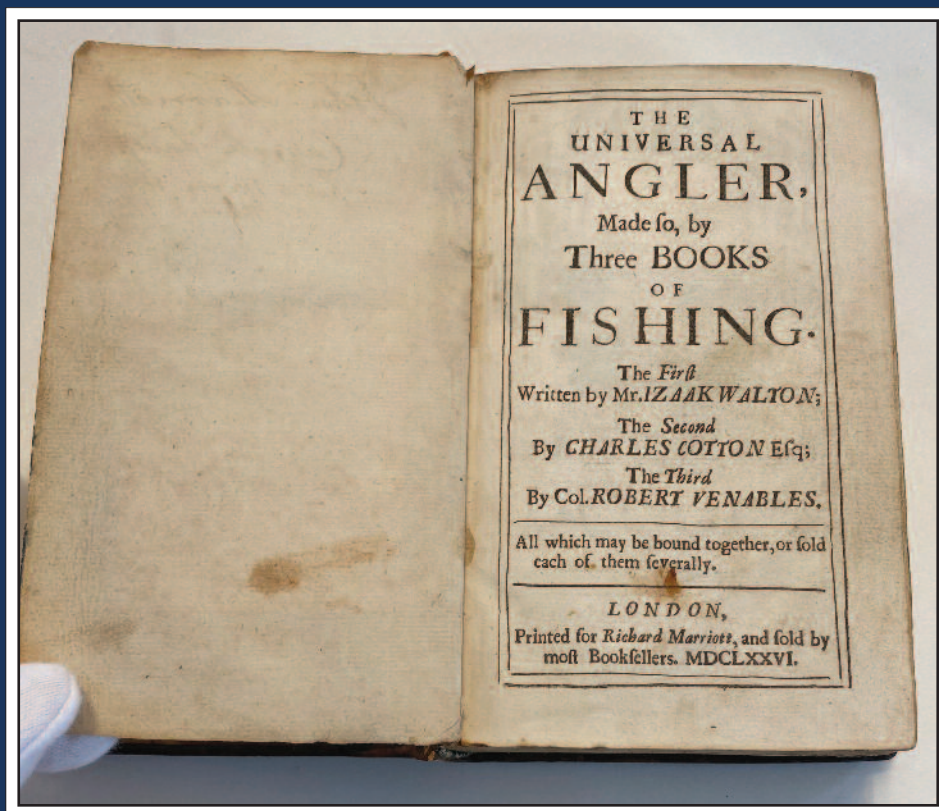


The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



FALL 2022

VOLUME 48 NUMBER 4

Surviving Spring Cleaning: Collector's Edition



Samantha Pitcher



Trustee Rob Oden was the proverbial kid in a candy store as he examined various titles from the Charles Thacher Collection.

I BELIEVE THAT IF SOMEONE would publish a group of American sporting books in sufficiently attractive formats, these books would not be carelessly thrown away during spring house cleaning fifty years from now, but would survive in reasonable numbers through the years.” So wrote Eugene Connett, founder of the Derrydale Press, in the original typescript for the press’s section in *The Colophon* 1938: *The Annual of Bookmaking*.

That original typescript now resides in the collection of Matthew Franks, who quotes it in his article, “*Thank God I’m Only Forty: The Story of Eugene Connett’s Lost Fiction*” (page 13). Connett, a successful writer himself, published Derrydale’s finely bound limited-edition books of sporting literature for fifteen years. Two decades later, he apparently turned his hand to book-length fiction. More than a half century after *that*, Franks acquired an archive of Connett’s attempt: two chapters of the novel and related correspondence as the author sought, unsuccessfully, a publisher. It is this correspondence that makes for a fascinating read of frustrated effort.

In Connett’s defense, few authors succeed in genre jumping. As Franks noted, Connett’s sporting literature rivaled the best of his contemporaries, and his Derrydale Press “must be reckoned as one of the most enduring publishers of sporting literature in the twentieth century.” In fact, two of the most valuable Derrydale deluxe editions—having definitely survived spring cleaning—can be found in the museum’s recently acquired Charles Thacher Collection.

The nearly-400-volume Thacher Collection includes many of the oldest and rarest angling books in existence and, as Charles Thacher himself says, “reveals how the nature of angling books has evolved over more than four centuries.” In “The Thacher

Collection: Some Words from the Collector” (page 2), Thacher shares his collecting origin story, from philatelist to antiquarian, and explains how the museum became the collection’s permanent home. This carefully curated library is one of the most important gifts the museum has ever received.

Among those who helped the museum secure this acquisition is Trustee Rob Oden, who graciously agreed to offer readers a taste of the treasures to be found in this trove. *Barker! Bowler! Blacker! Jennings! Gardiner!* Oden is a kid in a candy store in the presence of these books, an eager angler in a fly shop, but more than that: an astonished reader suddenly face-to-face with volumes he’d never expected to personally meet. In “The Charles Thacher Collection of Antiquarian Fly-Fishing Books and Angling History” (page 4), Oden gives a chronological overview, highlighting a few of the most significant titles. He credits Thacher with deep understanding of what’s important in collecting and exults in the “lofty leap forward” that this addition makes both to our library and the potential scholarly research of angling historians.

Then, in a breath of fresh air, we brought our annual Fly-Fishing Festival back to the museum grounds after a two-year hiatus (page 20). We used the occasion to open our new Joan and Lee Wulff Gallery with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and welcomed the public to its inaugural exhibition, *Tied Together: The Extraordinary Lives of Joan and Lee Wulff* (page 22). Attendees were treated to another recently opened exhibition, *On Turbulence & Flow: The Fly Fishing Inspired Artwork of Val Kropiwnicki* (page 24), which will be on display through spring 2023. Plan your visit now.

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ON THE COVER: The earliest edition of The Compleat Angler in the
Thacher Collection: the all-important fifth edition of 1676. Photograph
by Sarah Foster.

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The Thacher Collection: Some Words from the Collector

I AM PLEASED to have added my angling book collection to the continually growing array of diverse holdings that are on display at the American Museum of Fly Fishing. I hope that many others will derive rewards and enjoyment from it, as I have. The collection is small—fewer than 400 volumes. But it includes many of the oldest and rarest angling books extant, both American and English. When I reached the age at which I should take steps to save my family from the complicated task of dispensing with the collection, I decided that keeping it together was important, which required that it be gifted. The most important criteria were that it reside at an institution where angling history is at the forefront of its mission, there is little duplication with existing collections, and it be accessible to scholars, writers, and other angling enthusiasts who are doing research, or merely curious, about the rich traditions of angling and its literature. The museum met my requirements perfectly and uniquely.

My penchant for collecting began when I was eight years old and was given a postage stamp album by my uncle George, a school principal and part-time stamp dealer. People have been collecting stamps from shortly after they were first issued by Great Britain in 1840, and it became a popular hobby. From the beginning, I was enticed by the great variety of countries that issued stamps, as well as the subjects that they portrayed, and I was committed to filling as many of the album's thousands of empty spaces as my limited funds would permit. I was given a catalog that identified every postage stamp that had ever been issued by all countries, each with an associated price, which encouraged me to fantasize over what my collection might someday become.

Over time, I began specializing in the stamps of a few countries, and by the late 1990s I had built a collection that was nearly complete. The stamps that I needed to fill the few empty spaces in my albums were rarely for sale, and when they were, it was only at the world's top auction houses. At that point, the thrill of the quest—the spark that keeps the collecting impulse aflame—was largely gone, so I sold my stamps and sought a new collecting pursuit that offered a more active quotidian experience. I was an avid fisherman and enjoyed reading about it, so I began acquiring angling books.

Angling books were published for nearly 350 years before the first postage stamps were issued. People had been collecting them for more than 150 years, but none of the several dozen published bibliographies was complete, and only very limited and often imprecise information on values was publicly available. Furthermore, it was estimated that more than 20,000 different angling books existed. I decided that the combination of books about a subject that I loved, the lack of reliable published data about them, and the large universe of possible acquisition targets perfectly suited my passion for collecting. I started in earnest in 1999.

In my earliest years of collecting stamps, if I had five dollars to spend, I would buy 500 common stamps for a penny each rather than one rare stamp for five dollars. This approach fit my objective of filling the most album spaces but was ineffective in building an investment. Nearly fifty years later, when I sold my collection, those penny stamps were still worth a penny, but a single five-dollar stamp might well have been worth several hundred dollars. As I looked through auction sales catalogs for angling books, I realized that they followed the same price formula as stamps and, although I was collecting books primarily for enjoyment rather than as an investment, I didn't want to end up losing money, if possible. Also, I had limited shelf space and wanted to display what I bought. So, from the outset, my focus was on rarer books, which meant primarily books published in the nineteenth century and earlier. I quickly realized that I had no idea whether the amount being asked for a book was reasonable, and, moreover, I knew nothing of the many nuances of old books. So I decided to create my own database of angling books, including reliable information as to their values; that decision sent me down a rabbit hole for more than six years.

I became consumed with poring over existing bibliographies, dealer and auction catalogs, and the Internet, identifying and describing "collectible" angling books, which I defined as books selling for more than \$100. For such books the database included all of their publishing and physical features, such as variations in editions, bindings, dust jackets, size, and any other characteristic that distinguished them, plus features unique to individual copies, such as inscriptions, provenance, and extra added materials. Also, to substantiate the value data, in addition to the price, the dealer or auction house selling each book was recorded, as well as the date at which it was sold or offered. After spending about fifteen to twenty hours a week for six years compiling and editing data, in late 2006 the database (essentially, a bibliography with values) was published in a 620-page large-format book titled *Angling Books: A Guide for Collectors*, with more than 15,000 individual book descriptions. My family then welcomed me back into the fold.

In the course of the project, I discovered some old angling books that were not included in any previous bibliographies, as well as unrecorded editions of well-known books. Nerdily, the thrill of finding the occasional nugget was like catching a 20-inch trout in a drainage ditch, and I acquired many of these surprises. The oldest book acquired for the collection was published in 1597. More than 20 percent of the books were published before 1800, and more than 75 percent before 1900. The earliest American book was published in 1830, and the 130 books published before then are primarily British, with a handful that are French or Italian.

There is one set of books in the collection that is unique, very impressive, and I believe has found its perfect home in the

museum. It represents nearly a life's work of one Casimir Naleway, who lived in Chicago from 1913 to 1977. From the 1940s to the 1970s, he produced six extensive volumes portraying beautifully hand-drawn fishing flies, each identified by name, plus complete handwritten descriptions of all the materials required to tie each fly. Strangely, I acquired these volumes from a British dealer, which is the type of serendipitous experience that makes collecting so compelling. The books contain illustrations of more than 2,000 artificial flies, of which more than 75 percent are hand-painted, and the remainder are pen-and-ink or pencil drawings, a few only partially completed. The vibrancy of the colors of the hand-painted flies is extraordinary. The lengthy descriptions show remarkable care; I have not found a single error. The volumes are housed in three elegantly decorated full Morocco clamshell boxes. Mr. Naleway's stunning work deserves to be in a public institution where it can be admired and studied by angling scholars and other visitors. It is my hope that someone will uncover more details regarding this relatively unknown but dedicated and highly skilled artist and, probably, angler.

The collection I assembled reveals how the nature of angling books has evolved over more than four centuries. Until the late 1700s, they were primarily manuals, with instructions on the equipment, baits, and lures (including flies) used in fishing, the various types of fish that could be caught, the techniques recommended for catching them, and occasionally how to prepare them for the table. What we might today call plagiarism was not clearly proscribed during that period, and many books lifted material created by earlier authors. The most famous of all angling books, Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, was first published in 1653 and was preceded by many other books about angling, but it is considered by aficionados to be the pinnacle of angling writing, not for its rather mundane sections about types of fish and the baits to use, but its charming literary

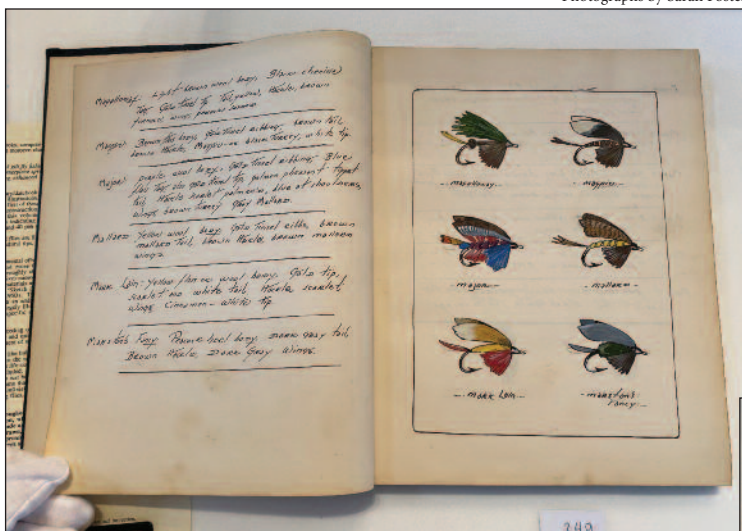
descriptions of the natural and spiritual joys and rewards of fishing, and the goodwill shared by anglers and their friends when they are not astream. Fly fishing was mentioned in many early angling books, beginning with the first British one published in 1496, in which a list of the best fly to use in each month of the year was included. The list had legs, as minor variations of it were occasionally repeated by other authors for another few hundred years.

By the end of the eighteenth century, books began including information about where to fish and more instructions related to fly fishing. A few decades later, books containing information about entomology and its connection to artificial fly patterns began to appear. The earliest book in the collection that includes actual tied flies (nine of them, presumably inserted by the owner) was published in 1814. Later books published in 1833 and 1839 contain 37 and 125 mounted flies, respectively; the earliest book with (31) flies inserted by the publisher emerged in 1842. Remarkably, the flies remain in fine condition, look much like flies still in use, and, no doubt, could seduce a wily trout or salmon today. Later in the nineteenth century, collections of stories about the authors' fishing experiences and travels began to gain popularity, much like today.

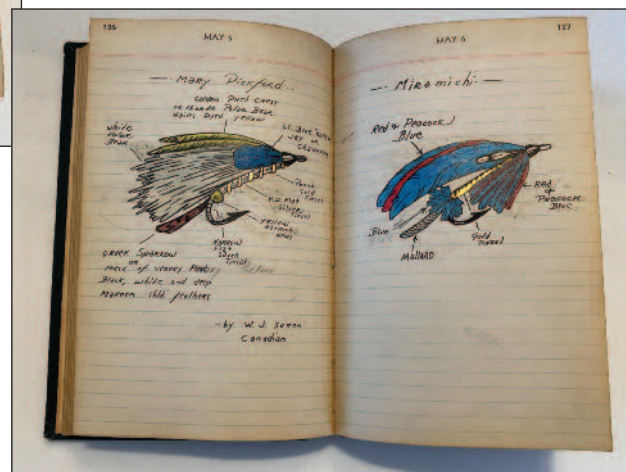
I hope that you will visit the museum and find some books that interest you. Meanwhile, I am thrilled that the collection, which entertained me for many years, will be permanently available to be shared with scholarly and curious anglers everywhere. To wit, one such eminent scholar and angler, Rob Oden Jr., who is also a museum trustee, has written a fascinating article for this issue, which, using my former collection as his focal point, connects the history of angling and its literature. I am looking forward to reading others in the future that do the same.

—CHARLES THACHER
KESWICK, VIRGINIA

Photographs by Sarah Foster



A few of Casimir Naleway's beautifully hand-drawn fly illustrations.



The Charles Thacher Collection of Antiquarian Fly-Fishing Books and Angling History

by Robert A. Oden Jr.

