journals, and spent two years editing her grandmother's memoirs. The result, *The Fly Fisher and the River*, was published last year by Skyhorse Publishing. I knew that Margot Page, former editor of this journal, was friendly with Max, so I asked her to review the book. It clearly exceeded her expectations, and she reports that "the Max we meet . . . is a fascinating, singular woman whose life and adventures



From J. Harrington Keene, *Fly-Fishing and Fly-Making* (New York: O. Judd Co., 1887), 65.

are unparalleled in our genre's literary chronicles." To learn more about Maxine Atherton and why both she and this book are important, turn to page 18.

Since 2014, we've graced our first cover of the year with a painting from our collection. This year we're showcasing *Will They Eat?* by Al Barnes, an artist best known for his flats-fishing and coastal marsh scenes. In "Al Barnes: Thin Waters, Big Skies," Trustee Fred Polhemus offers up a biography of one of the premier sporting artists of our time. You'll find it on page 2.

And speaking of artists, the museum recently presented its 2016 Izaak Walton Award to artist/writer/naturalist James Prosek. Coverage of the event, which featured an introduction of and interview with Prosek by publisher Nick Lyons, can be found on page 16.

It's winter. Why not come tie with us? See our schedule of events (page 25), and plan to attend the Iron Fly in February or take some tying lessons in March. We look forward to seeing you here.

KATHLEEN ACHOR  
EDITOR



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ON THE COVER: Will They Eat?, an oil painting by Al Barnes. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.	

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# Al Barnes: Thin Waters, Big Skies

**A**L BARNES (1937–2015) is widely acknowledged as one of the premier sporting artists of our time. He is considered the foremost expert and artistic master of flats subjects, and his distinguished career in this genre spanned almost forty years until his passing late in 2015. Barnes spent thousands of hours in pursuit of game fish in some of the most beautiful flats settings in the world.

With a deft hand and masterful eye, Barnes drew from first-hand experiences to convey on canvas the water's blues and greens, shimmering reflections and light bars, changing colors, and cloud shadows. In his vast panoramas of sky and water, Barnes painted the angler in pursuit as a relatively minor element, conveying the individual's insignificance in a large and majestic place. This is how Barnes saw himself in such settings: a minor detail in a grand production.

The main source of inspiration for the majority of Barnes's paintings was the Caribbean, the Bahamas, Belize, the Keys, or any other number of beautiful thin-water settings, but he was equally at home in the coastal marshes of his native South Texas. From bonefish tailing on the flats to pintails lifting off a tidal marsh, water—and his unique treatment of it—is the common factor in his paintings.

Barnes was born in 1937 and raised in Texas. His parents were restaurateurs in Port Isabel, not far from South Padre Island. This was heaven for Barnes, who loved to fish as much as he loved to paint. He spent a lot of time on Padre fishing and walking the beaches. He learned to sail and would often ride on commercial fishing boats to various locations. In his youth, he spent a lot of time on boats and at the easel, balancing both passions.

Barnes pursued classical training in school, learning how to draw and paint. This included drawing nudes—the best way for painters to learn figure drawing. The formal training also broadened his art horizons in general and taught him how to make a living at it. He studied art history and learned much from the painters who came before him.

Barnes spent a dozen or so years after college in various apprenticeships. He did commercial art in Dallas, sharpening his skills, refining his technique, and creating his own style until his yearning for salt water drew him back to the Gulf Coast. Leaving Dallas to return to his roots, Barnes bought a small beach house near Corpus Christi in the late 1960s and started painting shrimp boats and sailboats, coastal scenes and seascapes. His marine paintings were the staple of his fine-art creations—that is, until he took up saltwater fishing again, chasing redfish, trout, drum, sailfish, and marlin off Texas, the Mexican Yucatán, Hawaii, and Belize.

He began painting underwater scenes of cruising and schooling fish, both pelagic and thin-water subjects, which drew him more to the shallows, to the Texas saltwater marshes, the Florida Keys, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean. He started painting flats fishing from an above-water perspective, depicting both the fish under the water and the angler above it. His paintings are



*Al Barnes in front of one of his paintings, Fore & Aft.  
Image provided by Fred Polhemus.*

washed in cobalt turquoise, the color of many Caribbean flats, where he often went to fish and gather new material.

Barnes didn't paint in situ but rather took extensive photos and notes of the water, sky, beach, fish tailing, and anglers in pursuit. The creative process took place in his studio, with studies for values, composition, and color combinations. From these studies, he created the finished works, sometimes in watercolor but most often in oil.

The artist painted what he knew. He knew the fish, the tackle, and the flats boats. He knew how the anglers work from the boat or in the water, how an angler approached his or her prey, and how the take could create the memory of a lifetime.

During his long and distinguished career, Barnes achieved many milestones, and the accolades were countless. As recently as the year before he passed away, Barnes received a lifetime achievement award from the Harvey Weil Foundation of Corpus Christi (an organization supporting ongoing sportsman conservation efforts). He was a National Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Artist of the Year, two-time Texas State Ducks Unlimited Artist of the Year and Coastal Conservation Association Stamp Artist, three-time Texas Saltwater Stamp Artist, and two-time International Game Fish Association featured banquet artist. His work has been featured in magazines such as *Sporting Classics*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Southwest Artist*, *Florida Sportsman*, *Marlin Magazine*, and *Artist Magazine*. Barnes had numerous one-man and group exhibitions to his credit, and his work is featured extensively in private and corporate collections around the world, including the National Wildlife Museum in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

—FRED POLHEMUS  
TRUSTEE



# Five Flick Flies

by G. William Fowler



Five Flick flies sent to Voelker in 1961. Clockwise from top: Grey Fox Variant (small), Grey Fox (12), Hendrickson (14), March Brown (12), and Stone Fly Creeper. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession nos. 2016.018.001 through 2016.018.005. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM of Fly Fishing has a permanent collection of more than 22,000 artificial flies. This is the story of five of those flies, which were recently donated to the museum. It is coincidentally the story of the beginning of a friendship between two prominent American anglers: Art Flick from the Catskill Mountains of New York, the tier of the flies, and John D. Voelker from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, who received them.

Flick and Voelker were known as small-town country sportsmen who abhorred big-city life and shunned the limelight. And yet, history has rightfully made them giants in the sport of American fly fishing. John D. Voelker

(1903–1991) was a lawyer, prosecutor, Michigan Supreme Court justice, and prolific writer. Among his eleven books—published under the pen name Robert Traver—were *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Trout Madness*, *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, and *Trout Magic*. Arthur B. Flick (1904–1985) was an accomplished fishing and hunting guide, longtime Westkill Tavern innkeeper, fly tier, fly innovator, conservationist, and the reluctant writer of *Art Flick's Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations*, a significant entomology reference book described by Ernest Schwiebert as “essential in the working library of any fly-fisherman.”<sup>1</sup> Because of Flick and Voelker’s prominence in the sport of fly fishing, these five flies have a unique place

in the history of how Flick’s artificial fly patterns migrated from the Catskills to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The provenance of these particular Flick flies began in 1961 when Voelker wrote what he called his first fan letter.<sup>2</sup> “I have fly-fished for trout for over twenty-five years and never before really felt I had penetrated the mysteries of this nymph-dun-spinner cycle or had the nymph-dun correlation explained to me with such exciting simplicity until I read your *Streamside Guide*, which a friend just sent me.”<sup>3</sup> Voelker also sought the name of a good fly tier to replicate Flick’s patterns.

Flick responded to Voelker’s letter, saying that Voelker might consider contacting Harry Darbee, of Livingston

Manor, New York, “but [he] is so busy. I doubt if he would even answer your letter, although you might give him a try.”<sup>4</sup> Voelker responded with a cordial thank you, saying that he had purchased extra copies of Flick’s *Streamside Guide* to give to two of his favorite local fly tiers. “I am hopeful that at least one of them ‘catch fire’ and tie them as exactly as you describe.”<sup>5</sup> As a token of appreciation, Voelker included a copy of his book *Trout Madness* and invited Flick to come to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to fish. “If you ever get out here I can put you over some nice native brook trout. But you’re probably like me—I’m invited lots of places to fish but prefer to stay home.”<sup>6</sup>

When Flick received *Trout Madness*, he realized that Voelker and Robert Traver were the same person. Flick was embar-

rassed that he did not immediately make the connection and responded to Voelker, confessing to a “terribly red face.”<sup>7</sup> In response, Flick enclosed a piece of pink-tone fox fur and commented that his Hendrickson was not a standard version because he used “a more ‘pinkish’ body. This will probably make up more Hendricksons than you will use in your life, but that touch of color does seem to make a difference.”<sup>8</sup> Flick then sent Voelker ten flies of his patterns.<sup>9</sup> Voelker felt an immediate kinship and replied with another letter, again inviting Flick to come to Michigan.

I too hope we can fish together some day. We have miles of trout water that are scarcely touched. The tourists won’t get off the main highways, of course,

and the real fishermen who pass through here are high-tailing for Canada. If you can get up here I can sleep you and feed you and put you over some pretty nice trout on lovely trout waters. All I do is fish all summer so if you can make it come any time, just warning me so I’ll be on hand to meet you. On second thought, my daughter Julie is getting married on July 8th so that day is out as my wife tells me she thinks I’d better be on hand for the occasion. Aren’t women funny?<sup>10</sup>

More letters were exchanged, with Voelker continuing to promote the good fishing and Flick always graciously declining; but Flick was encouraged by the sincerity of the invitations and decided to make a week’s trip to fish with Voelker in the summer of 1962.



*Art Flick at his fly-tying bench, West Kill, New York, circa 1950s. From the collection of William Flick and used with permission.*

*Flick’s Hendrickson (14) from the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 2016.018.004. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.*





This is the original box, with Westkill Tavern mailing label, in which Art Flick sent ten fly patterns to Voelker in 1961. From the collection of Mike Anderegg. Photograph by Mike Anderegg and used with permission.

Five more of the original ten Flick flies sent to Voelker in 1961. Clockwise from top left: Cream Variant, Dun Variant (medium), Early Brown Stone, Hendrickson Nymph, and Red Quill (12). From the collection of Mike Anderegg. Photograph by Mike Anderegg and used with permission.



