

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



SUMMER 2023

VOLUME 49 NUMBER 3

Major Distractions and Minor Details

PRINTED IN STANDARD TIME

Solunar periods begin approximately at the times shown in the SOLUNAR TABLES and continue for an hour and a half or two hours thereafter.

SOLUNAR PERIODS

JULY—1950

Day	A. M.		P. M.		Sunrise and Sunset	Moon Phases
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major		
1 Sat.	7:00	1:10	7:25	1:50		
2 Sun.	7:55	2:05	8:20	2:40		
3 Mon.	8:45	3:00	9:15	3:25		
4 Tues.	9:35	3:45	9:55	4:10	4:36	
5 Wed.	10:20	4:25	10:35	4:50	7:32	
6 Thur.	11:00	5:05	11:15	5:25		
7 Fri.	11:45	5:45	11:55	6:05		
8 Sat.		6:25	12:30	6:45		
9 Sun.	12:50	7:10	1:20	7:30		
10 Mon.	1:40	7:55	2:10	8:20	4:39	
11 Tues.	2:30	8:45	3:00	9:10	7:30	

Part of John Alden Knight's Solunar table for July 1950.

JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, the first writer to publish articles about the Solunar theory, then Solunar tables themselves, might advise me that at this very moment I should *not* be sitting at a desk but should be outside, taking advantage of today's minor time: the one-hour daylight period between the day's two major times. If I want to catch fish or watch birds and can't hit a major time, this hour is my next-best chance. But I am not outside right now, and look—now I've gone and missed it.

Knight authored a dozen books on angling and upland hunting and, it turns out, began an autobiography at the request of his publishers. Matthew Franks, who has previously written about a handwritten letter from Frank Gray Griswold and chapters from an unpublished novel by Eugene Connett (Winter and Fall 2022, respectively), has another find to share with us from his collection: Knight's original incomplete, never-published manuscript. In "The Complete Incomplete Autobiography of John Alden Knight" (page 2), Franks shares details from this and other manuscripts and correspondence in the acquired archive. (I personally enjoyed reading that it was "there on the Juniata River that young Jack first picked up his interest in hunting and fishing, cutting his teeth on local fauna." Me too, Jack.)

This issue offers the reader another biographical sketch. After a successful career in commercial art, Arthur Taylor (1925–2010) left the city, settled in rural Maine, became obsessed with Atlantic salmon fishing, and eventually turned his attention to sporting art and bamboo rod building. In "Arthur Taylor: Artist, Angler, Conservationist" (page 10), Richard Jagels both highlights Taylor's talents and focuses on his conservation efforts, which have left the Penobscot "a freer-flowing river with

much improved passage for anadromous fish-spawning runs."

Two Gallery pieces grace these Summer pages. First, with the May 6 coronation of King Charles III, we thought it proper to once again draw attention to the well-used fishing vest of said king that resides in our collection. It is thanks to the efforts of former trustee John Mundt that we have it, and he tells the story of its acquisition in "Charles III: Angler and King" (page 17). Second, Curator Jim Schottenham reports on the long-awaited discovery of the origin of Billingham-style birdcage reels that appeared after Billingham's death. This new information led to proper identification of two reels in our collection. "The James Ratcliffe Birdcage Reel" can be found on page 19.

Beverley Ronalds—who wrote about her relative, the fly tier Maria Ronalds Shanklin, in our Winter 2021 issue—published a book last year about her great-great-grandfather. *Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer* is the result of research drawn from two hundred years of angling literature as well as family papers held on multiple continents. In "Singularly Influential: A Biography of Alfred Ronalds" (page 21), Beverley focuses on Alfred's seminal 1836 work, *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*, with just a hint of his biography. Then, in a review of the book on page 23, J. Keith Harwood enthusiastically sings its praises, glad to at last learn more about the author himself.

Remember the time that Joe Pisarro got bounced from a bar with the best of the best? No matter how you answer that, refresh your memory on page 25.

Cheers!