SIXTY YEARS OF READING in and around the history and practice of fly fishing—beginning with Ray Bergman’s *Trout* when I was twelve and which I essentially memorized—made me familiar with the names on the spines of the books before me: Barker, Walton, Cotton, Venables, the Bowlkers (Thomas and Charles), Ronalds, Stewart, Norris, Francis, Halford. But now I was in the presence of the books themselves. Sitting there, surrounded by the very volumes whose authors’ names I knew so well, created in me a sensation that perhaps only seriously addicted book collectors will recognize. As George Washington Bethune wrote nearly two hundred years ago, “There is a pleasure which the student finds in the sight and handling of volumes with which he has long been acquainted by report, but which he has never seen before; we come to think of books as living creatures, and to live to look upon their faces, as it were.”¹

On the second floor of the American Museum of Fly Fishing was a table on which the volumes were spread. The books were a part of the Charles Thacher Collection, recently and most generously given to the museum. The museum’s public announcement of the gift included notices about the following volumes:

- Samuel Gardiner, *A Booke of Angling*, 1606, credibly believed to be the only extant copy
- Thomas Barker, *The Art of Angling*, 2nd edition, 1653, a highly prized volume in any collection
- Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 5th edition, 1676, which includes Part II by Charles Cotton, with far more fly-fishing content than earlier editions of *The Compleat Angler*, and Part III by Robert Venables
- Anonymous, *The Kentish Angler*, 1804, and George Scotcher, *The Fly Fisher’s Legacy*, 1819, both prized by collectors
- Three editions of Charles Bowkler, *The Art of Angling* (1814, 1833, and 1839) that contain 9, 37, and 125 tied flies, respectively, in such fine shape that one could tie them onto a 6x tippet today if the hooks had eyes
- Alfred Ronalds, *The Fly-Fisher’s Entomology*, two 1st editions, 1836, a pioneering scientific study
- William Blacker, *Art of Angling*, 1842, with thirty-one flies (tied by Blacker) housed in a lovely leather wallet binding meant to be taken streamside

- William Scrope, *Days and Nights of Salmon Fishing*, 1843, which includes several charming tales and which sang the praises of soft hackles more than a century before Sylvester Nemes returned such flies to prominence
- W. H. Aldam, *A Quaint Treatise on Flees, and the Art of Artyfichall Flee Making*, 1875, which includes truly beautiful hand-tied flies in sunken frames
- Frederic Halford, *Floating Flies*, 1886; *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice*, 1889; and *Making a Fishery*, 1895
- An essentially complete collection of early American and Canadian angling books
- Preston Jennings, *A Book of Trout Flies*, 1935, one of the most prized Derrydale volumes
- Charles Phair, *Atlantic Salmon Fishing*, 1937, another Derrydale publication with many Atlantic salmon flies and the materials that made them
- Casimir Naleway, six volumes of a fly-fishing artist’s notebooks, 1940s through 1970s, with more than 2,000 hand-drawn and colored flies in three stunning gilt and green Morocco boxes

In addition to the above volumes, which were noted in the museum’s initial press release, I (although I possess nothing like Mr. Thacher’s expertise and knowledge) would add these others in the collection to any list of history’s most desirable angling books:

- John Taverner, *Certaine Experiments Concerning Fish and Fruite*, 1600
- Robert Venables, *The Experienc’d Angler*, 1662
- J. S. (John Smith?), *The True Art of Angling*, 1696
- Gervase Markham, *The Young Sportsman’s Delight*, 1712
- George Cole Bainbridge, *The Fly Fisher’s Guide*, 1816
- The Pickering (1836) and Bethune (1847) editions of Walton’s *The Compleat Angler*
- Frederic Tolfrey, *Jones’s Guide to Norway*, 1848
- Joseph Crawhall, *The Compleatest Angling Book that Euer Was Writ*, 1859
- John Waller Hills, *A Summer on the Test*, 1924, the deluxe edition (one of only twenty-five copies), with the plates signed by the prominent artist Norman Wilkinson—a notably rare book



A screenshot of the photo gallery in Executive Director Sarah Foster's phone as she took images of the books in the Thacher Collection.



Photographs by Sarah Foster

The Thacher Collection in its new home.

The reason this collection is so extraordinary is that Mr. Thacher is an extraordinarily talented and knowledgeable collector. Charles Thacher is, of course, the author of *Angling Books: A Guide for Collectors*, a truly comprehensive description and valuation of thousands of angling books.² Austin Hogan lists the requirements of any aspiring book collector as “a pocketful of gold, discrimination, perseverance, and a talent for study. A knowledge of history is mandatory if the collector is to build a library worthy of its keep.”³ I would add high intelligence and discernment, especially the latter. A serious book collector needs to discern between volumes worthy of acquiring and lesser books, and she or he must possess the intelligence to sort through the often confusing data regarding the edition and printing history of any book. The Thacher Collection is abiding testimony to Mr. Thacher's possession of all of these attributes and more.

The AMFF's library, previously outstanding, now reaches an entirely new level. This matchless collection prompts both celebration and a concise repetition of some of the signal moments in angling history. Our literature is blessed with a number of such superb histories.⁴ Still, a briefer account may be of value to those not well versed in the uniformly fascinating history of fly fishing. Two swift warnings: first, rarely, if ever, will I refer to an advance in fly-fishing technique or equipment as “the first.” Too often we students of angling history have done just this only to discover that the alleged first had been preceded by other advances decades or even centuries previously. Second, one needs to proceed with caution.

Our literature is more plagued by errors and incautious research than most historical inquiries. I do not doubt that I will commit errors in what follows, but as a longtime academic historian and philologist of the Ancient Near East from the fourth millennium BC/BCE through the advent of Islam, I will work assiduously to limit these.

THE VERY EARLIEST STAGES IN PRINT

Nowhere are such errors more evident than in accounts of the very earliest stages in fly-fishing history. Thus, the often-cited ancient Egyptian image from the era of Ramses II has been dated to 3290 BC/BCE, which is at least 2,000 years too early, and the notice by Aelian of fishing in Macedonia has been given a date of 220 BC/BCE, when in fact Aelian lived from 165 to 230 AD/CE.⁵ Similarly, so much has been written, and with reason, about the *Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* that errors have naturally multiplied. These begin with the *Treatyse's* author, long named as Dame Juliana Berners or the like. The *Treatyse* is included in the 1496 edition of the *Boke of Saint Albans*, along with three additional accounts of hunting, falconry, and heraldry, and is almost certainly written by a different author from the author of these additional accounts. “Dame Juliana,” as the author of the *Treatyse*, is likely mythical, although there was at least one St. Juliana, and perhaps several, from earlier eras.⁶ Still, the appearance of Dame Juliana Berners in the centuries after 1496 is likely a confusion or corruption, perhaps—as Austin Hogan has daringly, and I think

credibly, suggested—a confusion “stemming from the Celtic Goddess Buyana, who was a powerful ally of the Druids, a huntress and presumably to be appealed to by fishermen.”⁷ Hogan, with equal courage, also suggests that “the ‘Treatise’ was first written in Latin as a textbook.”⁸

Authorship, likely date of composition (ca. 1406–1450?), and other questions aside, there is an edition of the *Book of St. Albans* (1810) in the Thacher Collection, and the *Treatyse* is revealing for advances made in angling already in the fifteenth century. First, the *Treatyse* remains worthy of study because it refers to “bokes of credence,” upon which its author relied, and this reference proves that the *Treatyse* had literary ancestors.⁹ The reference is also of interest because “the very reference to [earlier angling studies] by the *Treatyse*’s author reveals how deep in our literary culture is the need to relate one’s thinking to the thinking of our ancestors.”¹⁰ Later writers found considerable inspiration in the *Treatyse*, perhaps in no area more so than in the *Treatyse*’s list of twelve flies, which were largely or wholly lifted later from the *Treatyse* by Mascall and Walton and doubtless others.¹¹ Moreover, and most intriguingly, the flies were copied from nature, and the *Treatyse* author recommends opening the stomach of a large fish to see what lay within. The author is not only recommending that flies be tied to imitate actual insects, but also those insects abundant at the moment, which is nothing if not matching the hatch.¹² In short, it “is a great mistake to overlook the high degree of knowledge which every line of the *Treatise* shows.”¹³

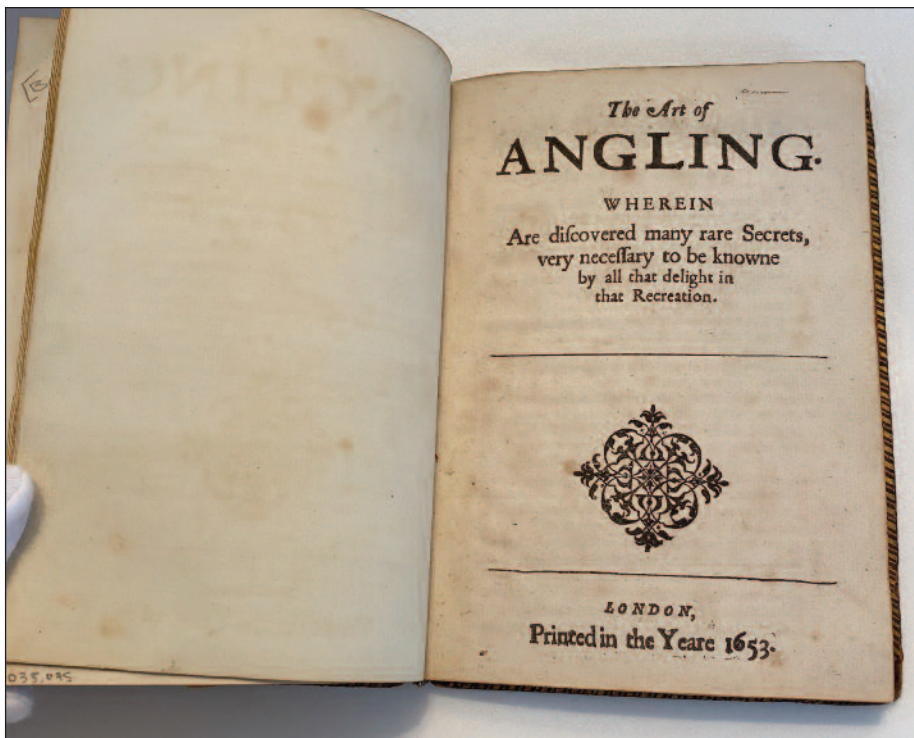
The second-oldest book in the Thacher Collection is John Taverner’s *Certaine Experiments Concerning Fish and Fruite* (1600). The volume is tantalizingly filled with scientific observations, especially in Taverner’s quite wide-eyed study of the migration of eels. Hills wrote, “Taverner, if he had not been so strangely neglected, might have filled the same office [as did Ronalds] for an earlier age.”¹⁴ The collection does not include a copy of John Dennys’s poem *Secrets of Angling*, with the famous note added by William Lawson, which note may well be among the first mentions of fly casting and which certainly speaks of the insect one should imitate and the materials

required to create the imitation. Andrew Herd and Paul Schullery’s comment on the woodcut in Dennys’s poem with Lawson’s note is worthy of citing at length.

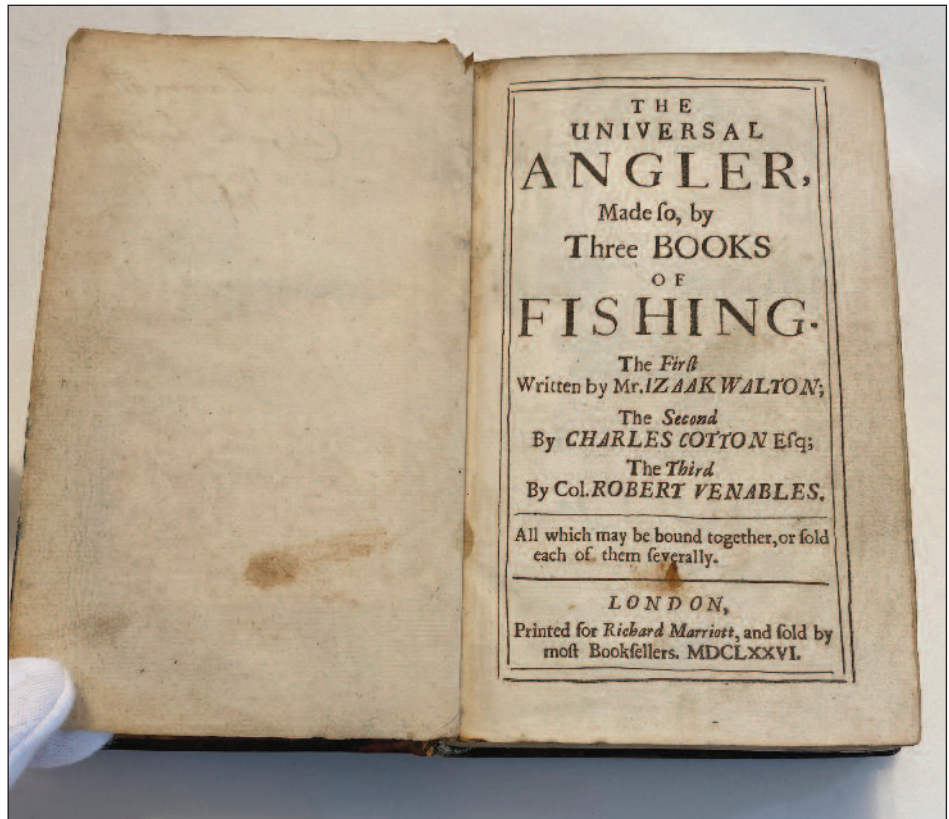
Angling historian John Waller Hills said that the Lawson fly “resembles a house fly on a hook more than anything,” but it seems to us at least equally similar to a bee. The view given in the woodcut may be part of the problem for us; we apparently see the fly from directly overhead with wings extending laterally on both sides. Perhaps if viewed from the side—that being the perspective that a few centuries-worth of later books have conditioned us to expect—the fly’s wings would be seen to extend upward as well as outward from the body.¹⁵

To continue our march toward the twentieth century, two volumes by Gervase Markham are included in the Thacher Collection: *The English Husbandman* and *The Pleasure of Princes*, both from 1614. In the latter, Markham again recommends flies imitating insects, as does Henry Peacham, in *The Compleat Gentleman* (1627), two editions of which are in the Thacher Collection: “For the making of these flyes the best way is to take the naturall flye and make one so like it that you may have sport.”¹⁶

We come now to another groundbreaking book in angling history and to what is surely among the greatest prizes of the Thacher Collection: the second edition of Thomas Barker’s *The Art of Angling* (1653). Although there is a possible reference to a reel in Dennys’s *Secrets of Angling*, John Orrelle’s *Fly Reels of the Past* ultimately concludes that “the first clear reference to a fishing reel in English literature is found in Barker’s book: ‘the rod, there was a hole made for you to put in a winch, to turne with a barrel, to gather up the line.’”¹⁷ Second, Barker is perhaps among the first to mention wound hackle in English fishing literature.¹⁸ Third, Barker not only describes flies but also recounts how to tie flies. And the most often cited sentence from Barker’s *The Art of Angling* is probably “that you can kill the greatest trout that swims with a single [horse-]hair, if you have sea-room, and that single hair will kill five for one killed by three hairs twisted.”¹⁹



The second edition of Thomas Barker’s *The Art of Angling* (1653).



The earliest edition of *The Compleat Angler* in the Thacher Collection: the all-important fifth edition of 1676.

STARS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

And now, but of course, to Izaak Walton and to the first edition of *The Compleat Angler* published in 1653. There are today many hundreds of editions of Walton, and the book is often said to be the most familiar book in English following the Bible (although the former is doubtless less often read than the latter). Because it is not until the fifth edition of *The Compleat Angler* (a copy of which is part of the Thacher Collection), with the important additions on fly fishing from Charles Cotton and Robert Venables, that we learn much about fishing with flies in the book, the early editions are best known for Walton's utterly charming prose. Mind you, this can be exaggerated. Here again, Hills is the most balanced:

Walton stands high as a writer, and possibly would stand higher were it not for the laudation to which he has been subjected. . . . His admirers have indulged in unbalanced and indeed intemperate panegyric. . . . [Walton's use of] dialogue is at once the most difficult of all literary forms, and also the most dangerous, for its apparent simplicity lures the unskilled to his ir retrievable disaster. . . . Many writers on fishing would have produced better books if they had not tried to copy him. . . . Walton is not one of the great English prose writers, but he is one of the most pleasing. The charm of his style lies in the revelation it gives of the man. Behind the printed page there always stands Walton himself, shrewd and critical, but also tolerant and kindly.²⁰

With Hills's balanced assessment I entirely agree, and I will add: as welcoming, affable, companionable as is Walton's prose, he is not only not one of the great English prose writers, he is also not the finest author of angling prose. That honor belongs to Harry Plunket Greene, about whose *Where the Bright Waters Meet* more later.