The full story of Flick's travels to the Upper Peninsula and his first meeting with Voelker is recounted by Voelker in "A Flick of the Favorite Fly" (a chapter in *Trout Magic*), an upbeat, humorous, and exaggerated, but mostly truthful, story.<sup>11</sup> The details of Flick's trip to the U.P. can also be found in Voelker's "Fishing Notes." Flick arrived on 29 June 1962. *Life* magazine photographer Robert W. Kelley and Voelker had been fishing for a couple of days and working on the photographic layout for their new book, *Anatomy of a Fisherman*.<sup>12</sup> Flick and Voelker fished together for six days, with Voelker catching eight brook trout and Flick catching ten.<sup>13</sup> The sizes of fish are not specified, but Voelker's notation "F" reveals Voelker caught five fryers and Flick caught only one. (The term *fryer* refers to smaller trout that might find themselves in a frying pan.) The fishing did not live up to Voelker's expectations and caused him to record in "Fishing Notes" on 1 July 1962, "As Pierre the guide said, 'You should have been here next week.'"<sup>14</sup> William E. Nault (1912–2001), a well-regarded fly tier from Ishpeming, Michigan, joined Flick

and Voelker on the afternoon of 2 July 1962 on the Hoist River. He did not catch a fish, but Flick caught four and Voelker caught one.<sup>15</sup> Bill Nault, a chemist and outdoor writer, turned out to be the tier to "catch fire" about copying Flick's patterns. He too wrote about the day he fished with Flick and Voelker.<sup>16</sup>

## PROVENANCE

Voelker eventually gave his ten Flick flies to Nault "to insure that Nault tied up exact duplications of the flies" described in *Streamside Guide*.<sup>17</sup> Nault preserved all ten of the flies for thirty-five years. In 1996, at age eighty-four, Nault was in a nursing home and—fully aware of the historical significance of the flies Flick gave to Voelker—decided to donate the ten flies and a verification letter explaining their history to the Fred Warra Chapter of Trout Unlimited for the annual dinner and fund-raising auction. Mike Stefanac and Mike Anderegg of Marquette, Michigan, joined together and were high bidder. They divided the flies by drawing lots. Stefanac chose a

Grey Fox, Grey Fox Variant (small), March Brown, Hendrickson, and Stone Fly Creeper. Anderegg kept a Cream Variant, Dun Variant, Red Quill, Early Brown Stone, and Hendrickson Nymph.<sup>18</sup> In 2015, Stefanac sold his five flies and the verification statement to the author with the knowledge that they would be donated to the American Museum of Fly Fishing in 2016. Anderegg still has his five flies and the original mailing box with a Westkill Tavern shipping label.

The craftsmanship of Flick's creations are well-done, "precise sparsely dressed flies."<sup>19</sup> The workmanship is "so perfectly executed, that once you became familiar with Art Flick's work, you could pick his fly out of a thousand."<sup>20</sup> A characteristic of a Flick fly was his use of "ultra stiff glossy dun hackles" from gamecocks he personally raised.<sup>21</sup> When high-quality English capes became unavailable in 1933, Willis "Chip" Stauffer, an engineer for Mercoid Corporation in Philadelphia, helped Flick get started in raising gamecocks from eggs acquired in England to ensure the highest-quality hackles.<sup>22</sup>



## THE RED QUILL

One of the ten flies given to John Voelker by Art Flick was the Red Quill (the male Hendrickson), the only fly pattern that Flick originated. That Red Quill is part of Mike Anderegg's collection, but the museum has one previously donated by Art Flick.

According to Flick:

The only fly I can claim to have originated is the Red Quill. That one I do take credit for. And it was a very peculiar thing. The Hendrickson, which Roy Steenrod tied so well, was on the market at the time, it was a fairly well known pattern as dry flies go. But I found out that in the Hendrickson hatch there was always, at least on the Schoharie, another fly that came along at the same time. It always seemed to be a male, whereas the Hendricksons always seemed to be females. And we finally boiled it down that it was the male of the Hendricksons. But they're different as night and day. In the first place, the female has a very tiny eye as is usually the case with the females, while the other just had a normal dark eye. The one I called the Red Quill had a large eye and it was definitely on the reddish side. Its body was more reddish and other than that it was the same fly. The body is a quill type and with trial and error I found out that the stripped quill of a Rhode Island Red rooster made a pretty good imitation of it and I used it right along.

—Quoted in Roger Keckeissen, *Art Flick, Catskill Legend: A Remembrance of His Life and Times* (Point Reyes Station, Calif.: Clark City Press, 2015), 66.

Sara Wilcox



Art Flick donated this Red Quill to the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 1978.052.001.

Flick is credited with popularizing the Variant style of dry fly.<sup>23</sup> Dick Talleur describes the Variant style as “a true high-rider. It employs an oversized hackle: two, three, even four sizes the normal. There are no wings; the upright, prominent hackle fibers comprise a rough wing silhouette. The tails are longer than normal, in order to balance the oversized hackle. The body is small, almost inconspicuous; often a quill of some sort. . . . Variants are dancers; saucy ballerinas performing tiny arabesques and pirouettes on shimmering ripples and glides.”<sup>24</sup> No wonder Talleur is captivated by the Variant.

Part of Flick's genius was to advocate the use of a limited number of fly patterns, instead of hundreds of variations, to successfully fish any Catskill river for brown trout. Without wanting to offend the commercial fly tiers of the era, who were offering countless patterns, Flick proposed ten patterns, concluding “Experience has convinced me that a good imitation of any of the materials discussed herein will prove equally effective on all streams where such materials exist.”<sup>25</sup>



Flick's Grey Variant (small) from the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 2016.018.002. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.



## PRESERVED AT THE MUSEUM

One fly can tell many stories. It knows the flora and fauna of various places, and is the result of art and craft. These five flies were produced by Art Flick's hands and then passed (in order) to John Voelker, Bill Nault, Trout Unlimited, Mike Stefanac, the author, and now, finally, to the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Over the course of half a century, the museum's five Flick flies not only preserve the work of an angling giant, but also describe a relationship, a period of history, expertise, beauty, and thoughtful care. No doubt many thousands of flies in the museum's collection have similarly rich stories to tell.



## ENDNOTES

1. Ernest Schwiebert, *Trout* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 563.
2. Robert Traver, "A Flick of the Favorite Fly," *Trout Magic* (West Bloomfield, Mich.: Northmont Publishing Company, 1992), 33.
3. John D. Voelker to Arthur B. Flick, 23

March 1961, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Correspondence Series, Box 43, Folder 39, Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

4. Arthur B. Flick to John D. Voelker, 5 April 1961, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Correspondence Series, Box 43, Folder 39.

5. John D. Voelker to Arthur B. Flick, 17 April 1961, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Correspondence Series, Box 43, Folder 39.

6. Ibid.

7. Arthur B. Flick to John D. Voelker, 24 April 1961, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Correspondence Series, Box 43, Folder 39.

8. Ibid.

9. Bill Nault, verification statement, accession no. 2016.018.006, American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont.

10. John D. Voelker to Arthur B. Flick, 4 May 1961, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Correspondence Series, Box 43, Folder 39.

11. Robert Traver, "A Flick of the Favorite Fly," *Trout Magic*, 31–47.

12. John D. Voelker, "Fishing Notes," 27–29 June 1962, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Personal Series, Box 6, Folder 27. Also, Robert Traver (with photographs by Robert W. Kelley), *Anatomy of a Fisherman* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964).

13. John D. Voelker, "Fishing Notes," 29 June–4 July 1962, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Personal Series, Box 6, Folder 27.

14. John D. Voelker, "Fishing Notes," 1 July 1962, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Personal Series, Box 6, Folder 27.

15. John D. Voelker, "Fishing Notes," 2 July 1962, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Personal Series, Box 6, Folder 27.

16. Bill Nault, "A Day to Remember," *Michigan Out of Doors* (March 1990), 66.

17. Bill Nault, verification statement, accession no. 2016.018.006, 5, American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont.

18. Mike Anderegg, e-mail to author, 3 August 2016.

19. Schwiebert, 175.

20. Mike Stefanac, telephone conversation with author, 17 July 2016.

21. Roger Keckeissen, *Art Flick, Catskill Legend: A Remembrance of His Life and Times* (Point Reyes Station, Calif.: Clark City Press, 2015), 63.

22. Ibid.

23. Dick Talleur, *Talleur's Dry-Fly Handbook* (New York: Lyons & Burford, 1992), 38.

24. Ibid.

25. Art Flick, *New Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations* (New York: Crown Publishing, Inc., 1969), xix.



*Clockwise from above left:*

*Flick's Grey Fox (12) from the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 2016.018.001. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.*

*Flick's March Brown (12) from the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 2016.018.003. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.*

*Flick's Stone Fly Creeper from the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Accession no. 2016.018.005. Photograph by Larry Crane and used with permission.*



# A Streamside Memory of Art Flick

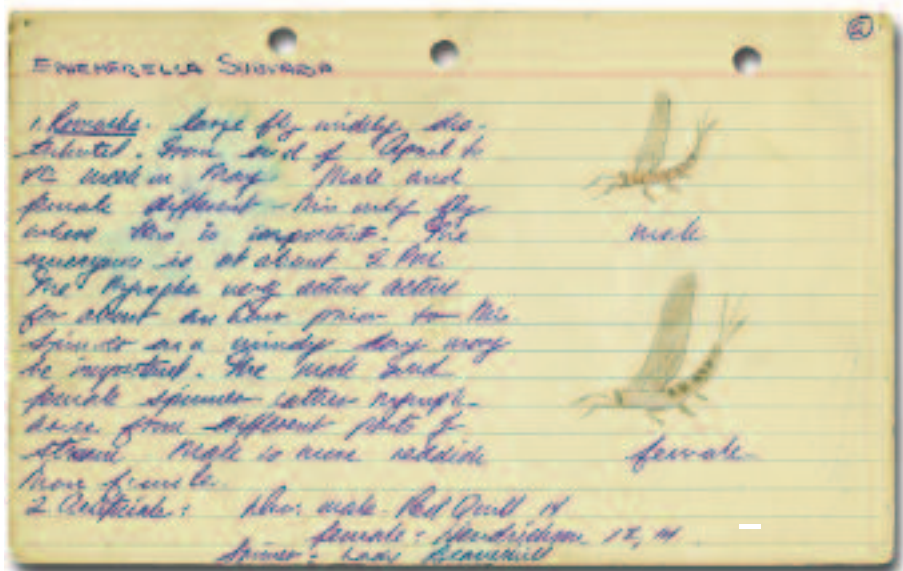
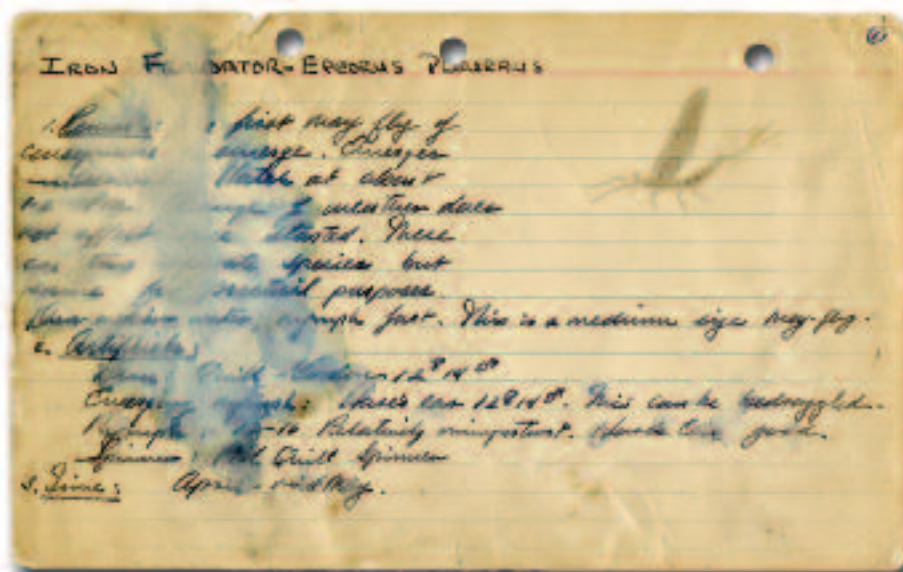
by Richard G. Bell

**M**OST FLY FISHERS I know—serious ones—got that way through an evolutionary process over a substantial period of time. There are a few who experienced some kind of piscatorial epiphany that served as a springboard from ground zero to the epicenter of the sport—an early trip to Montana with Dad, maybe? But most of us have had to work it out and grow into it, constrained by the twin sirens of upbringing and environment, and propelled by random strokes of good fortune.