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR



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ON THE COVER: A collection of John Alden Knight's annual Solunar tables
belonging to author Matthew Franks. Photo by Matthew Franks.

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The Complete Incomplete Autobiography of John Alden Knight

by Matthew Franks

I HAVE NEWS THAT may shock even those readers most prolifically steeped in angling literature. Sometime in the mid-1960s, John Alden Knight—founder of the well-known Solunar theory of when fish “go on the feed” and author of twelve published books on angling and upland hunting—penned his life story.¹ As Knight put it, “the publishers, sitting behind the mysterious obscurity of the working of the editorial mind, have asked for an autobiography.”² But, alas, it was not meant to be. With seven completed chapters that abruptly conclude their story at the end of World War I and another seventeen outlined, Knight passed away on 8 April 1966 at age seventy-five. This pearl of fly-fishing history, therefore, was never completed or published.

With good fortune and a bit of luck, however, several years ago I stumbled upon the original manuscript, written in Knight’s own hand on lined yellow paper with a blue ballpoint pen. The possession of a reputable, albeit unctuous, rare-book dealer, the archive included handwritten manuscripts of seven of Knight’s books, an unpublished book of poetry, a plethora of editorial correspondence, and a pile of other ephemera. Over the last decade, I’ve read the autobiography several times, each time reveling in the miserly knowledge that I was its sole beneficiary. But, in an inexplicable change of heart and uncharacteristic act of munificence, I have now decided to share it with my fellow angling bibliophiles in an unworthy attempt to finish what Knight never could: to tell his story.

John Alden Knight—“Jack” to those who knew him best—was born on 30 Dec-

All photos taken by the author except where noted



*This photo of John Alden Knight appears as the frontispiece in his book *The Theory and Technique of Fresh Water Fishing* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940).*

ember 1890 in the back bedroom of 18 North Main Street in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, a small town located in the heart of the state. His father, John Alden Knight Sr., then thirty-nine, was a railroad man working for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company as the chief clerk of their Sunbury and Millroy Division.³ His mother, Harriet Howard Jacob, was a thirty-eight-year-old local whom Jack affectionately described as just a plain "Lewistown gal."⁴ He had one sibling, his sister Elizabeth, who was three years his senior.

Life in Lewistown was typical for a fledgling in the country, with marbles, baseball, basketball, hockey, and household chores taking up most of his free time.⁵ But it was also there on the Juniata River that young Jack first picked up his interest in hunting and fishing, cutting his teeth on local fauna. He wrote that "the fishing around Lewistown when I was a boy was really excellent . . . rock bass and sun fish were our usual victims with an off catfish or eel if we were lucky."⁶ As for hunting, the local woodlands, according to Knight, held no deer, but had plenty of sparrows and other birds for a boy to target with his BB gun. Like many adolescent boys who prize the harvest over the sport, Jack's first grouse was "squabbled on the ground, illegally in the summer, at the hands of [his] trusted Daisy repeater."⁷

By Jack's fourteenth year, his father was promoted to chief claim agent of the Central Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and transferred the family to Williamsport, a bustling metropolis compared with Lewistown. This sudden change of locale also gave John Jr. access to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and its tributaries to broaden his angling pursuits. In particular, it was on Dahoga Creek, a small stream near Kane, Pennsylvania, that fly fishing first hooked him. "Never will I forget standing there on the bank watching George Hoover cast a string of three wet flies down over a pool where the current ran under an undercut bank held by an old stump. I was fascinated."⁸ When George finally landed a fish, he tossed it over in Knight's direction. "Here, Jack. Take this one up to the cook."⁹ As he recalls, "[t]o my dying day I will remember that little ten-inch trout, alive, cold and still quite active, its gorgeous coloration reflecting the sunset . . . *right then* I was a changed boy. From that moment on, my waking moments . . . were devoted to trout; it was an obsession."¹⁰ Given other more practical obligations, however, it was an obsession that would have to be put on hold for many years to come.