Walton's sources, we have learned only recently, included William Samuel, the author *The Arte of Angling* from 1577.²¹

But this is not to label Walton a plagiarist, which is to impose current standards of authorship back onto an era with quite different standards. From Austin Hogan: "The charge of plagiarism which is often hurled at the authors of angling books may in some instances be refuted if the dependence on the past is taken into consideration."²²

The earliest edition of *The Compleat Angler* in the Thacher Collection, as just noted, is the all-important fifth edition of 1676, that with Part II by Charles Cotton and Part III by Robert Venables.²³ Venables's *The Experienc'd Angler* (1662) is another one of the nearly priceless volumes in the Thacher Collection. We remember Venables largely because he is among the first to favor fishing upstream. Such fishing, Venables argues, has a signal advantage: the fisherman is not seen by the fish, but Venables also notes that wading upstream is arduous and can mean you line the trout for which you are fishing. Venables also "gave us our second tantalizing—and considerably more revealing—glimpse of seventeenth-century artificial flies."²⁴ The contributions of Charles Cotton are many and considerable, including dealing at length with fly fishing and creating flies. Cotton describes no fewer than sixty-five flies, and his appreciation of the correct way to assess the color of dubbing sounds very up-to-date, anticipating Leisenring and others: "If one wished to be sure of the colour, the dubbing is to be held between the eye and the sun so that, for example, what seemed to be black proved in reality to be shining red."²⁵ Cotton we also remember for his pillorying of London flies, which were fat, unlike his slender North Country flies.

Completing angling treasures from the seventeenth century is James Chetham's *The Angler's Vade Mecum* (1681), in which we find an early reference to fishing for individual fish (as opposed to "fishing the water," which is still frowned upon in some quarters) and which also includes all of Cotton's sixty-five flies. An edition of Chetham's volume is included in the Thacher Collection, as is Robert Nobbes's *The Compleat Troller* (1682), which is among the first to reference silk lines. Finally,

Richard Franck's *Northern Memoirs* (1694) is remembered primarily for its quite vicious attacks on Walton. Although *Northern Memoirs* was published in 1694, it was written in 1658, which means Franck was a near contemporary of Walton, and this suggests a rivalry (at least in Franck's mind).

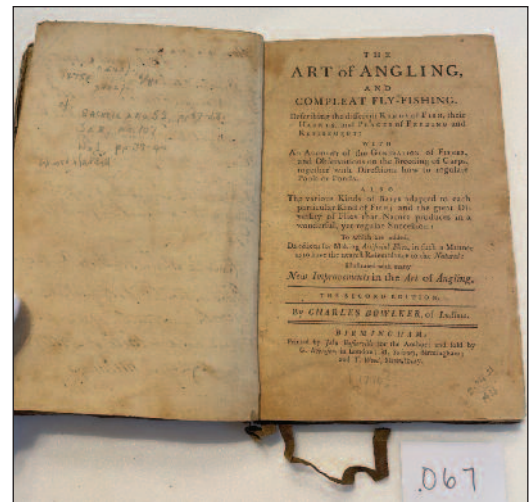
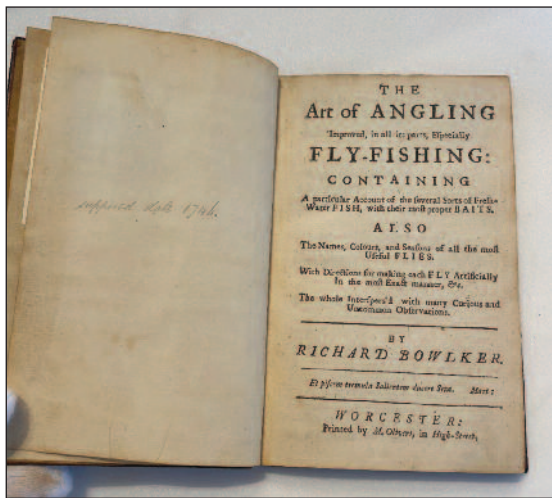
On to the eighteenth century. Virtually every historian of fly fishing notes that the eighteenth century is as lacking in real advances in angling technique as the seventeenth century is abundant in the same; there were mechanical advances in equipment, to be sure, in the eighteenth century, but not in new or renewed ways to fish for trout. Worthy of note, and in the Thacher Collection, are Robert Howlett's *Angler's Sure Guide* (1706), quite filled with practical advice, and James Saunders's *The Compleat Fisherman* (1724), which may be among the earliest books to note the use of gut.²⁶

But the real prize of eighteenth-century angling books is the work of Richard and Charles Bowlker. The Thacher Collection includes at least four copies of *The Art of Angling Improved, in All Its Parts, Especially Fly-Fishing*, from circa 1746 until well into the nineteenth century.²⁷ The Bowlkers performed what has been called a public service by disposing, at long last, "of the earlier patterns [from the *Treatyse*, through Mascall, Markham, Cotton, and others] by simply stating they were named as curiosities."²⁸ An 1826 edition of *The Art of Angling Improved* (not part of this collection) includes artistic representations of flies that signaled, as Hills has it, "the first time illustration keeps step with letterpress,"²⁹ and we noted above that the 1833 edition of the book in the Thacher Collection includes thirty-seven mounted flies. Concluding his summary of Charles Bowlker's work, Hills quite correctly argues that "Bowlker remains the most successful purely fishing book ever written. His great merit is that he gives old ideas a good shaking up and fishing a fresh outlook. He clears away a lot of lumber . . . he frees us for all time from the obsession of flies which had come down from *The Treatise*: flies which, though originally copied from living insects, had for centuries lost all touch with nature."³⁰

When we reach the nineteenth century, we come upon a true irruption of fly-fishing literature and with it, great advances in angling technique and knowledge—and similar advances in the portrayal of flies. From Bainbridge's *The Fly Fisher's Guide* (1816) through the works of Scotcher (1819) and Ronalds (1836) (all are in the Thacher Collection), there was a near revolution in fly illustrations: "half a dozen printed books with original illustrations printed in the 1840s alone. This was in dramatic contrast to the half century before 1816, when the gene pool of illustrations of flies was limited, for all intents and purposes, to

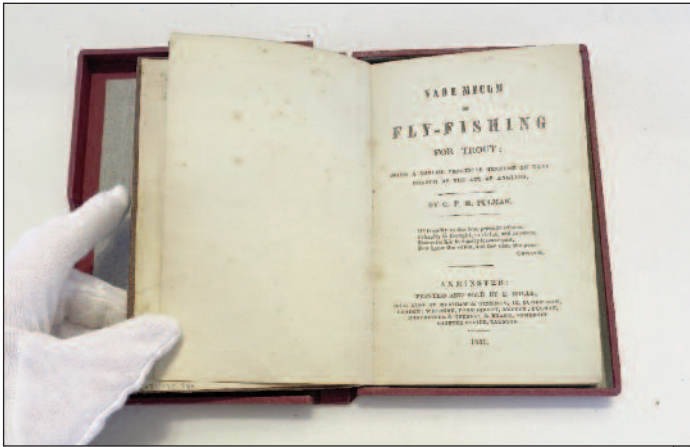
FLY-FISHING LITERATURE IRRUPTS

Illustrations of flies that signaled, as Hills has it, "the first time illustration keeps step with letterpress,"²⁹ and we noted above that the 1833 edition of the book in the Thacher Collection includes thirty-seven mounted flies. Concluding his summary of Charles Bowlker's work, Hills quite correctly argues that "Bowlker remains the most successful purely fishing book ever written. His great merit is that he gives old ideas a good shaking up and fishing a fresh outlook. He clears away a lot of lumber . . . he frees us for all time from the obsession of flies which had come down from *The Treatise*: flies which, though originally copied from living insects, had for centuries lost all touch with nature."³⁰



The various copies of *The Art of Angling Improved, in All Its Parts, Especially Fly-Fishing*, in the Thacher Collection. Clockwise from above left: the circa 1746 first edition, the 1774 second edition, the 1814 edition, and the 1833 edition.





George Pulman's *Vade Mecum of Fly Fishing for Trout*.



An illustration from William Scrope's *Days and Nights of Salmon Fishing in the Tweed*.

the Hawkins plates and the tiresome parade of images derived from them.”³¹ The most lasting advances of the century were, perhaps, in the realm of science. This I write initially in description of Alfred Ronalds's *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (1836); the Thacher Collection includes two first editions of this seminal book. As James Robb succinctly states, “Alfred Ronalds is rightly considered as the pioneer of angling naturalists.”³² Ronalds was an innovator in other regards: his rods were shorter than the 18- to 20-foot weighty poles obtained earlier, his reels were metal, and his leaders were of silkworm gut rather than the formerly dominant horsehair. Another summary, this from Richard H. Woods in the pages of this journal:

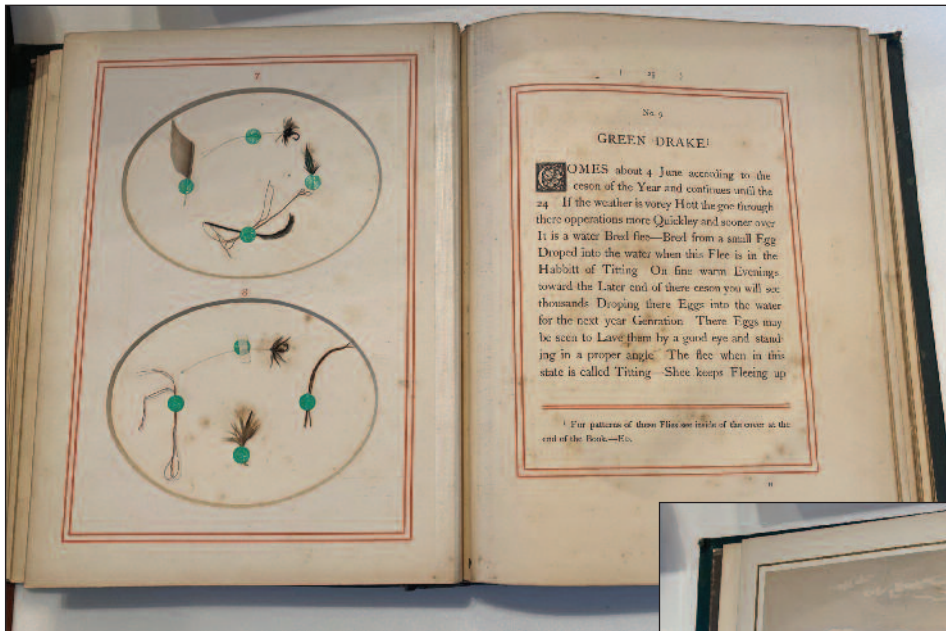
[Ronalds] did more than create lovely pictures or apply the world of science to the trout stream. He was an adventurous spirit. He conceived and analyzed the “trout's window”. . . . He studied and illustrated the trout's lie in the current. . . . He was an inquiring mind who conducted his own experiments on the senses of his quarry. His entomological researches and fly-tying were labors of personal hard work, not plagiarism from some earlier amateur writer, and his results were correct and accurate. Though his prose is not deathlessly lyrical it is nonetheless readable, clear, and concise. He was a whole man, like the rest of us, pursuing an idyll.³³

Next we come to progress at least as enduring: the beginnings of dry-fly fishing. To be sure, some have argued that the reference to a cork-bodied fly in early seventeenth-century literature means a reference to dry-fly fishing, but most dismiss this earlier reference as rather speaking of fishing a fly near the surface. Here a key volume is George Pulman's *Vade Mecum of Fly Fishing for Trout* (1841, the first edition, is in the Thacher Collection). In slightly later editions of this book, Pulman writes, “Let a dry fly be substituted for the wet one, the line switched a few times through the air to throw off its superabundant moisture.”³⁴ Pulman is speaking of false casting,

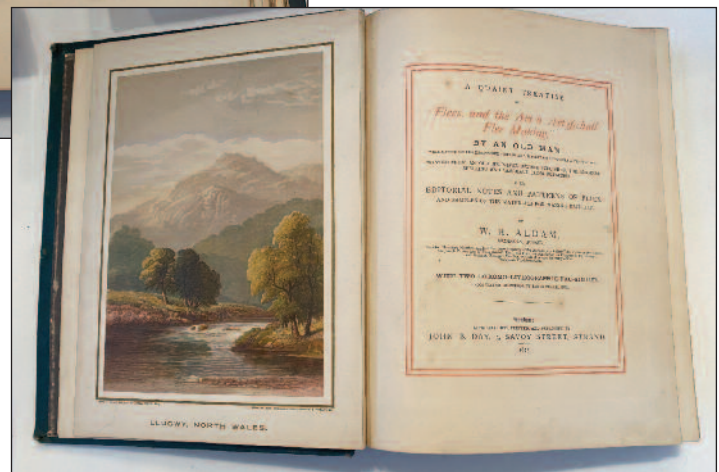
which, like many veteran anglers, I studiously avoid except when fishing a dry fly. (In the many decades I taught fly casting and fly fishing to students in several schools and colleges, I often said, unkindly but not unhelpfully, to students who persisted in false casting, “Mercy, all these years of fishing, I had not realized there were trout in the air.”) Hills, who made the observation noted above about Pulman's false casting, goes on to note that Thomas Stoddart's *The Angler's Companion to the Rivers and Lochs of Scotland* reports nothing about false casting in its first edition (1847) but does write of casting a figure of eight or two between casts in his second edition (1853), suggesting he had read of Pulman's advice in the years between.

Further nineteenth-century advances come from William Scrope's *Days and Nights of Salmon Fishing in the Tweed*, whose 1843 first edition is included in the Thacher Collection. Scrope (pronounced “scroop”) studied and reported on the natural history of Atlantic salmon, and many angling historians have noted the wit and humor of his writing. An example: a water bailiff, sworn to tell all of any untoward acts (i.e., poaching) he saw, sits at the dinner table until his wife first blindfolds him with a napkin, then brings him an illegal salmon, which was removed after the bailiff ate his fill, and then the blindfold was removed, so that the bailiff saw nothing improper. Also well remembered are Scrope's remarks on wading wet and his advice that all is well if one's legs turn red while wading, but if they turn black, it's best to get out of the water.

From the same decade comes a volume in the Thacher Collection I have longed to examine personally. This is the 1847 American edition of Walton's *The Compleat Angler* edited by George Washington Bethune. The volume begins with a “Bibliographical Preface” signed by “The American Editor.” Thus, this edition of Walton was published anonymously. The secret was soon out because Bethune was simply too well known—as a Calvinist minister and as a well-published author of books and hymns—for his identity to remain hidden for long. Apparently, his Calvinism suggested to him that to hold fly



The Green Drake plate (above) and title page of W. H. Aldam's *A Quaint Treatise on Flees, and the Art of Artyfichall Flee Making*.



fishing as a hobby was, well, rather flighty, and hence he published his Walton edition anonymously. The Bethune edition includes lengthy commentary, notes, appendices, and more, and thus is considered among the best editions of Walton published. It was a rare treat for me to begin to read through Bethune's Walton.

W. C. Stewart's *The Practical Angler* (1857) appeared a decade later. The Thacher Collection includes the fourth edition from 1861. True to its title, Stewart's volume is quite filled with clear and acute advice. We remember Stewart above all for his insistence that we should fish upstream. As noted above, Venables had advocated this, at least for smaller waters, two centuries earlier. Still, Hills convincingly argues that Stewart "was not the discoverer of upstream fishing any more than Darwin was the discoverer of natural selection: but he was the first for nearly two hundred years to take the trouble to make the case and the first of an age to do it completely . . . all credit be given to Stewart, for he converted the world as Darwin did."³⁵ Stewart's upstream fishing recommendations are based on his observations that in so fishing the angler is less visible, the fly acts more like an actual insect, and when the angler strikes, the fly is pulled into the trout's mouth.