My early environment was suburban Ohio, not an auspicious beginning for a fly fisherman. However, my upbringing provided a definite plus. My father, a metallurgical engineer from Lehigh University, was in the steel business all his working life and was an accomplished golfer. I always suspected that he was a little disappointed that neither my five-years-old brother John nor I took to the game seriously. His disappointment never outwardly showed, however, and besides, he had another passion: casting plugs and spinners with those lovely Pflueger or Shakespeare casting reels (guaranteed to be backlash free, so they said!) for bass, pike, and other lake denizens. John and I were both caught by this bug, the general fishing bug, hook, line, and sinker.

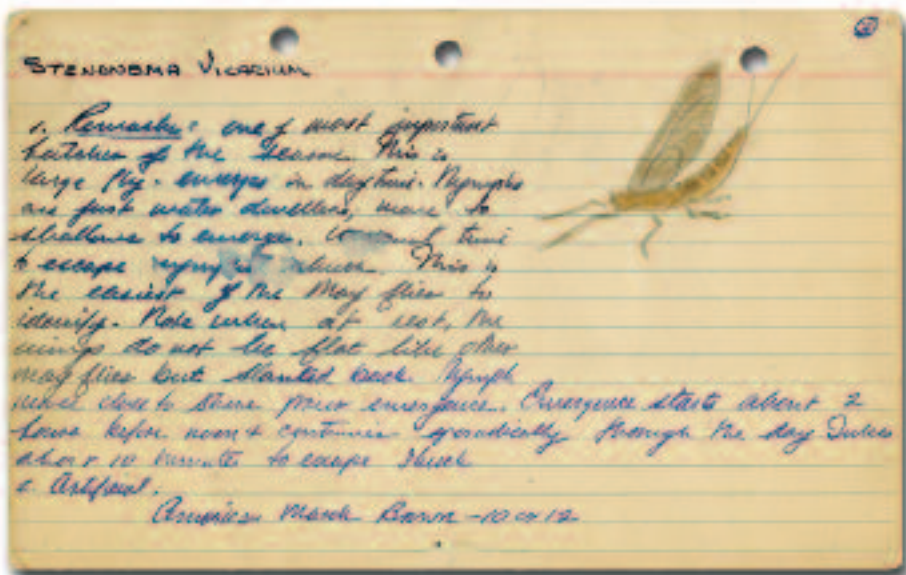
My earliest recollections of fishing are of doing so with John. It did not matter that we started with the traditional cane poles, bobbers, and worms; that our quarry was a limited selection of sunfish, suckers, and shiners; or that our home lake was not a pristine wilderness jewel nestled in the mountains, but rather Shaker Lake, right outside of Cleveland near the trolley line. We reveled in the pursuit of these humble creatures, beautiful in our eyes.

My brother brought something else to my table. John had this messianic fervor to tell me everything he knew and learned about fish and fishing, anywhere in North America. He was always learning because he was a subscriber, at one time or another, to *Field & Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, *Sports Afield*, and *Hunting and Fishing*. He also quickly discovered that if you filled out all the requests for free information that the



Shown on these pages are the author's eight 5-by-7-inch file cards with notes and illustrations of important species described in Art Flick's *Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations*.



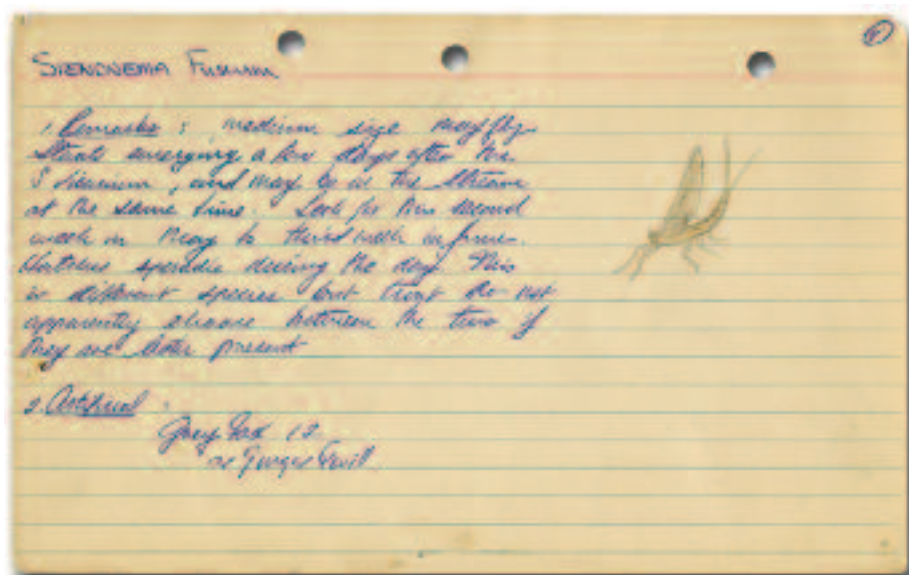


fishing lodges and tackle makers offered, you would be bombarded with beautiful flyers, maps, and brochures touting their place or product. Our mailbox was flooded with this material. Mother got quite a start one day when a dapper salesman in a seersucker suit and tie came to the door, announcing that he was from the Chris Craft Boat Company, and could he please speak with the Mr. John Bell who had expressed such an interest in the new Lake Erie Special speedboat? John kept all his "stuff" in a trunk, under his bed, and we would go through it together regularly. We became keenly aware that there was more to fishing than Shaker Lake shiners, and we dreamed of wondrous waters and beautiful places.

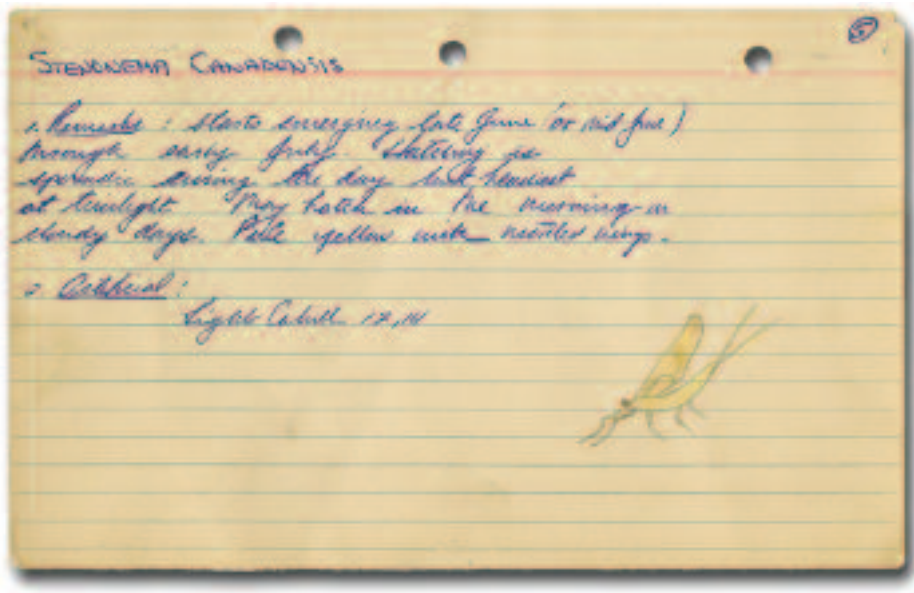
So with these great assets to help me, I was ready as a teenager to start a serious transition to fly fishing. One gift out of the blue made an enormous contribution. In 1943, when I was eleven years old, we moved from Shaker Heights to Rye, New York, because my dad had taken a new job in New York City. Rye was the home of the Arthur Packard family, and Mrs. Packard ("Aunt Mary") had been a boon companion to my mother during their early nursing days. The family was very helpful to us as we got settled in a new home in a new place. Mr.

Packard, who was associated with the Rockefeller Foundation, had a slightly unusual fishing interest. He took great delight in sitting in a cold, wet, open boat in Long Island Sound off Rye Beach in the late fall, trying to catch winter flounder on sandworms. It didn't matter if it blew, rained, or snowed, as long as the tide was right. One sleety, drizzly, bleak November day, he asked me if I would be interested in accompanying him. The answer was "Of course!" and we had a fine time catching a lot of flounder. We became good fishing friends, and that would be the core of our conversation when we met thereafter.

It may have been that Christmas or the next one that Mr. Packard surprised me by giving me his old three-piece, 9-foot Heddon bamboo fly rod, with crimson wrappings and—would you believe it?—an extra tip. He said he could no longer fly fish. No matter that it was heavy, and not easy to cast, or that there was a slight set to it: I thought it was the most beautiful fishing implement I'd ever seen. Later, having moved to Connecticut in 1952, I caught my first trout with it using a Colorado spinner and shortly thereafter, my first trout on a fly. I treasured that rod. I taught myself to cast with it and used it extensively thereafter for about twenty-five years.