EDUCATION AND EARLY CAREER

By the time he was of high school age, having attended Miss Knotwell's Academy and Burchfield's Academy for most of his elementary and middle school education before moving to Williamsport, Jack's parents insisted on the continuation of a private education.¹¹ He attended Dickinson Seminary¹² in Williamsport, then the Tome Institute in Maryland for two years, where he enjoyed baseball, basketball, and tennis, along with a little fishing when he could find the time.¹³ As a senior, he was elected class president.¹⁴ Following graduation from Tome, Knight was off to college at Cornell University where—between trips to the tributary streams of Cayuga Lake to fish for rainbow trout—he studied to be an "efficiency expert," a five-year course with two years of engineering and three years of law.¹⁵ By age twenty-four in 1915, he had earned his bachelor of arts degree.¹⁶ Interestingly, along the way, in the halls of that hallowed Ivy League institution, Knight's innate writing ability was first noticed. "Have you ever thought of writing, making a vocation, a profession of it?" Dr. Hammond, his professor of Renaissance literature, once asked him. "You, without question, have the gift," he added.¹⁷ But, at that time, with World War I in full swing in Europe, Knight, admittedly surprised by the inference, did not feel that a literary career was in the cards. His apparent gift for putting proper words in proper places would have to wait.

Following graduation, Knight left the Finger Lakes region of New York to return home to Williamsport, taking a job in the claims department of the Pennsylvania Railroad in the shadow of his father. Before long, however, feeling restless, he picked up and took work as a traveling salesman with the Alpha Portland Cement Company.¹⁸ But following the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German U-boat and America's entry into World War I, Knight was ready for more. With the assistance of his cousin (a Washington lawyer in the diplomatic service) to cut through some governmental red tape that at the time prohibited civilians from naval aviation, he joined the Naval Air Corps as an aviation cadet to train as a pilot. In a short time, he settled in as a flight instructor and test pilot for the Navy N9 biplane and HS1 "flying boat," in which he would patrol the Bahamas for German submarines. He ended his military career in 1919 at the rank of ensign.¹⁹

Following the war, like many soldiers, Knight felt a bit lost. So he began a rather varied and peripatetic career that started with working eleven- to thirteen-hour days, seven days a week, in the open hearth of Mark Manufacturing Company, a steel company in Chicago. By 1920, it was back to New York working as a marine insurance salesman in Manhattan. Within a few years, however, he found himself married and living in Binghamton, New York, where for several years he owned and operated a dry cleaning and dyeing establishment. By 1925, Knight had sold this business and, like many entrepreneurs at the time attracted by Florida's real estate boom, moved to Florida to try his hand at selling real estate. When that market crashed in 1926, he returned to New York to work in the real estate brokerage department of a Wall Street bank while renting a home in Rye with his family.²⁰ In all, the seven years following the war amounted to a blur of failed career paths for Knight. But by July 1926, his life took a serendipitous turn.

A THEORY IS BORN

It was while fishing in Lake Hellen Blazes in Brevard County, Florida, that the future for which Knight would forever be branded came to fruition: the origin of the Solunar theory. As he remembers it, while taking a lunch break from the morning's fishing, Knight's guide for the day, Bob Wall, commented that the fishing was about to get hot. Why? "Moon's down about noon," he replied matter-of-factly.²¹ In Bob's opinion, the key was the position of the moon: if it was directly overhead—moon up—or directly below the spot on the earth—moon down—fish bit best.²² For Knight, Wall's observations were revelatory. After taking more fish than he ever had before, Knight began an obsession that would result in decades of research and the subject of several books: the reason behind why fish would feed ravenously at certain times of day versus others.

His analysis commenced by a standard process of elimination. Knight made a list of everything he could think of that might have an effect on the feeding habits of fish, such as temperature, water condition, barometric pressure, and the like. By the time the list of potential factors was complete, it amounted to thirty-three. Then, one by one, each factor was considered and rejected. In the end, only three remained: sun, moon, and tides.²³





In essence, his aptly named Solunar theory (*Solunar* simply being a convenient combination of *solar* and *lunar*) postulated that there are major and

PRINTED IN STANDARD TIME

Solunar periods begin approximately at the times shown in the SOLUNAR TABLES and continue for an hour and a half or two hours thereafter.