AMERICAN AUTHORS, DRY-FLY ENTHUSIASTS

In 1864 there appeared the first American volume to be noted here (although not the earliest American volume on fly fishing), Thaddeus Norris's *The American Angler's Book* (first edi-

tion in the Thacher Collection). Austin Hogan has noted that "out of [his] wealth of experience [attained by Norris fishing from the Canadian Maritimes to Michigan] came our first miscellany, an angling book so full of information its [*sic*] almost unbelievable for its age."³⁶ In near chronological proximity was published the first edition of Francis Francis's *A Book on Angling*.³⁷ By this time, as Francis makes clear, dry-fly fishing had become so well established that it was seen as the obviously correct method of fishing. Francis's fellow anglers routinely recall his many acts of kindness on and off the water. Thus, Halford, writing some decades later, noted that Francis was "always ready to instruct or assist a brother angler, always hopeful for to-morrow no matter how hopeless to-day had been, and withal, never speaking ill of anyone, he was in this conversation as in his writings the most charming of companions."³⁸

Yet another author of significance follows soon after Francis Francis's publications. This is W. H. Aldam, whose *A Quaint Treatise on Flees, and the Art of Artyfichall Flee Making* appeared in 1875. The book's sunken plates of flies and the materials that went into the flies' construction are one of the great visual delights in the Thacher Collection. Further, several of these plates portray floating flies, e.g., the Green Drake (plates 7 and 8) and what appears to be an outsized *Hexagenia* with an extended body (plate 22). As such, the flies in this Aldam volume are likely among the early dry flies to appear in any angling volume.

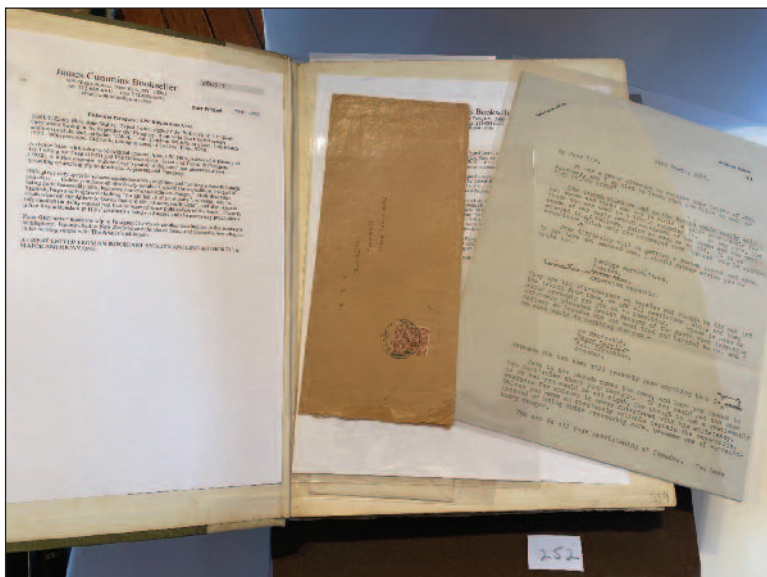
We come now to Frederic Halford, the evangelist of the dry fly. As the Gospel of St. Matthew concludes with the imperative to go forth and convert the world, Halford worked to convert all to dry-fly fishing exclusively. The Thacher Collection includes deluxe,

limited first editions of *Floating Flies* (1886), *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice* (1889), *Making a Fishery* (1895), *Dry Fly Entomology* (1897), *An Angler's Autobiography* (1903), *Modern Development of the Dry Fly* (1910), and *The Dry Fly Man's Handbook* (1913), providing striking (and visual) testimony to Mr. Thacher's wisdom and persistence in collecting. To accent but one of these volumes, the collection's copy of *Modern Development of the Dry Fly*, number 37 of a total of 75 copies, includes stunning flies in sunken plates. For example, Plate I includes male and female Green May Flies and Brown May Flies, Plate II male and female Spent Gnats, and Plate III beautifully tied and tiny male and female Olive Duns and Dark Olive Duns. The plates go on to include Olive Spinners, Pale Watery Duns, Iron Blue Duns, Blue Winged Olives, Sedges, and more, all dressed by C. Farlow & Co. in London.

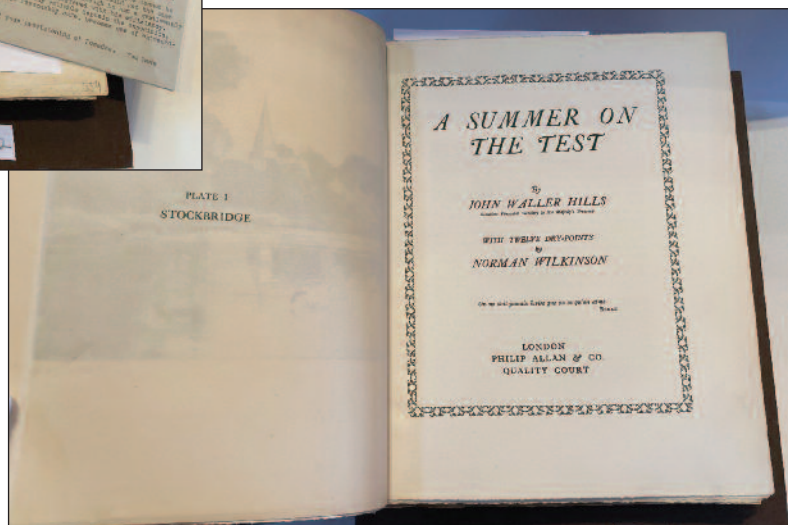
Halford is often criticized, and rightly so, for his intransigence, his conviction that dry-fly fishing had put an end to all other methods of fly fishing, and his insistence that any who thought otherwise (e.g., and a bit later, G. E. M. Skues [pronounced "skoo-es"]) were beyond ready comprehension. At the same time, I confess to admiring modesty, especially among anglers, and Halford can admit his failings. Thus, "I fail continually. I leave flies in the fish's mouth; I am weeded and broken. Some evenings I get home dead beat, tired out, depressed, and ready to declare that I will give up dry-fly fishing altogether. I hope, however, that I have learned to look at sport from an optimistic point of view, and so the next morning I wake up keener than ever, and once more sally forth to the river resolved to do or die."³⁹ Halford loved the English countryside as much as did Walton. His love of books is a comfort to all of us for whom reading a book is among life's supreme pleasures.

Finally, and speaking of fishing chalk streams, among the more valuable and sought-after treasures in the Thacher Collection is John Waller Hills's *A Summer on the Test* (1924). Hills, who also wrote *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, which I greatly value and upon which I have relied heavily in composing this article, writes as memorably as any author cited here. For example, Hills writes about the supposed author of *Treatyse on Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, "The authoress was stated to be Dame Julyans Barnes, or Bernes, a mythical lady whose name has now been changed by devout disciples into Dame Juliana Berners, and a romantic though mendacious biography has been completed for her."⁴⁰ Or, in summarizing Richard Franck's *Northern Memoirs*, "in spite of its abominable style, Franck was a right good fisher."⁴¹ Or this: "The eighteenth century was barren of fishing writers: in the nineteenth they sprang into being on all sides . . . it was the romantic revival which brought them into lusty life."⁴² Indeed, I put Hills right up there with Harry Plunket Greene, the Irish baritone whose *Where the Bright Waters Meet* (1924) is a magical account of fishing the Bourne before, apparently, the little river was destroyed for a time, though I am given to think that there are indications the Bourne has come back. I reread *Where the Bright Waters Meet* annually.⁴³

The preceding pages provide nothing like a thorough examination and illustration of the Thacher Collection, whose holdings continue well into the twentieth century, as noted in the initial paragraphs, and whose value to angling historians is inestimable. The American Museum of Fly Fishing has for fifty-plus years been a haven for those intrigued by the history of fly fishing. The museum's standing now takes a lofty leap forward with the addition of the Thacher Collection.



Accompanying Thacher's copy of John Waller Hills's *A Summer on the Test* is a letter Hills wrote to American author Zane Gray in 1924 about a fishing trip Hills took to Paraguay (left).



ENDNOTES

1. George Washington Bethune, quoted in Hans Bruns, "How to Start a Book Collection," *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 1978, vol. 5, no. 3), 8.
2. Charles Thacher, *Angling Books: A Guide for Collectors* (Far Hills, N.J.: Meadow Run Press, 2006). The book was originally quite beautiful, with an elegant slipcase, but my personal copy, uh, shows wear.
3. Austin Hogan, "Famous Firsts for the Beginning Collector," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 1976, vol. 3, no. 2), 13.
4. I am thinking here especially of recent works by John McDonald, such as *Quill Gordon* (New York: Random House, 1972) and other of Macdonald's publications; Paul Schullery, *Royal Coachman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999) and many additional works by Schullery; Andrew Herd, *The History of Fly Fishing*, 4th ed. (Ellesmere, U.K.: Medlar Press, 2019) and other books and articles by Herd; and also of older histories, such as James Robb, *Notable Angling Literature* (London: Herbert Jenkins, no date but ca. 1945) and John Waller Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout* (London: Philip Allan, 1921). Hills's history is especially praiseworthy for its sparkling wit and uncommon candor. Similarly well written and commendable for its acute observations is Robert Bright Marston, *Walton and Some Earlier Writers on Fish and Fishing* (London: Elliot Stock, 1894). A notably concise and an obvious delight to read is Arnold Gingrich, "The Angling Heritage" in *The Well-Tempered Angler* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 221–52. It is also important, as David Ledlie has astutely observed, for one's research to go beyond books and to also consider periodicals; see David Ledlie, "Review of Andrew Herd, *The Fly*," *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 2002, vol. 28, no. 4), 22. Hence the many references in the current article to material published in the *American Fly Fisher*.
5. Samuel Snyder, "Wading through the History of Angling's Evolving Ethics," *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 2014, vol. 40, no. 2), 9 and 13, fn. 8. The ancient Egyptian image in question has been ascribed to the era of Ramses II and to the Tomb of Nebwenef, but I have not been able to confirm this.
6. I am thinking of the third- or fourth-century AD/CE Juliana of Nicomedia and of the twelfth-century AD/CE Juliana of Liège.
7. Austin Hogan, "The Historic Trout Flies of Europe and America," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 1978, vol. 5, no. 1), 18. The literature here can fairly be called vast. I suggest starting from the most recent studies, e.g., Alan Diodore, "Caxton, de Worde, and a Speculation on the Treatise," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 2022, vol. 48, no. 1), 8–11, and Jody Martin, "Deep Waters: The Historical Role of Spirituality in Fly Fishing," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 2022, vol. 48, no. 1), 7 and 19, fn. 8, and then proceeding chronologically backward. See especially: John Waller Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout* (London: Philip Allan, 1921), 2–35. Frederick Buller's *Dame Juliana: The Angling Treatise & Its Mysteries* (Newton Abbot, U.K.: Flyfishers' Classic Library, 2001) has been described as "the definitive work on the subject" (*The American Fly Fisher*, Summer 2010, vol. 36, no. 3), 20, but I have not been able to access this book. John McDonald's *Quill Gordon* (New York: Random House, 1972) includes an easily readable version of the *Treatise* put into modern English, including consistently helpful documentation (150–72). In the same volume, McDonald provides a lockstep logical—indeed, I think irrefutable—argument for the mythical status of the Dame Juliana alleged to be the author of the *Treatise* (118–48).
8. Hogan, "The Historic Trout Flies of Europe and America," 19.
9. As quoted in and noted by Paul Schullery, "Peter Hayes's *Fly Fishing Outside the Box: Emerging Heresies*," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 2014, vol. 40, no. 3), 20.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 25.
12. "For baits for great fish, keep this rule especially: When you have taken a great fish, open up the belly, and whatever you find in it, make that your bait, for it is best" (the *Treatise*, in the version included in McDonald, *Quill Gordon*, 170).
13. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 35.
14. *Ibid.*, 180.
15. Andrew Herd and Paul Schullery, "The Oldest Flies, Part I: In Which the Extraordinary Harris Fly Collection's Origins Are Finally Discovered," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 2019, vol. 45, no. 1), 5. As I have written before, among the many admirable traits of Herd's and Schullery's work is their sprightly, tongue-in-cheek prose, e.g., "Got that? We're not entirely sure we have it either" (6).
16. Henry Peacham, quoted in Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 172. The Thacher Collection includes both the first (1627) and third (1661) edition of Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman*.
17. John Orrelle, *Fly Reels of the Past* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Amato Publications, 1987), 10.
18. Hogan, "The Historic Trout Flies of Europe and America," 18.
19. Quoted in Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 69.
20. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 62–64.
21. *The Arte of Angling* is a part of the Kienbusch Collection at Princeton University. For the fascinating story of the discovery of the author's identity, see J. I. Merritt, "The Kienbusch Collection," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 1980, vol. 7, no. 3), 3–7, and Arnold Gingrich, "William Samuel: A New Name to Revere between Dame Juliana and Izaak Walton," *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 1975, vol. 2, no. 2), 4–5.
22. Hogan, "Famous Firsts for the Beginning Collector," 14.
23. There is, apparently, although upon this I had not come before, some disagreement regarding whether the 1676 edition of *The Compleat Angler* is the fifth or sixth edition; see Merritt, "The Kienbusch Collection," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 1980, vol. 7, no. 3), 7, fn. 3: "Scholars quibble over whether the 1676 Walton was the fifth or sixth edition."
24. Herd and Schullery, "The Oldest Flies, Part I," 6.
25. Quoted in James Robb, *Notable Angling Literature* (London: Herbert Jenkins, no date but ca. 1945), 31. McDonald's *Quill Gordon* includes a condensed and edited version of Cotton's Part II addition to *The Compleat Angler* (173–89).
26. See Paul Schullery, "Fly Fishing's Three-Century Saga of Silkworm Gut," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 2006, vol. 32, no. 3), 2–9. With typical sparkle, Schullery writes, "For many years, probably up until the early 1800s at least, the production of the gut was a nasty little cottage industry that I am sure consumers were just as happy not to know about" (4–5). He quotes the following from Saunders's *The Compleat Fisherman*: "this silkworm gut will be so strong, that nothing of so small a size will equal it in nature" (5). I have long argued that no technical development for those who fly fish today is remotely as significant as is the staggering strength of current tippet materials. When I first began to fly fish, in the early 1950s, the smallest tippet material we used was 4X, and my memory is that it tested at about 2 pounds, the strength of 7X today.
27. Everything from "Especially" on in the volume just cited is the book's subtitle. The various editions of Richard, then Charles, Bowlker's work include varying subtitles, e.g., Richard Bowlker, *The Art of Angling: Improved in All Its Parts, Especially Fly-Fishing* (1746) and Charles Bowlker, *The Art of Angling: Containing Directions for Fly-Fishing, Trolling, Bottom Fishing, Making Artificial Flies, &c* (1839).
28. Hogan, "The Historic Trout Flies of Europe and America," 18. See also Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 144–45.
29. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 177–78.
30. *Ibid.*, 204–05.
31. Herd and Schullery, "The Oldest Flies, Part I," 9.
32. Robb, *Notable Angling Literature*, 196.
33. Richard H. Woods, "A New Review of an Old Book," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 1976, vol. 3, no. 1), 12.
34. Quoted in Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 123.
35. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 108. Hills continues with an acute observation of his own: "All of this (fishing upstream) is difficult, and if you cannot attain the art, fish downstream" (111).
36. Hogan, "Famous Firsts for the Beginning Collector," 15.
37. The Thacher Collection includes Francis's *Angling Reminiscences* from 1887.
38. Halford, quoted in Robb, *Notable Angling Literature*, 70.
39. From Halford's *Modern Development of the Dry Fly*, quoted in Robb, 79.
40. Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, 12.
41. *Ibid.*, 58.
42. *Ibid.*, 85.
43. I owe my knowledge of Harry Plunket Greene and *Where the Bright Waters Meet* to my friend and fellow trustee of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, Jamie Woods.