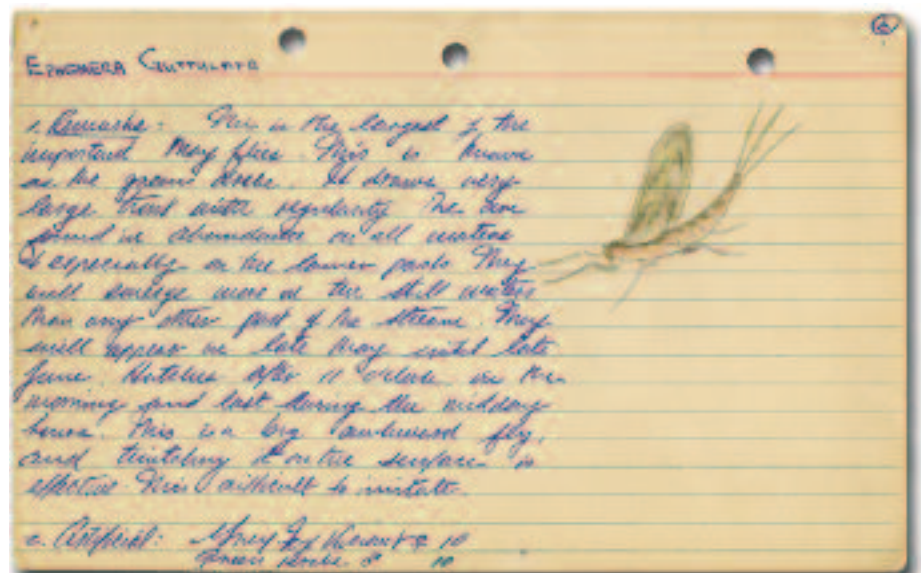


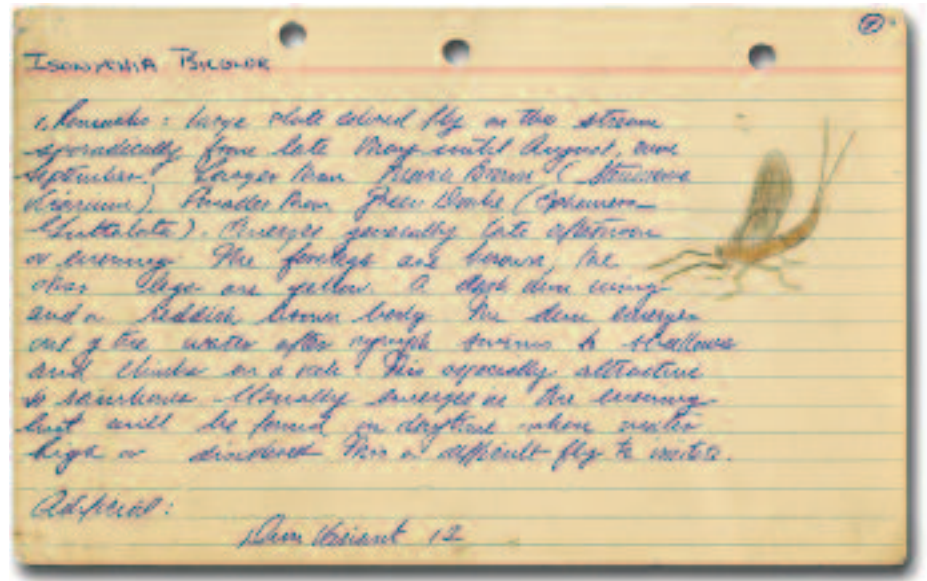
A stumbling block on the road to becoming a reasonably knowledgeable fly fisherman is the vast gulf of ignorance soon discovered upon trying to enter the salmonid world. There is so much to learn, and it will take a lifetime to make genuine progress. At first I was thrilled to start reading as much as I could: Ray Bergman's *Just Fishing* and *Trout* were milestones along the way. I then came to Ernest Schwiebert's *Matching the Hatch*, which floored me. I thought I had found the real answer to a satisfactory foundation of basic entomology in this slim 8½-by-5½ book with its exquisite illustrations. But how in the world could I master some 120 mayflies and thirty or more caddis, not to mention nineteen stones and assorted damsel, crane, and dragon flies? How was it possible to get these sorted and organized in my head? Luckily, Art Flick came to my rescue.

I started to practice law in New Haven, Connecticut, in the summer of 1960. My brother was then a newly established pediatrician in Englewood, New Jersey. Somehow we had arranged a day's fishing in the Catskills in the spring of 1961. In anticipation of that, I stopped off at the Yale Co-op, whose bookstore had a good sporting selection. There on the shelf was a second edition of *Streamside Guide* (1947). I leafed through it, and it

struck me like a bolt of lightning. Here was a guy on the Schoharie who says you really don't need to carry the details of 150 or more bugs around in your head—nine will take you a long way! Nine! I could manage that. I took the book home immediately and didn't so much read as devour it. It was like finding the Holy Grail; I became an instant convert and believer. It occurred to me that John and I hadn't fixed a specific destination for our forthcoming excursion, so I seized the moment: we'll go to the Schoharie! It was written.

The next day I realized that I did not know the location of public water on the Schoharie. I'd never seen it, much less fished it. I had explored and fished the upper Esopus through Shandaken, around the Roese Farm, and through Big Indian. I knew that it was just up Route 42 at Lexington. You can waste a lot of time on a short trip if you have to sort out public/private rights, so it's much smarter to do some planning first. I was late in this and wondered if I knew anyone who could shorten this search. Why, of course: Art Flick! I called him at the Westkill Tavern on a Thursday or Friday afternoon the day before we left. I assumed he still owned it, but it may have been sold by then. I know it burned down three years later. Calling Art Flick directly seemed like the most natural thing to do





because I had practically memorized his book in the past forty-eight hours. Parts of the conversation are as clear to me now as they were those many years ago. It went like this:

"Hello?"

"Hello, is this Mr. Flick? Mr. Art Flick?"

"Yep—that's me."

"Mr. Flick, you don't know me. My name is Dick Bell, and I've bought your book..."

"Good for you! Buy another one! Buy some more for your friends!"

"Maybe I will. Look—here's the thing. My brother and I are coming up there to fish the Schoharie tomorrow, and we need to know where the good public water is. Can you tell us?"

"You're coming up from where?"

"Shandaken."

"And about when do you think you'll leave there?"

"Oh, about 9:45."

"And there's two of you?"

"Yes."

"OK, here's what you do. You, uh—about when did you say you'd leave there?"

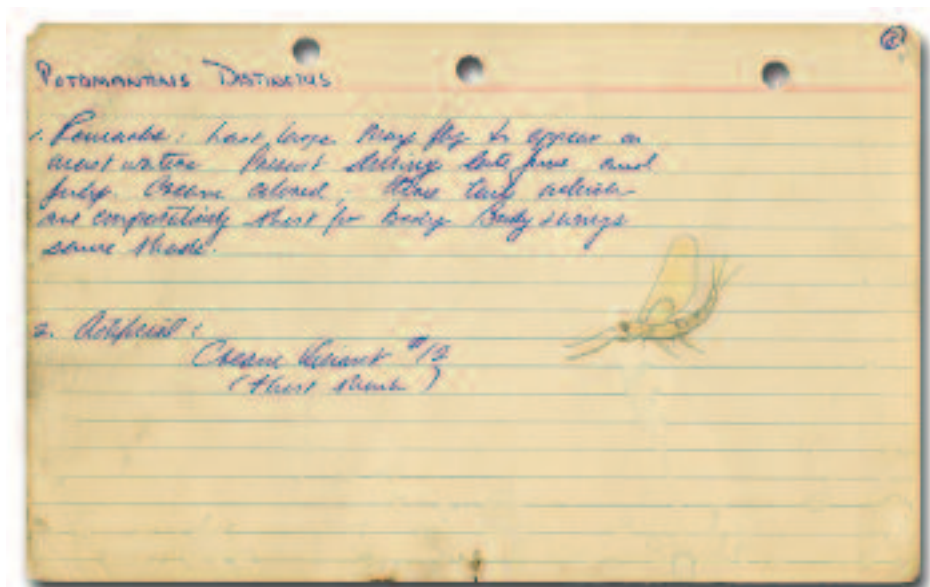
"About 9:45."

"OK. Stop by the house here at 10:00, and I'll come with you and show you where to go fishing. How's that sound?"

It sounded pretty terrific, and I hope I said so. Everything was anticlimactic after that. Mr. Flick had another appointment to deal with and told us he couldn't stay with us. He went ahead in his vehicle and led us up Route 42 to Lexington, then left onto Route 23A going north. We stopped to get down the bank into what I believe was Boulder Run. We fished for a short time, and Mr. Flick caught one trout. He bade us a fond farewell, scrambled up the bank, and was gone. My memory can't retrieve John's or my fishing experience of that day, but it really doesn't matter. Here was this established elder of the fly-fishing literary and fly-tying pantheon, with no doubt plenty to do on his own for or with others, responding in person to a dumb cold call from an obvious novice who should have done more homework first. Pretty classy. Pretty impressive.

Sadly, I never saw Art Flick again. But I did make up eight 5-by-7-inch file cards with colored ink drawings and notes of the important species described in his *Streamside Guide* and have carried them with me everywhere since.

~



# Before There Were Dry Flies

by Ed Van Put

Lee Van Put



*The Patton, tied by the author. It was the first artificial fly ever given to Theodore Gordon.*

*There is no other sport that takes quite the same grip upon a man. It is a sort of tender passion that grows in strength as long as we live.*

—Theodore Gordon  
“Little Talks about Fly-Fishing”  
*Forest and Stream* (23 March 1912)

**T**HEODORE GORDON TIED some of the first purely American dry flies. Although a great deal of Gordon's notoriety came from his experiences with the dry fly, he believed strongly that fly fishers should never abandon the wet fly and that there was a place for both—even when fishing for rising trout. His beliefs stemmed from his boyhood days and his initial introduction to fly fishing on the Letort Spring Run in Pennsylvania.

Gordon spent his early youth, between the ages of eleven and nineteen (from 1865 until 1873), in the Carlisle area

of Pennsylvania's Cumberland Valley, about midway between Harrisburg and Gettysburg.<sup>1</sup> The Cumberland Valley is bounded on the north and west by the Blue Mountains and to the east and south by South Mountain, and it was here that he first learned to fish for trout. He lived within walking distance of the Letort and near other excellent brook trout streams, including Big Spring, Mountain, and Yellow Breeches Creeks.

A couple of these streams flowed directly from large springs and gushed forth from limestone formations, creating some of the most prolific trout streams in Pennsylvania: low-gradient, fertile waters with cold temperatures and aquatic vegetation, such as watercress and water-starwort. The plants provided cover for both trout and an abundance of aquatic insects, including scuds, cress bugs, and shrimp. At the time, these

limestone streams were brook trout waters with excellent growth rates, producing many brook trout from ½ pound to 2½ pounds (about 11½ to 18½) inches.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon was introduced to trout fishing by a veteran fisherman who could fish with flies but preferred to fish with bait, because he believed it was easier and that bait caught larger trout. Thus, Gordon's early fishing experiences involved using worms on the tributaries of fly-fishing waters or on the fast-flowing streams in the mountains nearby.

When Gordon was a boy, he envisioned the very name *trout* as representing a fish with superior evasive qualities, great natural beauty, and providing exquisite fare at table.<sup>3</sup> Gordon viewed trout as “extraordinary fish,”<sup>4</sup> and he believed that only anglers with inherent skills and keen observation were capable of catching them. Among his boyhood



friends, the taking of that first trout was quite meaningful and elevated a lad quickly to a higher status—the first step to being recognized as a true disciple of old Izaak Walton.