SOLUNAR PERIODS

JULY—1950

Day	A. M.		P. M.		Sunrise and Sunset	Moon Phases
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major		
1 Sat.	7:00	1:10	7:25	1:50		
2 Sun.	7:55	2:05	8:20	2:40		
3 Mon.	8:45	3:00	9:15	3:25		
4 Tues.	9:35	3:45	9:55	4:10	4:36	
5 Wed.	10:20	4:25	10:35	4:50	7:32	
6 Thur.	11:00	5:05	11:15	5:25		
7 Fri.	11:45	5:45	11:55	6:05		
8 Sat.		6:25	12:30	6:45		
9 Sun.	12:50	7:10	1:20	7:30	4:39	
10 Mon.	1:40	7:55	2:10	8:20	7:30	
11 Tues.	2:30	8:45	3:00	9:10		
12 Wed.	3:20	9:40	3:55	10:05		
13 Thur.	4:15	10:35	4:50	11:00		
14 Fri.	5:10	11:30	5:45	11:55	4:43	
15 Sat.	6:00		6:30	12:20	7:28	
16 Sun.	6:45	12:45	7:00	1:10		
17 Mon.	7:30	1:35	7:50	2:00		
18 Tues.	8:15	2:20	8:35	2:45		
19 Wed.	8:55	3:05	9:20	3:25	4:47	
20 Thur.	9:35	3:45	10:05	4:10	7:25	
21 Fri.	10:20	4:30	10:50	4:55		
22 Sat.	11:15	5:20	11:40	5:45		
23 Sun.		6:10	12:10	6:40		
24 Mon.	12:45	7:10	1:15	7:40	4:51	
25 Tues.	1:50	8:15	2:20	8:45	7:21	
26 Wed.	2:55	9:20	3:25	9:50		
27 Thur.	3:55	10:25	4:25	10:50		
28 Fri.	4:50	11:25	5:25	11:50		
29 Sat.	5:40		6:20	12:20	4:55	
30 Sun.	6:30	12:45	7:05	1:10	7:17	
31 Mon.	7:20	1:35	7:50	1:55		

Moon in Apogee—July 9th

Moon in Perigee—July 25th





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PRINTED IN STANDARD TIME

Solunar periods begin approximately at the times shown in the SOLUNAR TABLES and continue for an hour and a half or two hours thereafter.

SOLUNAR PERIODS

AUGUST—1950

Day	A. M.		P. M.		Sunrise and Sunset	Moon Phases
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major		
1 Tues.	8:05	2:20	8:35	2:40		
2 Wed.	8:50	3:00	9:15	3:20		
3 Thur.	9:30	3:40	9:55	4:00		
4 Fri.	10:10	4:20	10:35	4:40	5:00	
5 Sat.	10:50	5:00	11:15	5:20	7:11	
6 Sun.	11:35	5:45	11:55	6:05		
7 Mon.		6:35	12:30	6:55		
8 Tues.	12:45	7:25	1:20	7:50	5:05	
9 Wed.	1:45	8:20	2:20	8:45	7:06	
10 Thur.	2:45	9:15	3:20	9:45		
11 Fri.	3:40	10:10	4:15	10:40		
12 Sat.	4:30	11:05	5:05	11:30	5:10	
13 Sun.	5:25	11:55	5:55		6:59	
14 Mon.	6:15	12:20	6:40	12:45		
15 Tues.	7:05	1:05	7:30	1:30		
16 Wed.	7:50	1:50	8:15	2:15		
17 Thur.	8:40	2:35	9:05	3:00		
18 Fri.	9:30	3:20	9:50	3:45	5:14	
19 Sat.	10:20	4:10	10:40	4:35	6:52	
20 Sun.	11:15	5:00	11:40	5:30		
21 Mon.		6:00	12:15	6:30		
22 Tues.	12:35	7:05	1:05	7:35		
23 Wed.	1:30	8:10	2:00	8:40	5:19	
24 Thur.	2:30	9:10	3:00	9:40	6:45	
25 Fri.	3:30	10:10	4:00	10:35		
26 Sat.	4:25	11:05	5:00	11:30		
27 Sun.	5:20	11:55	5:50		5:24	
28 Mon.	6:10	12:20	6:35	12:40	6:38	
29 Tues.	6:50	1:00	7:15	1:20		
30 Wed.	7:30	1:40	7:55	2:00		
31 Thur.	8:10	2:20	8:35	2:40		