Thank God I'm Only Forty: The Story of Eugene Connett's Lost Fiction

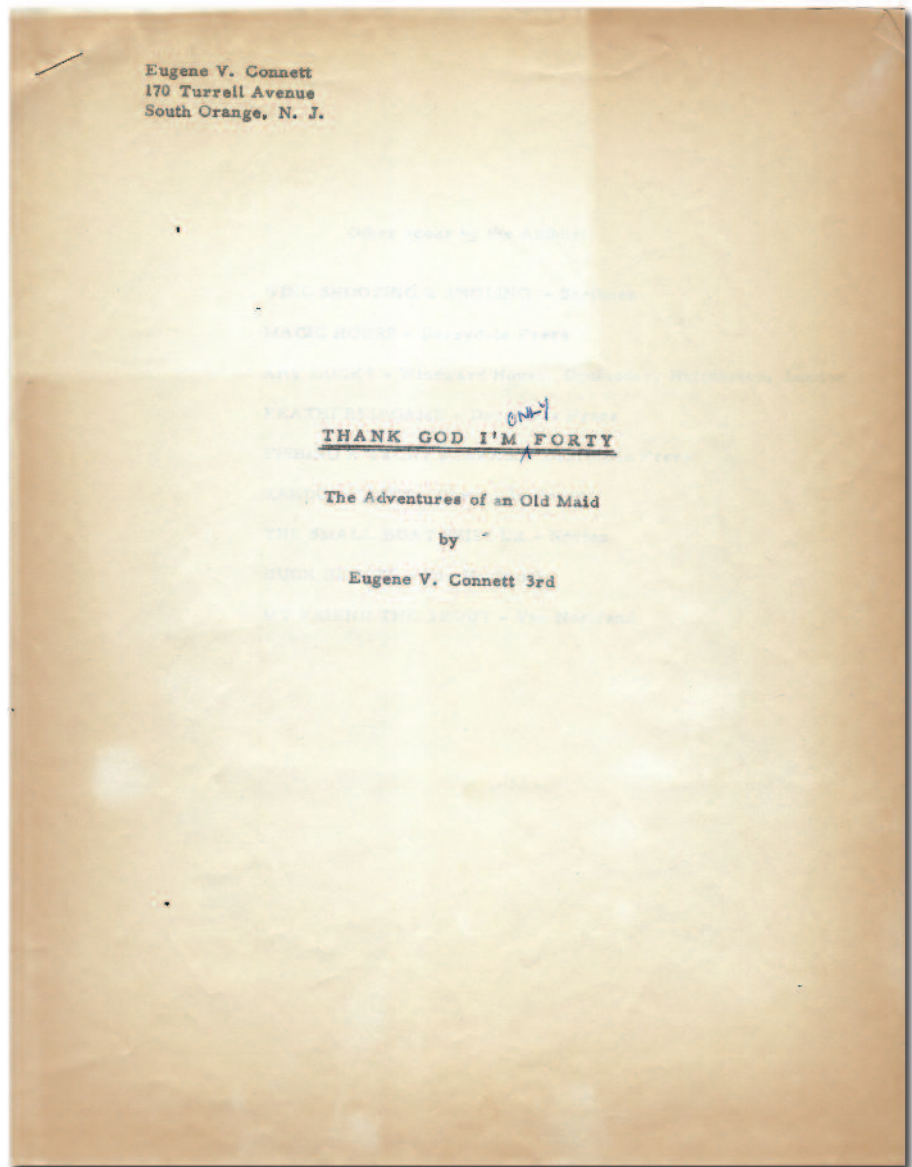
by Matthew Franks

EUGENE CONNETT WAS frustrated. He had contacted Daniel Mead, a prospective literary agent, with the intent of seeking his assistance to find his recent work of fiction a willing publisher. Perhaps not realizing Connett's pedigree as a well-established sporting author and editor, Mead naively offered to professionally edit, rather than promote, Connett's new book. Mead also made the mistake of including aromatic promotional materials in his correspondence, which did not settle well with Connett's delicate olfactory perception (more on this later). One could argue that making the switch from writing successful non-fiction to fiction is a protean task for even the most gifted of writers, but Connett was determined. Yet *Thank God I'm Only Forty: The Adventures of an Old Maid*, Connett's only known attempt at writing book-length fiction in his lifetime, never made it to publication.¹

The book first came to my attention a few years ago when a rare book dealer of my acquaintance queried me in his usual fashion. "I am pleased to offer you a unique archive concerning Eugene V. Connett's attempt at fiction. It includes the original edited typescript of two chapters out of a proposed 17 with related correspondence. I assume you're interested." Clearly, my dealer knows me all too well and, in this instance, I may have responded *yes* in record time. Admittedly, the entire experience proved slightly surreal. One minute you're mindlessly checking e-mails and the next thing you know you're reading the unpublished fiction of Eugene Connett.

EUGENE V. CONNETT III

For those unfamiliar with Connett, Eugene Virginius Connett III, the son of a hat manufacturer, was born 8 March 1891 in Orange, New Jersey. Twenty-one years later, following his graduation from Princeton in 1912, he entered the family business and within ten years became director of the firm and its 100 employees. With the exception of a short stint as an officer in the U.S. Army dur-



Thank God I'm Only Forty original typescript title page. Author's collection.

ing World War I, Connett remained a manufacturer of fine men's hats until 1925.² But a few years before that, by his thirtieth birthday, Connett's passion for fly fishing and upland hunting began to steer his destiny in a different direction.

Blessed with the skills of a real sporting writer, Connett began his prolific

contributions to the outdoor press with the laudable purpose of improving the ideals of American sportsmanship and conservation. Articles with the byline *Eugene Connett III* appeared in bold letters in most of the New York newspapers and in such magazines as *Forest and Stream*, the *American Angler*, *Field &*

Stream, the Sportsman, and others, effectively staking his territory in the competitive pantheon of outdoor writers.³ It was also in this period that his first book, *Wing Shooting and Angling*, was published by Charles Scribner's Sons in November 1922.

By 1925, Connett had sold his family's hat business to dedicate his full time to a new love interest: the writing and publication of sporting books.⁴ In 1926, Connett both authored and self-published his next book, *Magic Hours*, a short, twenty-page contemplative book on the pleasures of trout fishing for which only eighty-nine copies would be printed before his home printing press broke;⁵ his wife Kathryn donated it to the local high school soon thereafter.⁶ Fortunately for us, however, *Magic Hours* was the first of what would ultimately be 169 books bearing the imprint of

Connett's own publishing press for sporting literature, the now celebrated Derrydale Press. From 1926 to 1941, Derrydale published finely bound limited-edition books of sporting literature. As Connett described, "I believe that if someone would publish a group of American sporting books in sufficiently attractive formats, these books would not be carelessly thrown away during spring house cleaning fifty years from now, but would survive in reasonable numbers through the years."⁷ The works include many landmark contributions to the fields of upland shooting, fox hunting, yachting, fly fishing, and equine history that are still highly coveted by collectors today. Some editions now sell at auction for close to six figures.⁸

Connett's Derrydale Press was successful from its earliest days, having received steady attention in the *New York*

Times and *New York Evening Post*. The *Wall Street Journal* carried two stories about Connett in the fall of 1927 and continued to carry stories about him and his publications in its "With Sportsmen Afield and Afloat" column.⁹

Perhaps most impressive, as a result of Connett's personal oversight of the design, production, and marketing of the books, the press became only one of two deluxe limited-edition publishers nationally to survive—and even thrive—through the lean years of the Great Depression.¹⁰ Moreover, Connett managed to author another four books during these years as well. In fact, it wasn't until early 1942, following U.S. entry into World War II, that regulations on the use of fine paper and governmental restrictions on nonessential printing to small formats using very inexpensive paper resulted in Connett's liquidation of the Derrydale Press after fifteen years of prolonged success. But the sale of Derrydale did not keep Connett from his passion. Soon thereafter, Connett resumed his editorial duties as the new director of the sporting book division of D. Van Nostrand, a role in which he remained active for fifteen years. In addition, besides his editorial duties, Connett wrote another three books during this time, all focused on the subject matter that led to his early successes: angling and wing shooting.

THANK GOD I'M ONLY FORTY

For more than thirty-five years, Connett seems to have been writing, editing, or publishing something every waking hour. It is therefore ironic that following a lifetime of unrivaled accomplishment as both author and publisher of sporting works, it wasn't until 1962, at age seventy-one, that Connett finally decided to try his hand at fiction. What he may not have realized, however, is that his choice of topic (and titles) was quickly becoming outdated.

Set in late-nineteenth-century New Mexico, *Thank God I'm Only Forty: The Adventures of an Old Maid* was Connett's first crack at a short book of fiction.

"Mr. Petty, nobody but you could think up such a ridiculous plan as that. Henry is fully ten years older than Susie, and there isn't the faintest chance that they will fall in love."

"Out o' the mouths of babes and sucklin's sometimes comes a fatal lack o' common knowledge. Them two is as good as married, right now, if that little fool Susie agrees to pose for Henry. If she does, they're roped, throw'd and tied. You didn't think old Abe Petty had such brains an' imagination, did ye?"¹¹

-3-

"Well, after my meedest and crisp introduction to this here matter, I will now put you in complete possession of the glorious facts. This mornin' I hired Macklin to paint a portmrait of this here Susie girl. Ain't that a truly brilliant conception? Won't that master move o' mine steer them into their respective arms? ^{even the great} Could you, or Sphistonlese, have thought up a better plan to bring happiness into ^{them} two young lives?"

"Hummm. That doesn't sound as awful as I thought it might. You're giving Henry a job, and you're giving Susie something to do."

"You jest lack the finer instincts at times, young lady. I am doin' far more than givin' them two some thing to do. I am stimulatin' their imaginations and hopin' to arouse ~~their~~ thoughts of that purest and most magnificent sensation known commonly as love. After they sit lookin' at each other for a week or longer, if the good Lord sheds the blessin' of His benign approval, them two will feel the stirrin's of love's young dream in their hearts, and an' who is to say what the result will be?"

"Mr. Petty, nobody but you could think up such a ridiculous plan as that. Henry is fully ten years older than Susie, and there isn't the faintest chance that they will fall in love."

"Out o' the mouths of babes and sucklin's sometimes comes a fatal lack o' common sense and knowledge. Them two is as good as married, right now, if that little fool Susie agrees to pose for Henry. If she does, they're roped, throw'd and tied. You didn't think old Abe Petty had such brains an' imagination, did ye?"

"I must confess that I don't think you have done real harm --TET. But if you start messing into the relations of those two nice young people, I'll have Sheriff Garcia pop you into jail for disturbing the peace and being a trouble maker. Now, if you'll give me your word of honor that you will leave things completely alone, I will approve of what you have done."

"Fair lady, you have my word o' honor. What need will there be for poor old Abe Petty do mix any further in this here affair. I done my work when I

Page 3 of Chapter 8, "Mr. Petty's Masterpiece" from *Thank God I'm Only Forty*. Author's collection.

And so goes the story of Susan Collins, a thirty-nine-year-old unmarried woman who had become the matchmaking target of Abe Petty, a seventy-four-year-old cattleman, along with his confidante, Julia Allison, whose primary ambition was to find Susan a suitable husband (much against her will). In this short example replete with sylvan charm, Petty had secured a local artist, Henry Macklin, to paint a portrait of Susie in hopes of sparking love. Chapter 8, "Mr. Petty's Masterpiece," is one of two chapters I acquired, the other being Chapter 5, "Bob Hackett's Love Affair," of similar context.

The real story behind Connett's tale of fiction, however, is not Abe Petty's misguided attempts to find Susie a husband. Rather, it is Connett's quixotic, yet ill-fated, pursuit of its professional publication, a field in which he had been an

industry leader for more than three decades. Fortunately for us, Connett carried on extensive correspondence with his prospective publishers and literary agents, in which this nine-month journey from January to September 1963 is thoughtfully captured.

Following unexpected rejections from three big publishing houses of the day—Norton, Scribner, and Dutton—Connett turned his attention to the next three on his list: Thomas Bouregy & Company, Inc.; Julian Messner, Inc.; and Houghton Mifflin.¹² As we know, by the time that *Thank God I'm Only Forty* was written in 1962, Connett had accomplished more than most, and his approach to would-be editors noted as much: "Dear Mr. Daly, [h]aving edited some 300 sporting books, with my name in every one of them as editor, means that quite a few thousand people know the name. It is

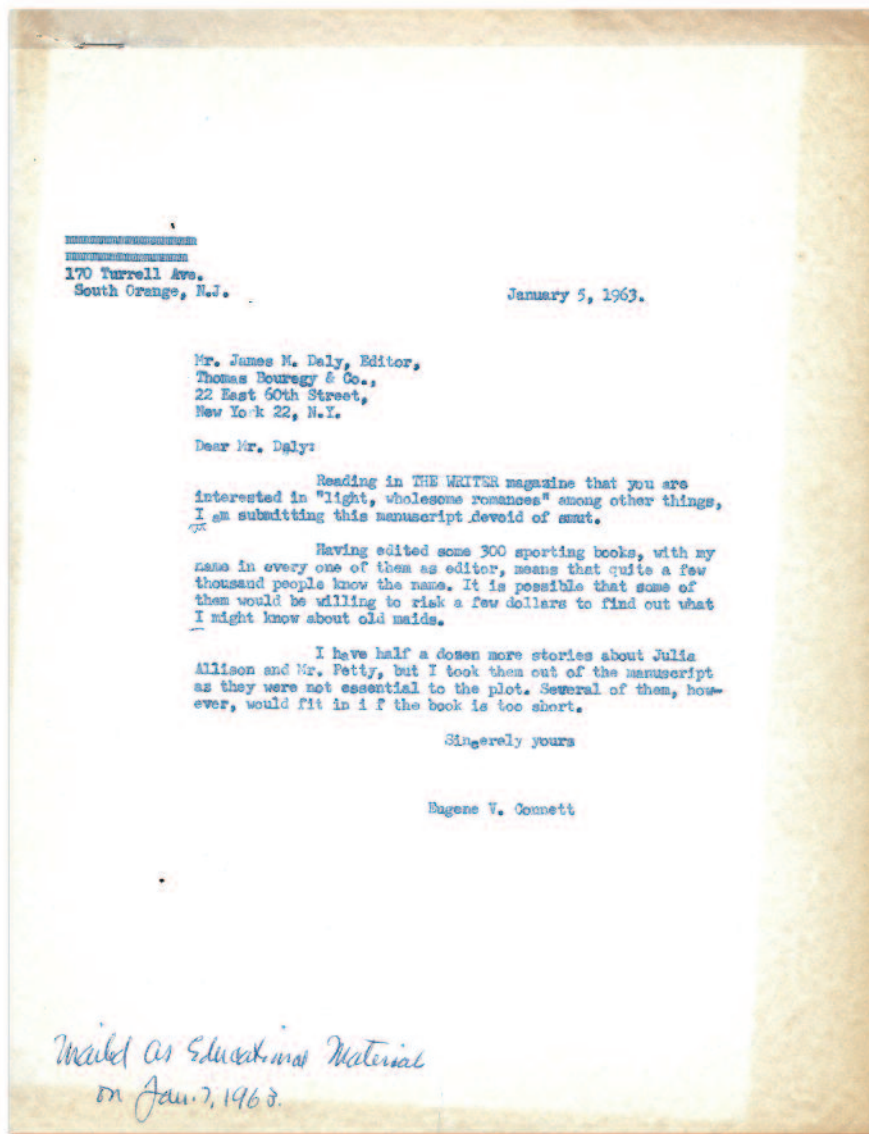
possible that some of them would be willing to risk a few dollars to find out what I might know about old maids."¹³ A month after receiving the manuscript attached to this letter, Bouregy & Company politely declined.¹⁴

Undeterred, in Connett's next effort—although 300 edited books were inexplicably whittled down to 200—the theme remained the same when approaching Julian Messner, Inc. "After thirty-six years of publishing, editing and writing sporting books—some 200 of them—I have written a book of fiction." Further adding, "[A]s I am all too familiar with the problems of publishing, I am willing to forego any royalties until you have recovered your cost of manufacture, at which time I would like the regular 10% royalty on all copies sold from the beginning."¹⁵ Despite the munificent offer to forego early royalties, albeit one not commensurate with a man of Connett's accomplishments, Messner promptly yet politely rejected his manuscript as well.¹⁶

Last but not least on his list was Houghton Mifflin, where Connett ostensibly had an inside track with his longtime acquaintance Lovell Thompson. "Having talked to you a number of times at the Publishers Lunch Club, you impressed me as a man of high moral character . . . I have been reading a series of 'modern' novels of late which are so full of four letter words, sex and filth that it occurred to me there must be quite a few people who might enjoy a book that wouldn't be a candidate for censors, courts or those who apparently enjoy wiping vomit off their chins at the end of every chapter."¹⁷ Once again, however, despite Connett's insider contact and partiality to Victorian morality, Houghton Mifflin apologetically declined.¹⁸

At this point, following six rejections, Connett felt it necessary for a change in approach. Specifically, the time had come for him to engage a professional literary agent to market the book to would-be publishers on his behalf. As chance would have it, he was referred to Daniel Mead of New York by his long-trusted professional typing service, a referral that he would soon come to regret. In fact, a two-week volley between the two quickly turned into a battle royale that would test the limits of Connett's patience.