Gordon caught his first trout along Bonny Brook, which he described as a “perfect trout brook” that flowed through meadows and a “swampy” area.<sup>5</sup> The stream had many deep holes and cavernous undercut banks where “huge” brook trout—many of them more than 2 pounds in weight—hid from view and were difficult to catch.<sup>6</sup>

Another stream on which he increased his knowledge of bait fishing was Mountain Creek, a brook trout stream of rapid descent that flowed hurriedly down South Mountain and into the Yellow Breeches Creek at Mount Holly Springs. But it was on the Letort that Gordon experienced an event that had a profound effect on the way he would fish for trout.

It was 1868, on a day when he had taken nine trout on bait. He met up with a “well-known sportsman” who was dressed in the finest fishing clothes and casting an “exquisite” bamboo fly rod.<sup>7</sup> It was near the end of the evening rise, and

trout up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound were rising steadily throughout a section of the Letort known to Gordon as the Meadow.<sup>8</sup> Here the stream flowed through an open area, wide and slow, and contained a good amount of aquatic vegetation, along with a great many “very hard to catch” trout that would never take bait.<sup>9</sup>

This encounter was the first time Gordon had seen someone fly fishing the Letort, and the angler was catching trout with ease. After he deposited one more fish in a white canvas sack that seemed to be filled with the speckled beauties, he stopped fishing. He had taken twenty-five beautiful trout, quite possibly the limit at the time, and the man and Gordon walked home together.

Watching the fisherman’s skills with a fly rod had been a revelation to the boy, and the experienced fly fisher was “kind and patient” while answering Gordon’s questions.<sup>10</sup> Along the way, he gave Gordon his first artificial fly, a fly just like the one on which he had taken all those trout. It was a popular wet-fly pattern used in southern Pennsylvania at the time and was said to resemble a March Brown. It was known as the Patton or Dr. Patton.<sup>11</sup> The Patton was

undoubtedly an early American wet fly. Its wings were tied with guinea fowl, the body was of brown silk ribbed with fine flat gold tinsel, and the hackle was from a brown rooster.

Before the use of dry flies, skillful wet-fly fishermen would cast upstream to rising trout with a single small wet fly that imitated, as nearly as possible, the natural on the water. The cast needed to be gentle and was most successful by using as short a line as possible, placing the fly, tied on the finest tippet, lightly, directly in front of where the fish was rising. Experienced wet-fly fishermen were keen on the color of the flies riding on the water and which pattern to use as an imitation. Special flies such as the Patton were tied by two or three shops in Philadelphia for the limestone streams found in and around the Cumberland Valley.

The event on the Letort was pivotal to Gordon’s angling experiences, and he would remember “very well” this fly-fishing introduction.<sup>12</sup> He was filled with anticipation, eager to try fishing with the fly that was given to him by the gentleman fly fisher, and he quickly assembled a light fly rod out of the remains of several sections of rods that were in disrepair.

Lee Van Put



*Royal Coachman dry fly, tied by Theodore Gordon. From the author’s collection.*



*Olive Quill dry fly, tied by Theodore Gordon. From the author's collection.*

He was clever enough to try his skills on the less-experienced, smaller trout in the riffle sections of the Letort where they would not be able to get a good long look at his imitation, and he succeeded in catching twenty-two trout on the Patton on his first outing with an artificial fly.<sup>13</sup> Theodore Gordon was thirteen years old at the time, and although the size of the trout may have been disappointing to others, it didn't matter to him—he had taken them on an artificial fly and was on his way to becoming a talented fly fisherman.

One of his next steps was to learn how to make his own flies, and this he did by studying the pages of Thaddeus Norris's *The American Angler's Book*.<sup>14</sup> It took Gordon all morning to tie five flies, after which he went to the nearby stream and took thirteen trout of up to ½ pound. He believed he would have caught more had his flies not come apart. This he blamed on tying the flies off with a half hitch instead of a whip finish.

Throughout his life, Gordon believed that when trout are rising and looking to the surface, conditions for the dry fly are good, but he claimed that a good wet-fly fisherman could also do well. He referred

to this "old style" of wet-fly fishing as the "drop fly" method,<sup>15</sup> and he claimed that a wet fly handled properly was very effective, because it imitates the movements of a natural fly depositing eggs on the water or of the fluttering motions of caddisflies. He also maintained that trout feed on larvae and nymphs when they are rising to the surface and changing into winged flies (emergers), and this, too, can be imitated by wet flies. When Theodore Gordon declared, "There is no other sport that takes quite the same grip upon a man. It is a sort of tender passion that grows in strength as long as we live," he was speaking from experience.<sup>16</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. Theodore Gordon, "Some Trout Fishing Memories," *Forest and Stream* (March 1921), 114. Also, the U. S. Federal Census Index at Family Search indicates that Theodore Gordon was living with his mother in the East Ward of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He is fifteen years old at the time of the census (August 1870).

2. Theodore Gordon, "Bonnie Brook,"

*Forest and Stream* (5 July 1913), 12. In two other instances in *Forest and Stream*, Gordon spells it *Bonny Brook* (4 April 1903 and 28 March 1903 issues). *Bonny Brook* is correct. It is a small tributary of the Letort Spring Run south of Carlisle.

3. Theodore Gordon, "Little Talks about Fly-Fishing" *Forest and Stream* (23 March 1912), 366.

4. Ibid.

5. Gordon, "Bonnie Brook," 12.

6. Ibid.

7. Gordon, "Some Trout Fishing Memories," 114.

8. Gordon, "Little Talks about Fly-Fishing," 366.

9. Gordon, "Some Trout Fishing Memories," 114.

10. Ibid.

11. Gordon, "Little Talks about Fly-Fishing," 366.

12. Ibid.

13. Gordon, "Some Trout Fishing Memories," 114.

14. Noted in a letter from Gordon to G. E. M. Skues: "I first learned to make flies at the age of 13 years from Norris." In John McDonald, *The Complete Fly Fisherman* (New York: The Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, 1970), 411–12.

15. Gordon, "Little Talks about Fly-Fishing," 366.

16. Ibid.

# Dave Brandt: A Catskill Keeper

by John Mundt



*Dave Brandt at the vise.  
With permission of Dave Brandt.*

DEBATE ASIDE, A MAJORITY of anglers consider the Catskills to be the birthplace of the American dry-fly tradition. The pantheon of great anglers, rod makers, and fly tiers who helped establish this heritage are numerous, and they have been celebrated in thousands of pages of print published over more than a century.

One contemporary angler and tier who helps keep this tradition alive is Dave Brandt. According to noted tier Roger Plourde, Brandt is “an icon in the Catskills. He is a great Catskill tier and has taught at the Wulff School of Fly Fishing for more than thirty years. He is an all-around good guy and is well respected.”<sup>1</sup>

Brandt has been an avid angler and tier for decades, but he is also an innovator. His Tied & True hackle gauge was developed to solve the problems associated with determining accurate hackle sizes and diameters for tying classic Catskill dry flies. It’s a simple device to use: the tier takes the finished dry fly and passes it through the corresponding ring on the gauge. A properly proportioned fly will fit through the ring with its hackle tips just slightly touching the inside edge of the ring.

The gauge covers flies ranging from sizes 10 thru 28, and according to Brandt, “While this gauge measures hackle only after the fact, I believe that through its use one can become better able to judge and select properly sized hackle before the fact. It was produced only in the hope of showing the novice

what fly he or she has actually produced, and can of course be of similar value to the non-tying angler or collector.”<sup>2</sup> Many tiers have found the Tied & True gauge useful and well worth the modest \$5 investment. Some recommend that you carry one with you as an aid for picking out properly sized flies at your local shop or while traveling.

In 2010, Brandt released a 101-minute DVD, *Traditional Catskill Dry Flies with Dave Brandt*. His tying demonstrations can be found on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). You can also follow Brandt’s Trout Unlimited blog, *Hook, Line, and Thinker*, at [www.tu.org/connect/groups/210-dave-brandt](http://www.tu.org/connect/groups/210-dave-brandt).

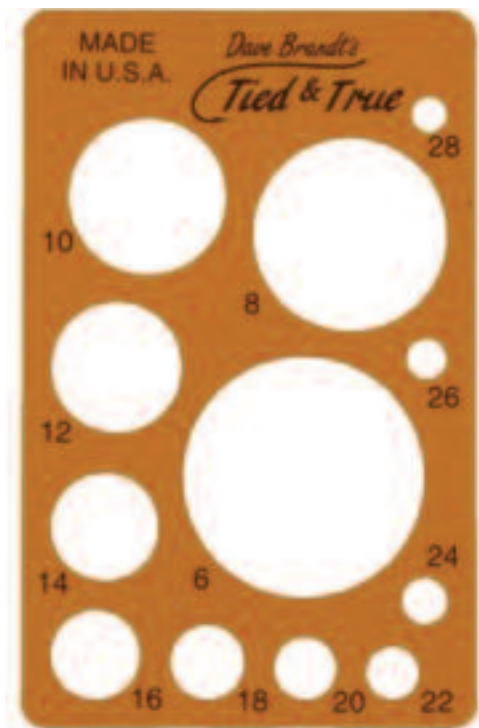
As anglers, we can be grateful for the passion and commitment that keepers of the flame like Dave Brandt have brought to our sport, and how they help preserve its rich heritage for current and future generations.



## ENDNOTES

1. Roger Plourde, e-mail to Kathleen Achor, 15 March 2016.
2. Dave Brandt, “The Hole Story,” author’s pamphlet about the Tied & True, n.d.

*John Mundt is a former trustee of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*



*Dave Brandt's Tied & True hackle gauge.  
With permission of Dave Brandt.*



# James Prosek Receives 2016 Izaak Walton Award



*2016 Izaak Walton Award recipient James Prosek.*

Photos by Nicholas Parish



*AMFF President Karen Kaplan and James Prosek.*

**M**ORE THAN ONE HUNDRED people gathered in New York City on October 26 to see the American Museum of Fly Fishing's presentation of the 2016 Izaak Walton Award to James Prosek.

Nick Lyons, in his opening remarks, said, "James has pursued and caught and painted an astonishing array of fish worldwide; and his interests have increasingly broadened from fly fishing for trout to other natural creatures, from his brilliant book on eels, one on ocean fishes, another on fishing the forty-first parallel, to the hybrids and crossbreeds his fertile imagination has created, like a flying fox and the trout bird. I have had the good fortune to know and publish a huge number of prominent writers about fishing, but not one had James's intense and ever-evolving interest in all aspects of the natural world—nor were any as multitalented, so full of endless curiosity and surprise." Lyons went on to hold an interview session with our honoree that was both enlightening and entertaining.

Prosek was a gracious recipient, even treating the evening's guests to a song from Walton's work. AMFF would like to thank the estimable David Nichols and his wonderful event committee (Foster Bam, Jane Cooke, Jerry Klauer, Wayne Nordberg, and Richard Tisch) for putting such a meaningful evening together.

The live auction is always a highlight under the smooth gavel of Heritage Auction's and *Antique Roadshow's* Nick Dawes, and this evening was no exception. A special thank you goes to Paul and Anke Volcker for donating lunch for four with the former chair of the Federal Reserve, which resulted in a friendly bidding war won by James's sister, Jen Prosek. The live auction culminated in a paddle raise for the museum's art acquisition fund, and every bidder was given a signed, limited-edition print of an original Prosek work commissioned by David Nichols especially for the event.

As always, we must also express our gratitude to the live-auction donors: Janet Mavec and Wayne Nordberg, the Three Stallion Inn, Anne Lovett and Steve Woodsum, Nick Dawes, and James Prosek himself, who gave two studio tours followed by dinner for a couple of our lucky and generous guests. We would also like to thank our silent auction donors and providers: Rob Oden, Ted Turner, Steve and Sandra Bogdan, REC Components, Parlor Skis, Jim Klug, Urban Angler, Yoshi Akiyama, Anthony Magardino, Beaverkill Rod Company, and Yellow Dog Fly Fishing Adventures. Finally, the success of this event comes down to the generosity of the attendees, so thank you so much to all who were present.





*AMFF Executive Director Bob Ruley.*



*Nick Lyons shares his thoughts about the evening's honoree before their interview session.*



*Dinner chair David Nichols, 2011 Heritage Award recipient Paul Volcker, James Prosek, Jen Prosek, Mike Bakwin, and Pete Bakwin.*



*Martha and Michael Nesbitt peruse the auction items before dinner.*



*James Prosek with one of the signed, limited-edition prints commissioned especially for the evening's event.*



# The Most Natural Girl: Maxine Atherton's *The Fly Fisher and the River: A Memoir* by Margot Page



Maxine Atherton sitting by the Batten Kill, ca. 1950. From the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Atherton Collection.

**B**ACK IN THE EARLY 1990s, during my tenure as the editor of this journal, I was befriended by the distinctly unique and then quite elderly Maxine Atherton, wife of renowned artist, illustrator, and author John Atherton (*The Fish and the Fly*, 1951). Max came into my youngish life in Vermont at the end of hers. She had known my grandparents, Sparse Grey Hackle and Lady Beaverkill, and because we were two women in the predominantly male world of fly fishing at the time, we gravitated toward each other. She trusted me. I escorted her to museum benefit dinners and listened (patiently, for the most part) to her passionate concerns about the disease furunculosis in northern salmon rivers, which she talked about—at great length—with anyone, anywhere. But because of her advanced age, I wasn't able to get much insight into her past.

And then, suddenly, she was gone. Did she mention to me that she had written memoirs? The fog of time obscures my recollection now, but evidently she had written them, tried unsuccessfully to get them published, and, without enough interest, eventually gave up.

Her rolled-up manuscript pages, held together by large rubber bands, were stored in a box until they were fortuitously rediscovered by Maxine Atherton's granddaughter Catherine Varchaver in the back of a closet in 2012. Varchaver, a philan-

thropy writer at the World Wildlife Fund, set upon a mission to laboriously transcribe her intrepid grandmother's life into a modern document, then lovingly edited Max's forgotten memoirs to bring her captivating adventures alive again for new generations. Welcome back, Max! Denied the wider respect of your peers and a reading audience in your lifetime, you are reborn now as a refreshing, important figure in fly fishing and a powerful writer who deserves our respect, especially as there is still a dearth of women essayists in our field. Who knew you could write evocative, flowing narrative with such keen, poetic observations about the natural world around you? I certainly did not. What a rich, glorious surprise your book is, and I am especially impressed that you so believed in yourself that you kept writing without external validation.

From childhood dreamer and animal lover to Jazz Age baby, from devoted wife and mother to accomplished angler, horsewoman, artist, gardener, and later, solo world traveler, the Max we meet in *The Fly Fisher and the River* is a fascinating, singular woman whose life and adventures are unparalleled in our genre's literary chronicles.

The descendant of pioneering ancestors, Max was a whimsical, enchanting spirit in childhood who grew up in the foothills of the Sierras north of San Francisco with a father





*Maxine Atherton outside Nevada City  
in the Sierra foothills, 1925. From the American  
Museum of Fly Fishing's Atherton Collection.*

who taught her how to fish, hunt, and navigate the woods; a beautiful but frustrated artistic mother; a jealous sister; and two bird dogs. An imaginative, artistic, independent child, she often escaped into the natural world, which she found tantalizing, mystical, and soothing.

Max attended the California School of Fine Arts, where in her senior year she met a new classmate, who quickly became a top art student: the painter John Atherton. Max had no intention of falling in love with scholarly, intellectual John (whom she soon came to know as Jack). As a recently recovered Roaring Twenties flapper, she was still secretly in love with Rudolph Valentino; Jack was his opposite. In addition to his unusual artistic talent, Jack was a gifted athlete, as well as a musician who loved to attend live performances. He wooed Max with outings to all the best cultural events San Francisco had to offer: art exhibitions, ballet, opera, theater, and the symphony. Together they saw Anna Pavlova dance and Yehudi Menuhin (at age nine) play his violin with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, as well as viewed an unconventional exhibit displaying the somewhat shocking new genres of impressionism and postimpressionism.

Max finally allowed herself to develop feelings for her sophisticated suitor, and when Jack took her to meet his sister, who lived near the Muir Woods, they walked hand in hand through the great forest. Max surprised Jack by dropping to her knees next to a brook, splashing the clear mountain water over her face, and joyously squeezing a fistful of mud through her fingers while squealing with delight. "You probably think I'm crazy, don't you?" she said to Jack. Looking down at her, he said, "I think you are the most natural girl I've ever known" (page 54). So it was during that walk in the woods that the astonished Jack discovered his new girlfriend had fly fished with her father in the Sierras and that she genuinely liked it. Naturally, after this revelation under the giant sequoias, he promptly and sensibly asked Max to spend the rest of her life

with him, she forgot all about Rudolph Valentino, and they were married in November 1926.

After spending a few years in San Francisco, where Jack worked at an advertising agency, they moved to New York City, the art center of America. Several months after they settled in, the stock market crashed. The resultant human suffering, as well as the noisy, crowded, unnatural city life, depressed the sensitive Max. Less affected by the gloomy state of the nation, Jack continued bringing Max to cultural events and joined the Anglers' Club of New York, where the couple was befriended by Edward Hewitt, then known as the dean of Northeast fly fishers.

It was Mr. Hewitt, as all referred to him, who gave Max the technical streamcraft education she needed. She and Jack spent most summer weekends with him at his camp in the Catskills, an old farmhouse on the Neversink where he owned more than 5 miles of the river. He taught her about the habits of trout and about catch-and-release, which, being competitive, she begrudged at first. She learned by fishing with him and then by observing him and her husband as they fished some of the trickier pools. She and Jack would continue to visit the Hewitt camp every fishing season until 1944 when the property, the river, and the valley were drowned by the damming of the Neversink to create a reservoir for New York City.

In 1932, to her delight, Max and Jack left New York City and moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, where their daughter Mary (Catherine Varchaver's mother) was born. Living closer to her beloved natural world, Max thrived, raising their daughter, creating gardens, playing golf, hunting, skiing, and fishing rivers in New York, Connecticut, and Maine.

Jack's painting and illustration genius would soon be recognized by the *Saturday Evening Post* as well as by Manhattan art galleries, but the partying habits of Connecticut's frenetic social life eventually threatened to become destructive. Max wanted to escape, but Jack was resistant to the idea of moving again. Fortune stepped up in the form of two artists Jack met at the Illustrators Club in New York: Norman Rockwell and Mead Schaeffer. Rockwell lived in Arlington, Vermont, near the Batten Kill, then known as one of the finest trout streams in



*Maxine Atherton on the Batten Kill, date unknown. From the  
American Museum of Fly Fishing's Atherton Collection.*

the East, and Mead Schaeffer would soon bring his family up to live in a restored farmhouse just down the road from Rockwell. Max quickly saw a chance for a new life and vowed to move to this artistic beehive by herself if necessary. By the following fall, in 1947, Jack had consented, and they purchased 12 acres of meadowland in Arlington, Vermont, fronting the Batten Kill, on which to build a new house. Their friend Lee Wulff lived on the river just over the New York border.

From here, the couple would fish for brown trout in the Batten Kill each spring and summer and travel to New Brunswick to fish the Miramichi for salmon every September. Max loved to venture out alone on the Batten Kill, continuing to learn the art of angling by trial and error. It was to this house my grandparents came to visit the Athertons circa 1950. My grandmother, known as Lady Beaverkill, was also a keen, accomplished angler, and forty years later she told me the tale of once being left at the house by Jack and Sparse who went out fishing, telling their wives they'd be home by dinner. Well, she and Max decided they wanted to fish too and were not going to spend a perfectly fine afternoon cooking for their husbands! So off they went to the local village store to buy some frozen dinners, popped them in the oven, and went down the hill to the Benedict Crossing pool to fish happily, returning home to pull dinner together with muffled giggles before their husbands arrived none the wiser.

Max's memoirs of their Connecticut/Arlington years feature tales of salmon, trout, nature, rivers, hatches, flora and fauna, angling tutelage, and fishing pals and guides. Sprinkled liberally throughout are personal anecdotes about their friends, a *Who's Who* of the golden age of fly fishing: Norman Rockwell, Mead Schaeffer, Pinky Gillum, Charlie De Feo, Ted Williams, Everett

Garrison, Lee Wulff, Edward Hewitt, Otto von Kienbusch, George La Branche, and my grandfather, Sparse, who helped her some years later to retrieve the precious handmade Hewitt reel she left behind in the wilds of Spain.

But along in there you can hear the underlying, distant thrum of approaching change. Little omens of a future event appear: Jack's bad skiing accident in 1945, followed by changes in his personality, increasing periods of unwellness, confusion, and uncharacteristic outbursts until we reach the denouement that—with Jack's sudden, shattering death of a heart attack at age fifty-two in 1952 after landing a 25-pound salmon on the Miramichi—ended an era when "life had been exceptionally kind to us" (page 96). In the excruciating vacuum of the aftermath, her neighbors, the Rockwells, take her in until she is able to return to her house alone. Max remembers walking through the Muir Woods with Jack twenty-five years earlier and wondering, "If Nature could make a tree live that long, why couldn't people live longer?" (page 54).

Voyaging was one immediate way to outrun her pain. The last half of her book is composed of her far-flung solo adventures, launched when the plucky forty-nine-year-old widow traveled alone to visit friends in Paris and fish the chalk streams in Normandy, as "I could find no woman foolhardy enough to go with me" (page 100). While sailing to Europe on the *Ile-de-France*, she sees herself as a "lonely one gazing out to a foggy horizon" (page 101), and after staying in châteaux and hostels, fishing the Charentonne, and still in deep mourning, she found France, just seven years after war's end, still "fraught with sorrow" (page 115) and experienced peace only when on the banks of a chalk stream. As always, nature provided Max with transcendence.



Maxine Atherton in Normandy, France, in 1953. Her handwritten note on the photo-album page these images came from reads, "The Charentonne River . . . A chalk stream before the April mayfly hatch." From the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Atherton Collection.