"The Hill Secretarial Service of Asheville, N.C. has been doing my typing, and they have suggested that I get in touch with you about trying to place the [manuscript] with some publisher. . . [w]ould you care to look [it] over and see whether you could work it off on some unsuspecting publisher?" was Connett's query on 28 June 1963.¹⁹ Within



Letter to James M. Daly, editor of Thomas Bouregy & Co., Inc., from Eugene V. Connett, 5 January 1963. Author's collection.

170 Turwell Ave.,
 South Orange, N.J.

July 3, 1963.

Mr. Daniel S. Mead,
 915 Broadway,
 New York 10, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Mead:

Thank you for your letter of July 2nd. Before having you revise all the material I sent you, I would like to have you give me a firm estimate of the cost of editing and typing the novel, with a general idea of what you think the revision would consist.

For the time being we will not tackle the stories MISS ALLISON'S FISH BOY HUNGER, MISS ALLISON'S REWARD, JULIA GOES TO JAIL, JOHN SMITH, AND JULIA RECALIBRATES.

If I decide to have you go ahead with the novel, it must be understood that I am to approve of your revised version before it is submitted to any publisher. Through the years my name has been printed in some 250 different titles as editor, and several hundred thousand copies of these books have been sold. I am understandably interested in what carries my name, and obviously no longer swoon at the idea of seeing my name in print.

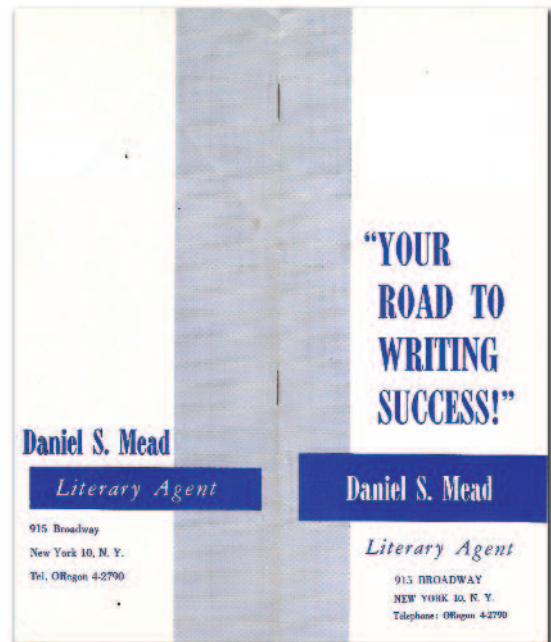
PLEASE don't send me any more of those perfumed circulars. They make my file smell like an unwashed hat check girl in Naples.

Sincerely yours

Eugene V. Connett

Letter to prospective literary agent Daniel S. Mead from Eugene Connett, 3 July 1963. Author's collection.

Original marketing brochure from Daniel S. Mead, literary agent, sent to Eugene Connett. Author's collection.



a few short days, on July 2, Mead enthusiastically replied. "We like your manuscripts . . . very much, both the editors and myself, but we do feel, as a point of criticism, that they need some revision before they can go out to market. . . . The work will be done at costs, plus 10% for overhead. The fee will be reasonable."²⁰

Somewhat deflated, Connett responded the very next day. "I would like to have you give me a firm estimate of the cost of editing and typing the novel, with a general idea of what you think the revision would consist." Further, he adds, with a hint of offense, "If I decide to have you go ahead with the novel, it must be understood that I am to approve of your revised version before it is submitted to any publisher. Through the years my name has been printed in some 250 different titles as editor, and several hundred

thousand copies of these books have been sold. I am understandably interested in what carries my name, and obviously no longer swoon at the idea of seeing my name in print." Finally, in a somewhat misguided attempt to be satirical, he chose to both go on the offensive and be so. "PLEASE don't send me any more of those perfumed circulars. They make my file smell like an unwashed hat check girl in Naples."²¹

Days later, on July 5, undeterred by Connett's comedic aspersions, Mead sent Connett a draft contract and quote of \$821.20 for his "professional time and energies" plus 10 percent of gross profits in connection with the book's publication.²² Connett, however, rejected Mead's request, sought return of his manuscript, and wrote, "I regret to say that, after figuring the probable sales of the book,

ensuring that you are able to place it with a reputable publisher for an additional 10% of gross returns, I don't feel that the possible net return to me would justify my proceeding with your proposal."²³

This exchange resulted in some spirited negotiation by Mead. "The main thing, Mr. Connett, is for us both to get your manuscript on the market for sale. . . . However, I wish to cooperate with you; I will permit you to remit in 10 monthly installments if you in turn will forward first payment of \$82.12 now. . . . Fair enough?"²⁴

Growing ever frustrated, Connett answered, "When I first approached you I was under the impression that you were a literary agency, which would either try to place my work or tell me that it was not good enough to warrant your efforts. If you thought it had real possibilities I

even hoped that you might make a few suggestions as to how I might improve it sufficiently to warrant your agency in trying to sell it. I now find that apparently a large part of your services is 'editing,' 'professional reworking,' and retyping, proof reading your typing, etc. I am not in the least interested in these services. Will you therefore please return my manuscript to me immediately."²⁵

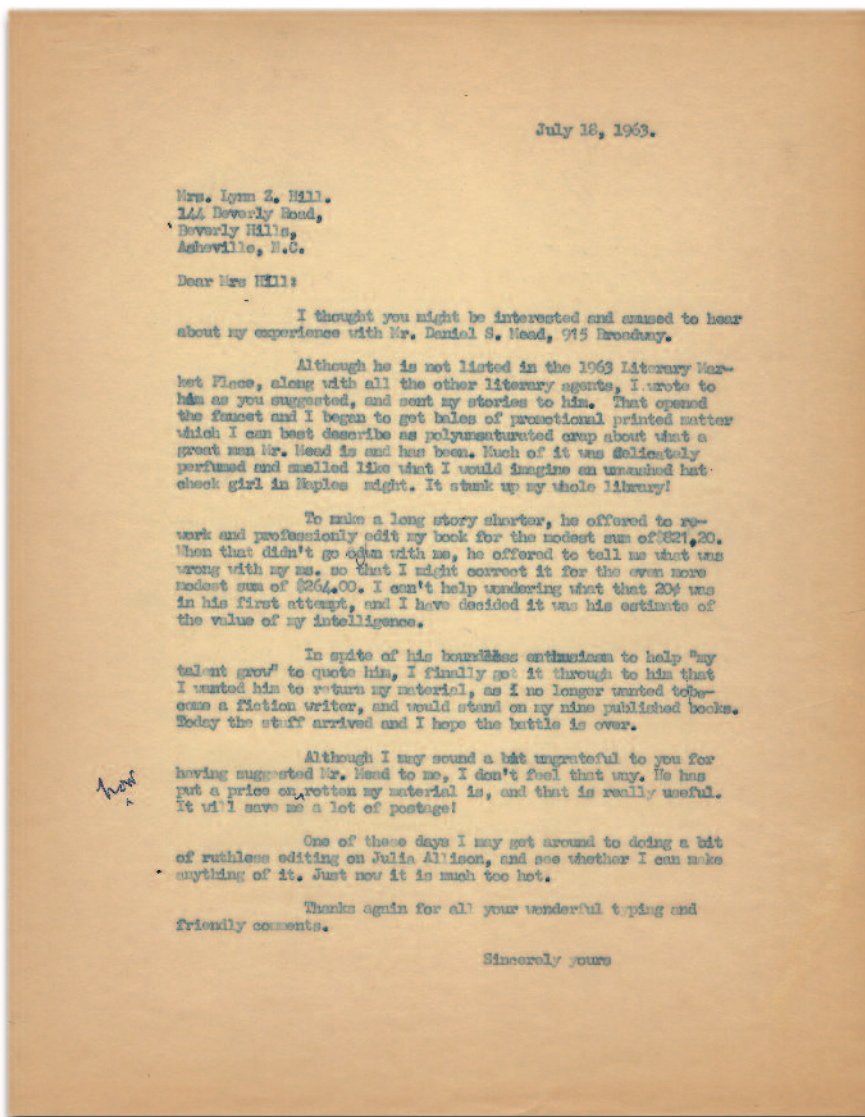
Later that week, on July 12, Mead made one final pitch. "Since I believe your work is much too good to be off the market . . . I should like to suggest that you yourself undertake the job of editing and revising, and then send the revised version to us for sales handling. . . . The fee for a professional constructive criticism, a criticism listing the present flaws in your manuscript . . . and showing you how to correct such deficiencies, will be \$264. . . . P.S. I would like to make one thing plain, Mr. Connett. We accept only such material as we feel has sales potential, and this in itself should be complimentary to you and encouragement to proceed!"²⁶

Connett, more than exhausted from the tête-à-tête, finally retorted, "I am less and less enthusiastic about becoming a writer of fiction. I will rest on the nine published books I have written and let it go at that. Once more I ask you to return my book [manuscript] and stories at your earliest convenience."²⁷

Following this two-week exchange, so as not to appear ungrateful to his referring party, Connett reached out to Lynn Hill of the Hill Secretarial Service once more. "Although he is not listed in the 1963 Literary Market Place, along with all the other literary agents, I wrote to him as you suggested, and sent my stories to him. That opened the faucet and I began to get bales of promotional printed matter which I can best describe as polyunsaturated crap about what a great man Mr. Mead is and has been. Much of it was delicately perfumed and . . . stunk up my whole library!"²⁸

By September of the same year, however, apparently having not learned his lesson, Connett was at it again, this time contacting the Nicholas Literary Agency (likewise not listed in the then-current Literary Market Place), another referral from Lynn Hill. Again, his approach was unchanged, albeit this time splitting the difference between having edited 300 books and 200.

"After the war I joined the D. Van Nostrand Company, which had no trade book department and started to edit sporting books for them, in order to get a trade book department in operation. I am still doing that. Some 250 sporting books now carry my name in them, in



Letter to Lynn Z. Hill from Eugene V. Connett, 18 July 1963, expressing his thoughts on her recent literary agent referral. Author's collection.

the colophon of the Derrydales and on the reverse of the title page in the Van Nostrand books. So several hundred thousand people must know my name. I have been secretary of the Publishers Lunch Club and am pretty well known in the trade."²⁹ He continues, "I am fed up with the filth and abnormality that seems to pervade even the 'best' books today. There might be room for a perfectly clean book without a four-letter word or a perverted act or character." The Nicholas Literary Agency was enthusiastically interested in representing Connett, but suggested that they only handled members of the Armed Forces Writing League.³⁰ An exasperated Connett replied, "I am all through joining things, so I won't join the Armed Forces Writing League. However, it was kind of you to ask me. . . . I think I'd better get hold of a regular agent whom I know

and take my chances with him—if he'll have me."³¹

The "regular agent" he knew was Lurton Blassingame, well-known literary agent of John Alden Knight and other accomplished sporting authors, to whom he wrote the very next day, with, of course, a similar approach. "It is barely possible that all the above publishers having known me for the past 36 years in connection with sporting books only, they may have been shocked to find me writing fiction. Maybe you could soften the blow with some other publisher." He then added what had become standard fare by this point: "I have published or edited some 250 sporting books. My name has appeared . . ." and so on.³²

Perhaps finally dispelling Connett's long-held belief in publisher bias rather than the unthinkable lack of a market for his fiction, Blassingame responded the

next day, "I doubt if the editors who have seen the novel have decided to forego making money on it because the author is an editor of sporting books."³³ Although the correspondence archive about finding an agent or publisher for his fiction ends after this letter, we know that *Thank God I'm Only Forty* never made it to publication. Connett died six years later on 20 September 1969 at age seventy-eight.

NEVER PUBLISHED

Connett's ongoing and ever-growing frustration with the tiresome and unexpected failure to publish his attempt at fiction is palpable, but it seems a reasonable reaction from a man whose long-time *raison d'être* had been the professional publication of books ready for market. It is undeniable that highly successful shifts of genre are extremely infrequent among authors. That is, I don't know that Nick Lyons or John Gierach, two very accomplished contemporary angling authors, could find success in mass-market fiction any more than Danielle Steel or James Patterson could write the next great fly-fishing book. Even Michael Jordan never made it in major league baseball. Moreover, it is possible that Lurton Blassingame—along with Norton, Scribner's, and other top publishers—realized what Connett unfortunately had not: that the depiction of single women as unfortunate spinsters was quickly becoming far less acceptable than in Connett's heyday. So, although *Thank God I'm Only Forty* never saw the light of day, we can be comforted that among Connett's many contributions to American sportsmanship, his Derrydale Press must be reckoned as one of the most enduring publishers of sporting literature in the twentieth century. I also find solace in the thought that when Connett maintained his focus on his true love, sporting literature, his writing rivaled even the best of his contemporaries.

The least we treasure-seekers can do to honor those great sportsmen who came before us is that when some original correspondence, typescript, manuscript, or other ephemera fortuitously lands in our hands, we do our best to bring these stories back to life for the next generation. In fact, while *Thank God I'm Only Forty* is the only known unpublished fiction of Eugene Connett, there are at least two other unpublished books in my possession that bear his name: *Notes of a Woodcock Hunter* and *Sporting Recollections*. But those stories are for another day.

ENDNOTES

1. Other titles that Connett contemplated for this work include *Old Maids Can't Be Rushed*, *Give an Old Maid Time*, *Spinsters Aren't That Dumb*, and *A For Effort, Mr. Petty*. In fact, Connett liked *A For Effort, Mr. Petty* better than *Thank God I'm Only Forty*. One, therefore, can only speculate as to why he chose *Thank God I'm Only Forty* when submitting the book to potential publishers.

2. See Colonel Henry A. Siegel, *The Derrydale Press: A Bibliography* (Goshen, Conn.: The Angler's & Shooter's Press, 1981), 1–2. See also Stephen Ferguson, "Eugene V. Connett III and the Derrydale Press," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 1991, vol. 17, no. 2), 12.

3. Siegel, *The Derrydale Press*, 2; Ferguson, "Eugene V. Connett III and the Derrydale Press," 12.

4. E. V. Connett & Co., Inc., closed its factory on or around 1 March 1925. The company began the manufacture of hats near Rahway, New Jersey, in 1815. See "Century Old Firm Quits," *New York Times* (1 February 1925), 2.

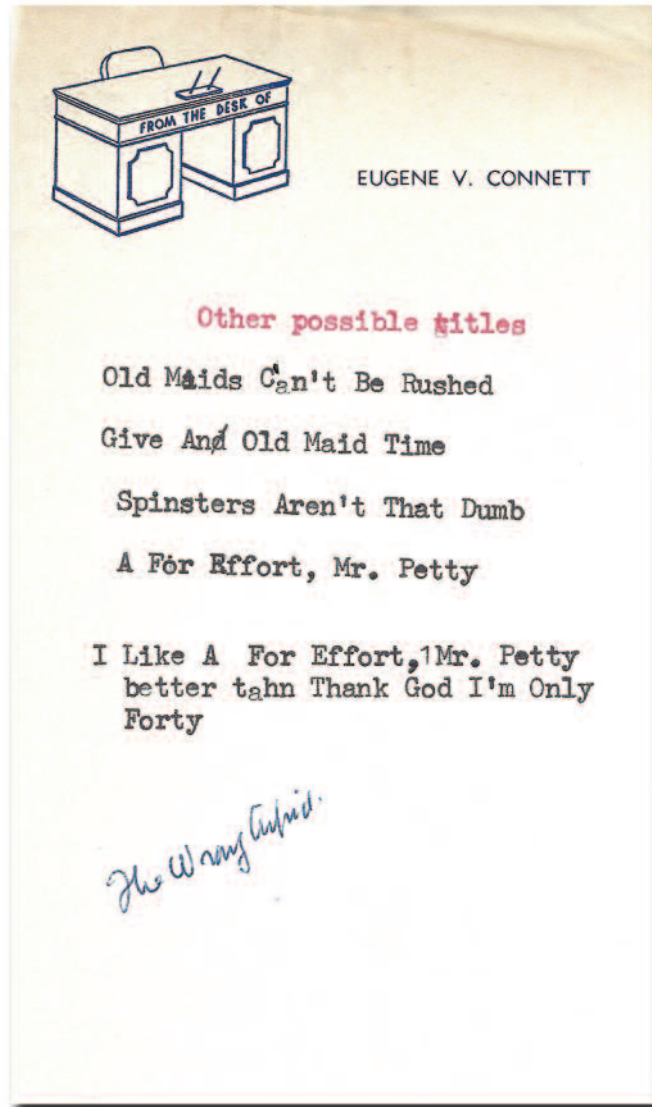
5. Sparse Grey Hackle, "Thirty for Gene," *The Anglers' Club Bulletin* (Winter 1970, vol. 49, no. 1), 2–7, 6.

6. Described by Eugene Connett in an original edited typescript to an unidentified and likely unpublished work by Connett recalling the circumstances under which he printed *Magic Hours*. Author's collection.

7. Eugene Connett in the original typescript of "The Derrydale Press" for *The Colophon* 1938: *The Annual of Bookmaking*, Connett's own retained copy. Author's collection.

8. At the November 2007 Lang's auction, for example, a copy of *Magic Hours* (of 89 copies printed) sold for \$43,680 and Charles Phair's *Atlantic Salmon Fishing* (of 40 copies printed) sold for \$50,400. Perhaps most impressive, Preston J. Jennings's *A Book of Trout Flies* (of 25 copies printed) sold for \$89,600 and William R. Woodward's *Gallant Fox: A Memoir* (for which there are only 6 recorded copies in a proposed limited edition of 50) sold for \$67,200.

9. Ferguson, "Eugene V. Connett III and the Derrydale Press," 12.



"Other Possible Titles" for *Thank God I'm Only Forty* on original Eugene Connett letterhead. Author's collection.

10. "Books: De Luxe," *Time* (19 December 1938), <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772156,00.html>. Accessed 5 May 2022.

11. Eugene V. Connett III, *Thank God I'm Only Forty: The Adventures of an Old Maid*, Chapter 8, "Mr. Petty's Masterpiece" (unpublished manuscript, 1962), 3. Author's collection.

12. Letter dated 18 September 1963 from Eugene Connett to Georgia C. Nicholas of the Nicholas Literary Agency. Author's collection.

13. Letter dated 5 January 1963 from Eugene Connett III to James M. Daly, editor, Thomas Bouregy & Co., Inc. Author's collection.

14. Letter dated 11 February 1963 from Lucy Mabry Fitzpatrick, editor, Thomas Bouregy & Company, Inc., to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

15. Letter dated 18 February 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Kathryn G. Messner, Julian Messner, Inc. Author's collection.

16. Letter dated 4 March 1963 from Kathryn G. Messner, Julian Messner Inc., to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

17. Letter dated 20 May 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Lovell Thompson, Houghton Mifflin Company. Author's collection.

18. Letter dated 11 June 1963 from Dorothy de Santillana, senior editor, Houghton Mifflin Company, to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

19. Letter dated 28 June 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Daniel S. Mead. Author's collection.

20. Letter dated 2 July 1963 from Daniel S. Mead to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

21. Letter dated 3 July 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Daniel S. Mead. Author's collection.

22. Letter dated 5 July 1963 from Daniel S. Mead to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

23. Letter dated 6 July 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Daniel S. Mead. Author's collection.

24. Letter dated 9 July 1963 from Daniel S. Mead to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

25. Letter dated 10 July 1963 from Eugene

V. Connett to Daniel S. Mead. Author's collection.

26. Letter dated 12 July 1963 from Daniel S. Mead to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

27. Letter dated 15 July 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Daniel S. Mead. Author's collection.

28. Letter dated 18 July 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Lynn Z. Hill. Author's collection.

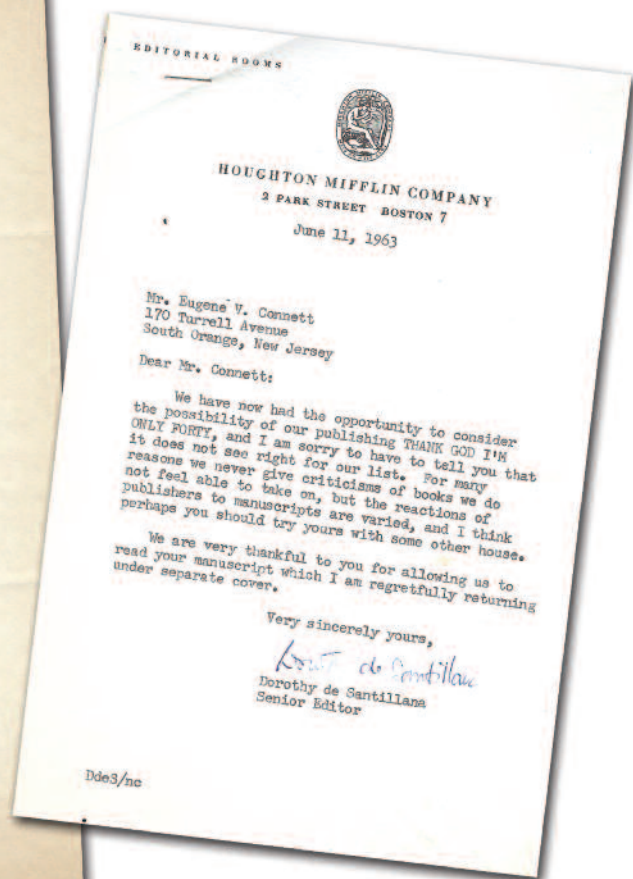
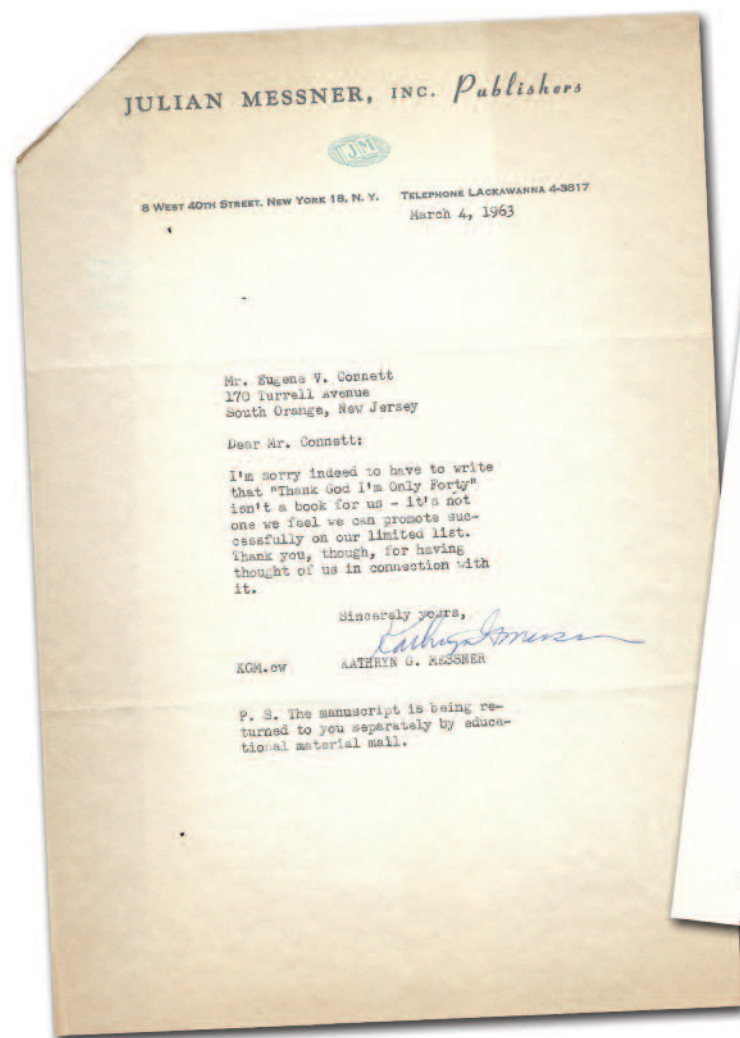
29. Letter dated 18 September 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Georgia C. Nicholas. Author's collection.

30. Letter dated 18 September 1963 from Georgia C. Nicholas to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.

31. Letter dated 21 September 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Georgia C. Nicholas. Author's collection.

32. Letter dated 22 September 1963 from Eugene V. Connett to Lurton Blassingame. Author's collection.

33. Letter dated 23 September 1963 from Lurton Blassingame to Eugene V. Connett. Author's collection.



Rejection letters sent to Connett by Julian Messner, Inc. and Houghton Mifflin Company. Author's collection.

Fly-Fishing Festival



Above: Vendors and visitors alike enjoyed the balmy summer day.

Below: Curator Jim Schottenham (left) and volunteer Bill Cosgrove helped this delighted visitor make a clown fly.



Photos by Sara Wilcox

Thanks to the magic of technology and an assist from Executive Director Sarah Foster (right), Joan Wulff not only experienced the opening of the Joan and Lee Wulff Gallery via Facetime, but also received well wishes from Brian Price and Rachel Finn during the festivities.

ON AUGUST 13 the Fly-Fishing Festival returned to the museum grounds in Manchester, Vermont, with a lineup befitting a two-year hiatus. Nearly 600 visitors stopped by over the course of the day to enjoy the unique representation of vendors, artists, craftspeople, industry professionals, and other angling-related nonprofits.

The ribbon cutting for the Joan and Lee Wulff Gallery and *Tied Together: The Extraordinary Lives of Joan and Lee Wulff*, its inaugural exhibition, was a highlight. Although Joan couldn't make it to the event, she joined via Facetime and was delighted to see the space buzzing with visitors.

The day included fly tying with Paul Sinicki, Kelly Bedford, Bill Newcomb, George Butts, Brian Price, Scott Biron, and Greg Brown. Bob Romano gave a presentation on the Rangeley Lakes, and Steven Sandford held a duck-carving session. Bob Selb, Fred Kretchman, and Carmine Lisella were on hand for complimentary appraisals all day, and AMFF ambassadors Pete Kutzer and Rachel Finn shared their fly-casting expertise with attendees.

The casting competition, hosted by Orvis, brought fifteen competitors to the course. Randy Wilson was the first-place winner of a Helios 3F 905-4 fly rod, and second place went to Greg Brown, who secured a Hydros II fly reel. The third-place

winner, young Matt Wilson (after a dramatic shoot-out to break a three-way tie), generously gave his prize of a Wader Mud Room Bag to an even younger runner-up! The day concluded with a throwback film event, featuring some of our favorites: *Running Down the Man*, *Metalhead*, *Connected*, *Doc of the Drakes*, *Gangsters of the Flats 2*, *Reel Adventures of Hank Patterson*, *120 Days*, *Nex Gen*, *Common Thread*, *Time*, and *Mighty Waters*.

Special appreciation goes to our sponsors and raffle donors: Berkshire Bank, Scott Biron, Costa, Express Copy, Mud Dog Saltwater Flies, Mrs. Murphy's Donuts, Mulligans of Manchester, Northshire Bookstore, Orvis, R. K. Miles, Scott Biron, Stonecutter Spirits, Taconic, TD Bank, Vermont Country Store, Wagathas, the Works, and Yeti. Many thanks also to our volunteers: Lauren Barrows, Bill Cosgrove, Lea Gregory, Carmella Livingston, Clay Livingston, Nikki Mackson, Merritt Perkins, Sandy Schottenham, Ron and Cheryl Wilcox, Alexa Witkin, and Kristen Zens.

It was a great day and a great turnout. Thank you to all who supported the event and made this year's festival such a success. See you on Saturday, August 12, 2023!





Heading out for a scavenger hunt on Yoshi's Nature Trail.



As always, there was plenty of activity under the main tent.



AMFF President Fred Polhemus and Curator Jim Schottenham prepare to cut the ribbon to open both the Joan and Lee Wulff Gallery and its inaugural exhibition, Tied Together: The Extraordinary Lives of Joan and Lee Wulff.



Some of the first visitors to the new gallery and exhibition.



This young caster impressed Tom Zemianek of Orvis with her burgeoning skills during the casting competition.



When Carmine Lisella stepped away from his table for a moment late in the day, Elsie was happy to fill in and point people in the right direction.

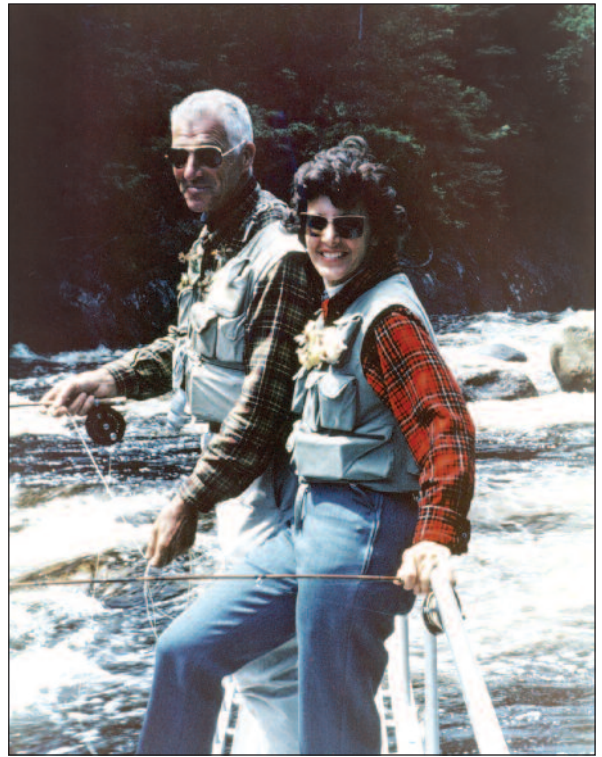
Tied Together: The Extraordinary Lives of Joan and Lee Wulff

Jim Schottenham



S. E. Bogdan prototype reels for Lee Wulff Ultimate, circa 1960s. Lee Wulff enlisted the help of Stan Bogdan to produce a lightweight fly reel capable of landing large fish. The resulting reel, the Lee Wulff Ultimate, was made by Farlow's and retailed through Norm Thompson.

*Gift of Joan Wulff
2021.017.051 (left)
2021.017.048 (right)*



Joan and Lee Wulff photographed by Stan Bogdan on the Godbout River in Québec, circa 1980s.

*Gift of Joan Wulff
2021.034.019*

Sara Wilcox



In 1943, at age sixteen, Joan Salvato graduated from high school. That year, she competed in—and won—her first national casting competition: the women's dry-fly accuracy championship at the National Association of Angling and Casting Clubs competition in Chicago, using a rod (pictured above) custom built for her by William Taylor.

*Gift of Joan Wulff
1994.003.001*

WHEN JOAN SALVATO AND Lee Wulff were joined in marriage, it brought together two luminaries of the fishing world. The significance of the contributions this pairing made to the sport of fly fishing cannot be overstated—it provided modern-day anglers with numerous innovations related to both the gear and techniques that have helped shape the sport into what it is today.

Working as a team, they taught and inspired countless fly fishers, from novice to advanced, to not only become better practitioners but to work toward the protection and conservation of the natural world. The Wulff School of Fly Fishing, still in operation today, started in 1979 along the banks of the Beaverkill and is a shining example of the dedication to angling that these two shared. Authoring numerous books, writing countless articles, and appearing in—as well as producing—films related to their beloved sport, Joan and Lee will doubtless continue to motivate scores of future anglers to become ambassadors for the fly-fishing community.