*A few of Maxine Atherton's photos of the Little River, taken during her trip to Labrador. From the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Atherton Collection.*

At Hewitt's suggestion, she had made arrangements to continue to Spain to fish for trout and salmon, still trying to escape her grief. She traveled in primitive conditions—again alone—to Arrudo, where, while fishing in a remote area with a guide who spoke no English, she ran into a wasp's nest of military guards who were protecting a touchy, hidden nearby angler: Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Spain's brutal dictator. Up popped many strange male heads from nearby shrubbery and from around trees, on high alert as Max innocently waded up to a fruitful-looking pool. Contemplating being thrown into a dank Spanish prison, she mused, "I simply could not believe it possible for one little American fisherwoman to cause a serious international dispute. With that I went to bed and had a good sleep" (page 136). Only Max.

Max recounts a breathtaking voyage early in her widowhood to remote Labrador to fish for salmon, during which she is forced to change ships at sea in the treacherous North Atlantic by leaping over railings while the two ships are faintly tethered together in the giant waves. She is again all by herself. Traveling with a tent and cold-weather fishing gear, she eventually reaches her primitive base destination among the Inuit, whom she describes as "optimistic and wise" (page 163). Accompanied by an Inuit guide who speaks no English, she

then journeys to the "truly desolate wilderness" (page 172) of the Little River, getting disoriented and then lost when he disappears to leave her clambering around huge boulders, hundreds of miles afield where no one, not even the Inuit, traveled alone. Somehow they manage to reunite at the confluence of two rivers before dark. Only Max.

After years of solo worldwide travel as "a restless wanderer, forever searching for I knew not what" (page 43), Max comes to understand that she has finally learned how to live without needing her lost husband, that "when there is nothing more to learn, there's nothing to live for" (page 178). So because she is a force of nature, Max goes on. Eventually she remarries (for a decade), and, based in Montreal with her new husband, Watson Wyckoff, flies in and out of more remote wildernesses by bush plane. She also continues her solo fishing adventures, proving herself a tenacious, tough salmon fisher, and noting with some resignation and not a little pride, "As usual, I was the only lady fisher there" (page 93). Her stories about the rivers she continues to fish over the ensuing years begin to pile up on each other like colorful fallen leaves in a forest.

Savoring the chapters in slow, delicious chunks, I read with a dawning realization and growing delight that within the aged, stooped woman I knew briefly was a sister nature lover,



dreamer, and writer. How did I not know this? In reading *The Fly Fisher and the River*, I was often stopped in my tracks to ponder her painted word images, such as that of salmon “in the pool’s black shadows behind the clear amber-tinted waters lit by the sun’s golden glow” (page 207). And to wonder in utter amazement just what in God’s name would she do next? Fly solo around the world three times? Go to the Arctic to live by herself in a tent without heat or food for six months? It was not that Max did not know fear in leaving comfort and familiarity behind; she writes of many frights caused by her sometimes reckless adventuring, which makes her that much more human and admirable. But she continued on *despite* the fear—the very definition of courage. “Why, oh why did I insist on such crazy adventures!?” she writes, blaming her pioneering ancestors (page 177).

Because of *The Fly Fisher and the River*, we can now fully witness—thanks to her granddaughter Catherine Varchaver—that Max was a kick-ass trailblazer: a courageous, determined, passionate woman self-described as “allergic to crowds” and “a fanatical fly fisher” (page 225). But she was also deeply sensitive to war, injustice, and poverty, and passionate about environmental conservation and the well-being of animals. Max viewed rivers as magical places, as nature’s works of art, writing about them with awed reverence in prose that is lyrical, heartfelt, honest, and evocative. She soothes herself by “imagining myself fishing in a stream of liquid jet” (page 83). Max always took the time to appreciate the rich beauty of the pre-

cious wilderness around her, and she mourned deeply each river habitat lost to poaching and environmental destruction as she achingly chronicles one lost world after another.

As I came reluctantly, ineluctably to the end of *The Fly Fisher and the River*, where I knew Max’s adventurous life and exceptional heart would stop in 1996 at the great age of ninety-three, I was sad that during the decades she wrote her memoirs the angling world did not embrace hers as a valid voice, unready for a Maxine Atherton because she was unique, so far ahead of her time, and yes, probably because of a degree of sexism caused by the conventional mores of those times.

We can now celebrate that Max’s voice is silenced no longer and that because of her granddaughter’s efforts, justice has been served. I hope this grand woman will at last be honored for her spirit of adventure and that her compelling life will inspire other women as she posthumously receives the deserved acclaim and respect denied to her in her lifetime.

~

*The Fly Fisher and the River: A Memoir*  
by Maxine Atherton  
edited by Catherine Varchaver  
Skyhorse Publishing, 2016  
\$24.99 (hardcover)  
248 pages  
[www.skyhorsepublishing.com](http://www.skyhorsepublishing.com)



Maxine Atherton in 1962. Maxine’s note on the album page this image comes from reads, “Exploring Arctic rivers for Arctic Char, Northwest Territories near Arctic Circle,” and this particular photo was captioned, “Two marvelous guides.” From the American Museum of Fly Fishing’s Atherton Collection.



Dick Finlay, Maxine Atherton, and the author pose at a museum event in the early 1990s. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

# Bill Curtis

## 25 March 1925–24 October 2016

Pat Ford



*Bill Curtis casting at one of his favorite spots on Old Rhodes Key, now more commonly known as Curtis Point.*

*Bill Curtis instructs a young angler perched on a poling platform, which Curtis invented, in this undated photo. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*



THE AMFF MOURNS the passing of flats-fishing pioneer Captain Bill Curtis. Born in Chelsea, Oklahoma, Curtis was introduced to fly fishing when, as a nine-year-old, he received a fly rod from his uncle. After competing for a time in rodeos (the foreman at the ranch in Oklahoma was a world-champion trick roper and took the young boy under his wing), he joined the Air Force at the dawn of World War II and learned how to fly. Although there were a few close calls, including one instance when his training flight caught fire and he had to bail out, he continued to fly photo airships and shoot aerophotography.

After the war, Curtis transitioned into commercial photography, working with the Cuban Tourist Commission and the Ford Motor Company. He came to Miami in 1948 and discovered a huge tarpon population in Florida, which prompted him to put down roots. Already realizing the effects of pollutants like fertilizer on the Florida environment, in 1950 he started collecting samples of baby tarpon with Richard Wade, a marine biologist at the University of Miami.

Curtis started guiding in 1955, learning his trade from the first Florida guides and using that knowledge to put clients like Ted Williams onto record permit, bonefish, sailfish, tarpon, and snook. If it swam in Florida, he would find it. One of his most important trips took place in 1960, when he guided Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and Secretary of Commerce Luther

Hodges in Biscayne Bay. These fishing trips led to the formation of Biscayne National Park and the halt to what would have been disastrous development and devastation of South Bay. Each day that he launched his boat, Curtis saw the negative effects on the Florida environment and recognized the need to preserve it.

In addition to the Curtis Connection knot (he was a skilled marine knot tier) and the numerous fly patterns and innovations that he contributed to the boating and tackle industries, Bill Curtis is best known for his invention of the poling platform, the first of which was installed on a Hewes Bonefisher in 1975. Other guides chided him for creating a “cleaning deck,” but history has given Curtis the last laugh, as his platform is a staple of any flats boat these days.

Bill Curtis was a legend in his own time. The word *legend* gets thrown around a lot these days, but in his case, he earned it: earned it by stepping into the forefront of the Florida Keys fishing boom as one of its greatest innovators. Earned it through years of guiding clients to record fish. Earned it through his tireless efforts in conservation, including being a founding member of the Bonefish & Tarpon Trust. His many contributions have made an indelible mark on the sport of fly fishing, and he will be dearly missed.

—PETER NARDINI  
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



# Museum News

## Richard Hoffmann Receives Austin Hogan Award

At the meeting of the American Museum of Fly Fishing Board of Trustees in October, Richard Hoffmann was named recipient of the 2016 Austin Hogan Award. The award was created to recognize exemplary contributions to the museum's quarterly publication, the *American Fly Fisher*. In the Spring 2016 issue, Hoffmann presented the "The Haslinger Breviary Fishing Tract" in three parts: a description of the codex of a fifteenth-century breviary and a review of its provenance (with Peter Kidd), a transcription and his own English translation of the fishing tract, and an essay placing the breviary's fishing notes in historical context. The Haslinger Breviary fishing tract is the earliest recorded collection of fly-tying patterns known to exist. It was a pleasure to work with Richard Hoffmann to make this important work accessible to a wider audience.



Richard Hoffmann

Richard Hoffman.

## Board Changes

The museum would like to recognize three trustees who recently left the board for their years of support and guidance: Bill Andersen (2013–2016), William McMaster (2002–2016), and George Gibson (2001–2016).

George Gibson was president of the board from 2008 to 2009; he also served as vice president (2005–2007) and treasurer (2014–2016). He oversaw the construction of our current museum and has been a stalwart and superb leader for the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Alan Gnann of Tolland, Connecticut, and Frankie Wolfson of Naples, Florida, were voted onto the board at the October meeting.

Board members are vital to the success of our organization and have led us in becoming one of the leading small museums in the country.

## Bill Andersen (1954–2016)

Bill Andersen, a trustee of the museum, passed away in late October. A trusts and estates lawyer and avid fly fisher, he served as a trustee for one term, resigning his position in early October. He was a dynamic and passionate board member who was deeply committed to the AMFF mission. During his term, he was instrumental in asking Tom Brokaw to accept the Heritage Award. That particular event, chaired by Bill's friend Lefty Kreh, was one of the museum's most successful. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the museum's digital initiative.

Bill Andersen lived in New York City. The museum regrets the passing of such a smart, energized, and devoted supporter.



Jack McCoy

Bill Andersen and Mary Claire Decker at the 2015 Heritage Award event, honoring Tom Brokaw, in New York City.

## Limestone Trout Club

Museum members gathered on October 4 for an outing at the beautiful Limestone Trout Club in Connecticut. The quarries provided wonderful fishing, and a great day was had by all. Thank you to John Mundt for helping to arrange the event, all members who came out to support it, and the staff and guides at Limestone Trout Club for making us feel so welcome.





On October 21, the American Museum of Fly Fishing had the pleasure of hosting Elizabeth Merritt, vice president of strategic foresight at the American Alliance of Museums and founding director of the Center for the Future of Museums. Her lecture, "Peering into the Financial Future," featured a look at potential new financial models for museums and discussed frameworks for strategic foresight, trends destabilizing traditional income streams, and emerging financial strategies for museums.