In the *The Compleat Lee Wulff* (E.P. Dutton, 1989), Lee was quoted as saying, “The finest gift you can give any fisherman is to put a good fish back, and who knows if the fish that you caught

isn't someone else's gift to you?” (ix). The legacy of Joan and Lee is an unmatched gift to all anglers—past, present, and future.

Much of *Tied Together: The Extraordinary Lives of Joan and Lee Wulff*, our newest exhibition, would not have been possible if not for the unmatched generosity of Joan Salvato Wulff and her incredible willingness to share memories of significant events that propelled her to the pinnacle of the fly-casting world. Among her more recent accomplishments, Joan helped to found the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. She is currently an honorary member of the Atlantic Salmon Federation and trustee emeritus of the International Game Fish Association. She has made multiple appearances on ABC, ESPN, and PBS television, and has received numerous awards and honors, including the American Museum of Fly Fishing Heritage Award, the Federation of Fly Fishers Lifetime Achievement Award, and induction into the International Game Fish Association Hall of Fame. She is the only woman to have received the New York Anglers' Club Medal of Honor.

JIM SCHOTTENHAM
CURATOR



Joan Salvato performing at a dance recital, mid-late 1940s. In 1938, Joan Salvato became a student of Eleanor Egg, a celebrated track star from Paterson, New Jersey, who opened The Dance Studio. Joan transitioned to a teacher after her first year, specializing in tap and baton dancing, and ultimately becoming a full partner at Egg's studio from 1944 to 1952. Photographer unknown.

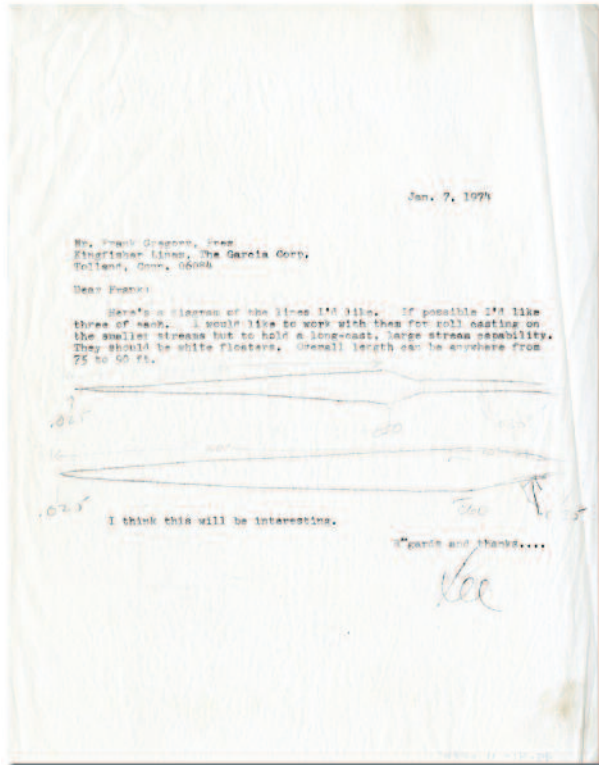
Gift of Joan Wulff
2022.017.009



Landscape, 1927

Lee Wulff studied art at the Académie Delécluse in Paris, where he painted this original landscape scene. Reportedly receiving positive feedback from his two exhibitions during the summer months there, he took his talents back to America in September 1927, joining the DuPont Company as an artist.

Oil on unstretched canvas
Gift of Joan Wulff
2021.025.021



Letter from Lee Wulff to Frank Gregory with the original design for Triangle taper fly lines, 7 January 1974. The Triangle Taper Fly line was patented by Lee Wulff and issued number 4,524,540 on 25 June 1985. Wulff states in the patent that the new line is especially suited for making a roll cast.

Gift of Joan Wulff
2021.017.070



In 1974, officers of the American League of Anglers, Inc., led by sportsman and broadcaster Curt Gowdy (left, in hat), sought to bring attention to the degradation of fish habitats. As part of the event, held in Central Park, New York, both Joan and Lee provided a casting demonstration. Photographer unknown.

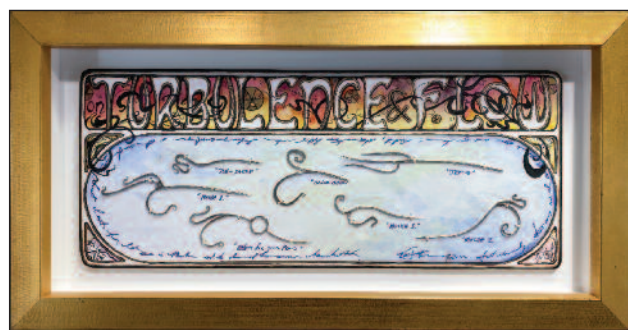
Gift of Joan Wulff
2021.017.074

On Turbulence & Flow: The Fly Fishing Inspired Artwork of Val Kropiwnicki



Above: Kropiwnicki's VK-S5 "Atlantis" prototype (left) and VK-S5.RF "Rybeck."

Below: A number of original hook designs.



Photos by Sara Wilcox



Val Kropiwnicki setting up the exhibition in mid-May.

VAL KROPIWNICKI (aka VK Steelworks) has become an increasingly recognizable name in the fly-fishing world. Beginning in 2010, Val embarked on a journey to create 200 original fly patterns. It took him 4,056 days (a little more than eleven years), during which time he also created a plethora of fly-fishing-related art and designed his VK-S5.RF fly reel.

Many artists become anglers and many anglers become artists and they often merge into one. But Val is anything but ordinary, and in an artist's statement, he provides greater insight on his work, his inspiration, and his character:

As a human being, I use art making as a way to deal with and rationalize the craziness, and beauty, of the world around me. As an artist, I hope to create images and objects that make people think outside their normal thought process. As a fly tyer, I strive to push the traditional salmon fly paradigm by adding miscellaneous metals, materials, and meanings to a Victorian-era art form that traditionally sought to entice fish and fisherman alike. In many ways the flies I tie are direct descendants of their 120-year-old predecessors and often incorporate many of the same materials and fabrication techniques—tradition is important to me. But unlike in traditional fly tying, the word "pattern" doesn't resonate or hold solid in the process I use to create a fly. For me,

being "inspired by" is enough, and life is far too short not to push for a new technique or composition.

Like my other artwork, the flies I make have reasons for being tied, and in a broad sense one can group the flies I've made into categories: flies about interactions I've had with people; flies about historical events; flies about conservation and environmental issues; flies inspired by music; flies about corporate bad guys, career politicians, and other shady characters; flies about sex or religion; flies inspired by fish; and finally, flies inspired simply by the sheer beauty of nature. Another way to look at it would be that it isn't life that inspires my art, but instead it is the act of being alive, now, that drives the things I create.

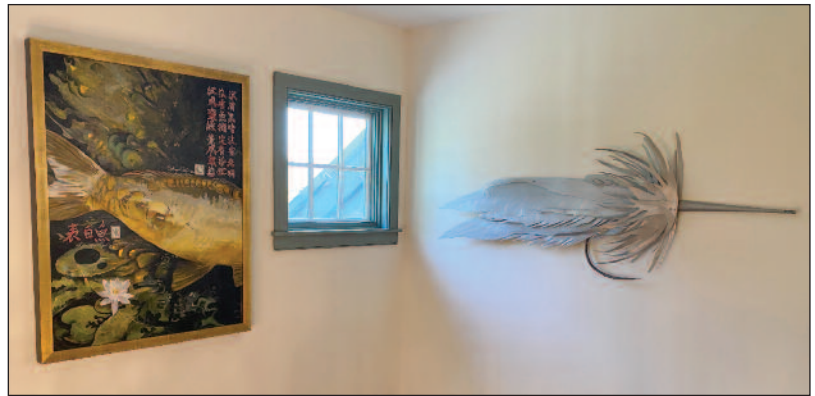
Through artful curation, *On Turbulence & Flow: The Fly Fishing Inspired Artwork of Val Kropiwnicki* will not only immerse visitors in the striking beauty of the flies, hooks, reels, and paintings, but also remind us that we all experience states of turbulence and flow.

The exhibition, which opened May 14, will run through spring 2023.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Turbulence case.



The exhibition extends to the upper walls around the museum's front door.



The Abominus Noah.914.GFNP.



Eight fly framings centered between the Turbulence and Flow cases.



Bobbins and Yoko.120.SSP.



The Flow case.

Museum News



Laurel Tobiason



Members gathered at the Meccawe Club in Bridgewater, Vermont, on July 13 to share a warm summer day and their love for bamboo at our annual fishing outing. Thank you to AMFF Trustee Bill Hesse for hosting the event. We look forward to welcoming our members in 2023 at the Tamarack Club (details to follow).

Recent Donations to the Collection

Former Executive Director **Paul Schullery** of Manchester, Vermont, provided us with copies of books he authored to help complete our library catalog. Additionally, he gave us a large collection of flies.

Robert Miller of Tucson, Arizona, donated a copy of *No Hatch to Match* by Rich Osthoff (Stackpole Books, 2001), as well as a set of flies tied by Osthoff that are featured in the book. **Steve Raymond** of Clinton, Washington, shared a collection of flies from his book, *Blue Upright* (Skyhorse, 2015).

Anke Volcker of New York City donated an Orvis graphite rod and Hardy Bros. Zenith and Marquis #4 reels used by Paul Volcker. **Art Scheck** of Williamston, South Carolina, sent us an Orvis Ultralite bamboo fly rod and Orvis CFO II fly reel, as well as a comprehensive fly collection. **Carlo Bongio** of Brookings, Oregon, gave us his Fenwick rod used by Bill Schaad, as well as some mounted Bill Schaad flies and Russell Chatham-tied flies. **Otile McManus** of Milton, Massachusetts, donated a Malloch's metal fly box with ten trays of flies, containing almost 500 flies in total!

Paul Rossman of Pine Meadow, Connecticut, sent us some of the titles he has authored, as well as a pair of Ronn Lucas exhibition hooks. **Val Kropiwnicki** of Branford,

Connecticut, whose work is currently on view at the museum (see page 24), shared some flies by Ronn Lucas.

Nick Lyons of New York City donated two Sandra Weiner portrait photographs of Ed Zern. **Flip and Diane Pallot** of Mims, Florida, sent us some folders of newspaper clippings on Lefty Kreh.

And **Joan Wulff** of Livingston Manor, New York, continues to share her legacy through multiple donations throughout the year. Some of the objects she recently donated include her creel and her waders, flies used during casting performances, and many wonderful photographs.

Summer Kids Clinics

We were thrilled to welcome kids back on-site during the month of July for a series of clinics. Each Thursday, young budding anglers (ages six through twelve) joined museum staff and volunteers for a look into the world of fly fishing. We focused on fly tying, casting, art, and entomology.

"All Tied Up" brought Paul Sinicki and Kelly Bedford to the museum to demonstrate the basics of fly tying. Everyone left with their own "first" fly and the hope to use it the following week in the "Casting About" session, when we compared fly-fishing equipment to conventional gear. Once the kids were

convinced they could cast a feather as far as a weighted lure, they assembled their outfits and spent the rest of the time casting away. On the hottest day in July, we sheltered inside and explored gyotaku (the traditional Japanese method of printing fish), then spent the final day— after a proper lesson in entomology—back on the stream searching for insects. Huge thanks to all the kiddos for joining us this summer, and we look forward to reconnecting in 2023!

Samantha Pitcher



After an entomology lesson, our Kids Clinic participants headed outside to see what kinds of insects they could find streamside.

James Callahan



Trustee Jason Scott, shown here with guide Mac Musselwhite (holding Jason’s fish), represented AMFF at the 2022 Jackson Hole One Fly Tournament in September. We admire the long-standing traditions associated with this iconic event, and we were honored to be included.



Scenes from the Battenkill is a peek into the beloved Vermont stream’s storied past. Featuring photographs from the Mary Orvis Marbury and Maxine Atherton collections, it provides visitors to the museum’s gazebo a sense of the rich and colorful history of the river that runs through Manchester.

Upcoming Events

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

October 27
Members-Only Event
Charles Thacher Book Collection
5:00 p.m.

October 27
Open Waters: The Many Paths to Fly Fishing
Film Screening and Panelist Discussion
Patagonia
Santa Monica, California
6:30 p.m. PST

November 3
Heritage Award honoring the 30th anniversary of the film adaptation of *A River Runs Through It*
Award to be accepted by Producer Patrick Markey
Racquet and Tennis Club
New York City
6:00 p.m.

January 19
Reel Talk with Jim Schottenham
Livestream Event
3:00 p.m.

February 18
Open Vise Night
Fly Tying Gathering and Demos
4:00 p.m.

March 13–14
Izaak Walton Award honoring Nancy Zakon
March 13: Livestream event
March 14: Reception and Auction
Key Largo Anglers Club

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or events@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.

CONTRIBUTORS

Author photo



Matthew Franks is the head of high net worth lending at Royal Bank of Canada. He previously held various roles in the high net worth division of Morgan Stanley Private Bank and as a finance and tax attorney at several prominent law firms in New York City. Franks earned a BA and MA in history from the University of Florida and a JD and LLM in taxation from Boston University School of Law. He and his wife, Norene, split their time between New Hampshire and Connecticut. He is a member of both the Anglers' Club of New York and the Potatuck Club.

Rob Oden retired in 2010 as president of Carleton College. Previously, he served as president of Kenyon College and headmaster of the Hotchkiss School. He holds undergraduate degrees from both Harvard College and Cambridge University, and a PhD in Near Eastern languages from Harvard University.

Oden began his career in 1975 at Dartmouth College, where he rose to the rank of full professor in eight years and was awarded Dartmouth's first distinguished teaching prize. He has published five books and more than forty articles in peer-reviewed journals on Ancient Near Eastern religions, languages, and history.

He began to tie flies when he was five years old in his native South Dakota: no vise, no bobbin, no instruction, quite awful results. Six years later, an older cousin introduced him to fly fishing in the Pacific Northwest and Montana. Oden has today fly fished in most states; often in Iceland and in New Brunswick for Atlantic salmon; and for weeks every year on the Brodhead's River in Pennsylvania, where perhaps American fly fishing originated. He is convinced one can catch any brown trout that swims on an Eagan's Frenchie.

Steve Binnick



From Louis Rhead, American Trout-Stream Insects (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916), 65.

A Fresh Perspective



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING

In 2004, the American Museum of Fly Fishing opened the doors of its Main Street location, which continues to be our primary campus. The same year, we introduced the logo that you know today: often shown in navy blue and deep red, a trout (or some sort of salmonoid) placed boldly in front of a crossed fly rod and fishing net, surrounded by “The American Museum of Fly Fishing” in a classic serif font and finished off with a couple of wet flies. It speaks to the history of fly fishing, offers the feeling of tradition, and is an image that people are proud to be associated with. For eighteen years, it has been a reflection of our organization’s mission and it served us well, just as the previous two logos did during their tenures.

We are still fiercely dedicated to preserving the rich history of fly fishing, but we recognize that our sport is evolving, as are the people participating. And so we introduce you to our updated logo (pictured above), designed to garner attention from entirely new audiences, present a unique look to attract anglers of all demographics, and remain true to our core supporters, some of whom have been with us since the earliest days.

I am confident that there will be many readers who share my excitement as we roll out our new look. And I’m sure there may be others who find it difficult to embrace something dif-

ferent. So, let me share some personal insight. I wear Darn Tough socks—exclusively. No exceptions. Why? The founder of the company is one of the most genuine people I’ve ever met (and happens to be an avid fly angler!). The company gives back in ways that are important to me. Their mission, their intentions, and their actions have gained my trust. When I think about brands and organizations that I choose to support, their logo and image may attract me initially, but it’s their products, their content, and their people that convert me to a loyal and lifelong supporter. As a member, you support AMFF because our mission aligns with yours, and you trust AMFF to be the steward of the history, traditions, and practices of the sport of fly fishing. We will continue to be its guardian and protector, proudly displaying our new shield.

AMFF Trustee Adam Trisk was instrumental in bringing this new logo to life, and we are so thankful for his guidance and involvement. For more information on this project, visit amff.org/new-logo.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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