## Marianne Kennedy (1950–2016)

Marianne Kennedy, executive assistant at the museum from 1996 to 1998, died September 18. Marianne received her law degree from Vermont Law School in 1986 and later opened her own practice, primarily devoted to family law. Beginning in the 1990s, she focused on nonprofits—the museum included—and on public agencies, serving as a consultant, a health-policy analyst, and an expert in restorative justice. After her museum tenure, during which she kept the offices running smoothly throughout the search for and transition to a new executive director, she went on to become executive director of the Bennington County Court Diversion Program and executive director of the Rutland Women's Network and Shelter. Marianne was a recipient of the Vermont Bar Association Pro Bono Award for providing distinguished legal services to underprivileged citizens of Vermont. She will be greatly missed.



Marianne Kennedy at a museum event ca. 1997.

## Upcoming Events

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

### February 25

Gallery Program  
Fit to be Tied and Iron Fly  
2:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

### March 4

Gallery Program  
Fly-tying lesson  
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

### March 18

Gallery Program  
Fly-tying lesson  
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

### March 25

Gallery Program  
Spring Training  
1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

### April 5

Heritage Award Event honoring Tom McGuane  
Racquet & Tennis Club  
New York City

### June TBA

Gallery Program  
Canvas & Cocktails

### July 1

Gallery Program  
Canvas & Cocktails  
5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

### July 10

River Cleanup (Get Trashed)  
1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

### August TBA

10th annual Fly-Fishing Festival  
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

### September 14

Members-Only Event  
Rare Flies  
1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

### September 30

Gallery Program  
Canvas & Cocktails  
5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

### December 2

Gallery Program  
Hooked on the Holidays  
1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Always check our website ([www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org)) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or [amff@amff.org](mailto:amff@amff.org). 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.

## Maggie Merriman (1936–2016)

Maggie Merriman, who was featured in the museum's exhibit *A Graceful Rise: Women in Fly Fishing Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, died September 30. Often referred to as the Fly Fishing Lady of the West, she was the founder of the Maggie Merriman Fly Fishing Schools in 1978, the first separate fly-fishing school for women, taught by a woman, in the western United States. The schools were operated through a number of fly shops in Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Nevada, and California. Merriman saw the need for women-only schools on a national level as well, so she organized and developed the first-ever two-day women's school at the Federation of Fly Fishers conclave in West Yellowstone, Montana (also in 1978). The next year, she organized women-only classes at the Golden Gate Angling & Casting Club in San Francisco.

In 1982, after designing a Lamiglas rod for women, Merriman independently designed, manufactured, and released the first women's fishing vest designed by a woman; launched a series of fishing accessories under her own label; and permanently located Maggie Merriman Fly Fishing Schools to West Yellowstone. She wrote a product-evaluation column for *Fly Fishing Heritage* and a column on women's issues for *Flyfisher*, the national magazine of the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF). Merriman developed and served as the coordinator of the FFF's National Women's Educational Fly Fishing Program from 1995 until 1998. She was honored as their Woman of the Year in 1995 and as one of the Legends of Fly Fishing in 2003.

Maggie Merriman lived in Huntington Beach, California. We will miss her.



Maggie Merriman. Photograph courtesy of Lyla Foggia.

## Rare Read Rendezvous

One benefit of AMFF membership is access to members-only events held on the museum grounds. On September 22, Rare Read Rendezvous—a true behind-the-scenes, white-glove event—was held as a thank you to our members, who were able to take a close look at some of the museum's most significant books from the permanent collection. The extensive Gardner L. Grant Library was also open to explore. Rare book expert David Foley was on hand to discuss books and answer questions. The event was well attended, and we look forward to the next members-only event. Our thanks to Dave and the attending members for making the afternoon memorable.

## Recent Donations to the Collection

**Phyllis Herrick** of Sunderland, Vermont, gave us a 1994 sculpture by Bill Herrick, *Alabaster Trout*. **James Woods** of Cambridge, New York, donated a collection of fourteen books and **Leon Martuch** of Windermere, Florida, donated a collection of twelve books; for detailed listings, contact the museum.



Sara Wilcox

Dave Foley (second from left) discusses books from the museum's collection with members during Rare Read Rendezvous, held in the Gardner L. Grant Library in September.





The museum welcomed Maple Street School students on September 21 for a tour of our exhibit, The Wonders of Fly Fishing. They then created practice rods and used them to cast at the museum pond! Pictured is one student drawing at the Stan Bogdan exhibit.



With a grant from the Mount Laurel Foundation, the museum worked with United Counseling Service of Bennington County (Vermont) to develop a program to interest developmentally disabled adults in the history and sport of fly fishing. Combining fly fishing's healing and therapeutic properties with the UCSVT focus on teaching new wellness skills, the program—which took place on three days in fall—included an overview of the history of both the sport and the museum, an exhibit tour, a tour of the Orvis Rod Shop, and casting instruction and demonstration. Here Communications Coordinator Peter Nardini helps a participant land a rainbow trout.



On December 3, the museum, partnered with Southwestern Vermont Trout Unlimited, welcomed the community to our annual Hooked on the Holidays event. Community members and families, museum trustees, and friends of fly fishing joined us for an open house event to create fish ornaments, decorate cookies, craft Christmas cards, tie clown flies, and make practice rods. S'mores and hot cocoa were on hand to keep visitors warm as they took advantage of free museum admission. Thank you to those who shared this special time of the year with us and to our program sponsor, TD Bank.

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

To order, please contact Samantha Pitcher at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at [spitcher@amff.org](mailto:spitcher@amff.org).



## CONTRIBUTORS

Allison Bell



**Richard G. Bell**, a retired Connecticut lawyer, is currently vice president of the Connecticut River Salmon Association and chair of the Watershed Fund, an environmental foundation in New Haven. The fund is an affiliate of the Regional Water Authority of South Central Connecticut, the water supplier for greater New Haven and the lower Naugatuck Valley; Bell is a former director and secretary-treasurer.

Bell's law review articles comprise disparate topics, such as "Acid Rain" (1983), about poisoned air in the Northeast stemming from the discharge of Ohio Valley power plants; "The Cross of Gold" (1997), William Jennings Bryan's unsuccessful will contest before the Connecticut Supreme Court; and "The Court Martial of Roger Enos, I and II" (1999, 2000), Washington's unsuccessful attempt to punish the fatal defection from Arnold's 1775 march through the wilderness to Québec. He has authored histories of two fishing clubs: *Whoops for the Wind*, the Walton Club of Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut (1999), and *Potatuck*, the Potatuck Club of Newtown, Connecticut (2009). Bell contributed to this journal's Summer 2003 issue with "Mary Orvis Marbury and the Columbian Exposition" and to the Fall 2004 issue with "Common Threads among the Gold: A Brief Discourse Regarding Common Characteristics of Fishing Clubs and Their Members." He is currently working on *The Battle of Bahrain and Other Sea Stories*, a collection of stories from his experiences aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer in the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf from 1954 to 1957.

**G. William Fowler**, a lifelong fisherman, is an attorney in Odessa, Texas, now practicing commercial litigation in the oil and gas industry. He is a frequent contributor to *Flyfishers Journal*, published by the Flyfishers' Club of London. His most recent contribution to the *American Fly Fisher*, "The Fishing Notes of John D. Voelker, Michigan's Mightiest Piscator," appeared in the Fall 2016 issue.

Photo courtesy of G. William Fowler



Judy Van Put



**Ed Van Put** and his wife, Judy, live along the Willowemoc Creek in New York's Catskill Mountains. Van Put has been an avid fly fisher and fly tier for nearly sixty years. During forty of those years, he was employed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as a principal fisheries technician. His main focus was acquiring public fishing rights and small parking areas along selected trout streams in the Catskills (including the Beaverkill, Neversink, Willowemoc, and Esopus Creeks) and purchasing approximately 54 miles of permanent public fishing easements. In 2006, Van Put was the recipient of New York State DEC's highest employee honor, the Ernest F. Trad Award, which is given to the employee whose ability or special achievements further the department's goals and objectives of public service.

Van Put is the author of *The Beaverkill: The History of a River and Its People* (Lyons & Burford, 1996, and a greatly expanded second edition by Stackpole, 2016) and *Trout Fishing in the Catskills* (Skyhorse, 2007).

# Bob Ruley Named Executive Director

Greg Hinson



*Bob Ruley at the 2014 Nantucket Conservation Foundation Cranberry Festival.*

**W**E ARE DELIGHTED to welcome Bob Ruley as the new executive director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

The Executive Director Search Committee was formed in January 2016, chaired by Robert Oden and composed of the Executive Committee as well as both long-term and new trustees. It was charged with locating candidates with fund-raising and financial management skills, finding a strong leader with an affable personality and, with hope, finding all of these things in an avid fly fisher. In Bob, we found not only that person, but also someone who possesses the proven ability to build and enhance the community of our museum.

Bob comes to us from the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, where he held positions in development. During his time at the foundation, he cultivated high-net-worth individuals, increased community participation in events (by as much as ninety percent in some), and was instrumental in adding hundreds of new members. As a trustee of the Nantucket Lighthouse School, he significantly increased revenue and enrollment. In the for-profit sector, Bob has created and overseen seven-figure operating budgets, developed and managed a multimillion-dollar capital improvements budget, and created a comprehensive master database.

An active angler in both salt and fresh water, Bob collects vintage fishing tackle and books and has an extensive knowledge of the history and lore of all angling.

After reviewing several candidates from throughout the United States gathered for the committee's review by O'Boyle Associates, the Search Committee unanimously approved Bob for the executive director position. He was then profiled at a special meeting of the Executive Committee at the end of August, at which he was also unanimously approved. In September, the full board was invited to participate in a telephonic discussion about Bob, and on October 23, a full quorum of the board of trustees confirmed his appointment at the annual AMFF meeting.

The search has been a long and enlightening experience. It not only provided information about the many candidates interviewed, but also illuminated the expectations of our board of trustees and the needs of our museum. We want to meet and exceed those expectations, and with Bob Ruley's directorship, I hope we will.

KAREN KAPLAN  
PRESIDENT



## Catch and Release the Spirit of Fly Fishing!

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### MISSION

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING is the steward of the history, traditions, and practices of the sport of fly fishing and promotes the conservation of its waters. The museum collects, preserves, exhibits, studies, and interprets the artifacts, art, and literature of the sport and, through a variety of outreach platforms, uses these resources to engage, educate, and benefit all.

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.org](mailto:yakiyama@amff.org) 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 Becki Trudell at [btrudell@amff.org](mailto:btrudell@amff.org) to tell us how we would benefit from your skills and talents.

### SUPPORT

The American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. If you wish to contribute funding to a specific program, donate an item for fund-raising purposes, or place an advertisement in this journal, contact Sarah Foster at [sfoster@amff.org](mailto:sfoster@amff.org). We encourage you to give the museum consideration when planning for gifts, bequests, and memorials.

### JOIN

Membership Dues (per annum)

Patron	\$1,000
Sustainer	\$500
Contributor	\$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 Samantha Pitcher at [spitcher@amff.org](mailto:spitcher@amff.org).

We welcome contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*. Before making a submission, please review our Contributor's Guidelines on our website ([www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org)), or write to request a copy. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's.



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