Moon in Apogee—Aug. 6th

Moon in Perigee—Aug. 20th

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The Solunar tables for July and August 1950.

minor periods each day of the year during which a hunter's or angler's odds are improved. Major periods last approximately two hours. They begin the moment that the moon is overhead and when it is directly under our feet. Normally these are the moments of greatest fish activity during each day. In contrast, minor periods are intermediate stretches of lesser duration, approximately one hour, which coincide with the rising and the setting of the moon. During these periods, Knight contended, there is a corresponding increase in fish activity relative to the rest of the day.

Of course, other factors, such as weather and the availability of food, also have to be considered. But, as Knight himself described it, "Other conditions not being unfavorable, fish will feed, animals will move about, birds will sing and fly from place to place, in fact, all living things will become more active, more

alive, during Solunar periods than at other times of apparent equal value."²⁴ Ultimately, Knight concluded that it was the effects on positive and negative ions in the atmosphere under different Solunar influence that were likely the cause.²⁵

His idea was first made public in an article, "Ocean Tides and Fresh-Water Fish," for the *Sportsman* in January 1935. He then published several articles on the subject the same year, which appeared in *Sports Afield*, *Field & Stream*, and *Outdoor Life*. The response from readers was so positive that Knight launched a Solunar table publication business for the general public. In his first offering, the Solunar tables were printed on postcards and sold for the sum of 50 cents. The first thousand he printed were sold in just five weeks.²⁶ Knight then set out about inventing a lexicon.

Encouraged by the sales of his Solunar tables, Knight began reworking the arti-

cles into a book. His big break came a year later—1936, in the heart of the Depression—when Charles Scribner's Sons published *The Modern Angler: Including the Solunar Theory*, a formal declaration that his decade-in-the-making Solunar theory had arrived. Of course, misunderstandings plagued the book's reception. For half of his readers, the Solunar theory was a triumph, for the other half a scandal, but no one could ignore it. A view that the placement of the moon had an effect on feeding fish was unseemly in the circles in which he traveled, but that it made an impact on the fishing world is undeniable. Perhaps most important, it shunned iconic perspectives on the place of science in the mellifluous art that is fly fishing. Knight articulated that "for obvious reasons, I did not talk much about my new feeding schedule. Radical ideas of this sort are not always welcome among

the more seasoned anglers.”²⁷ Perhaps it was inevitable then that the Solunar tables’ success, with both fly-fishing purists and bait fisherman alike, would force a confrontation between Knight and his detractors.

CONFRONTING “BARRIERS OF UNBELIEF”

As it turns out, the “seasoned anglers” to whom Knight was referring were also his closest friends. “It was this very group that formed the most solid wall of resistance during the first year or so that I strove to break down the barriers of unbelief in what I knew to be the truth,” he would later write in *Moon Up–Moon Down*.²⁸ An allusion to angling author Edward Hewitt is discernible here. “Get in the car or we’ll miss the morning Solunar period,” Knight remarked to a group of his fellow Anglers’ Club of New York members on a 1935 fishing trip on the Delaware River. To which Hewitt

replied, “Well, you won’t miss much; that idea was never any good—doesn’t work for a damn.” According to another member of the fishing party, “Jack just gave him a dirty look and we went to the Delaware.”²⁹ While this would be one of their many comedic, hurtful frictions over time, the exchange is a window into the “wall of resistance” from seasoned anglers to which Knight previously refers.

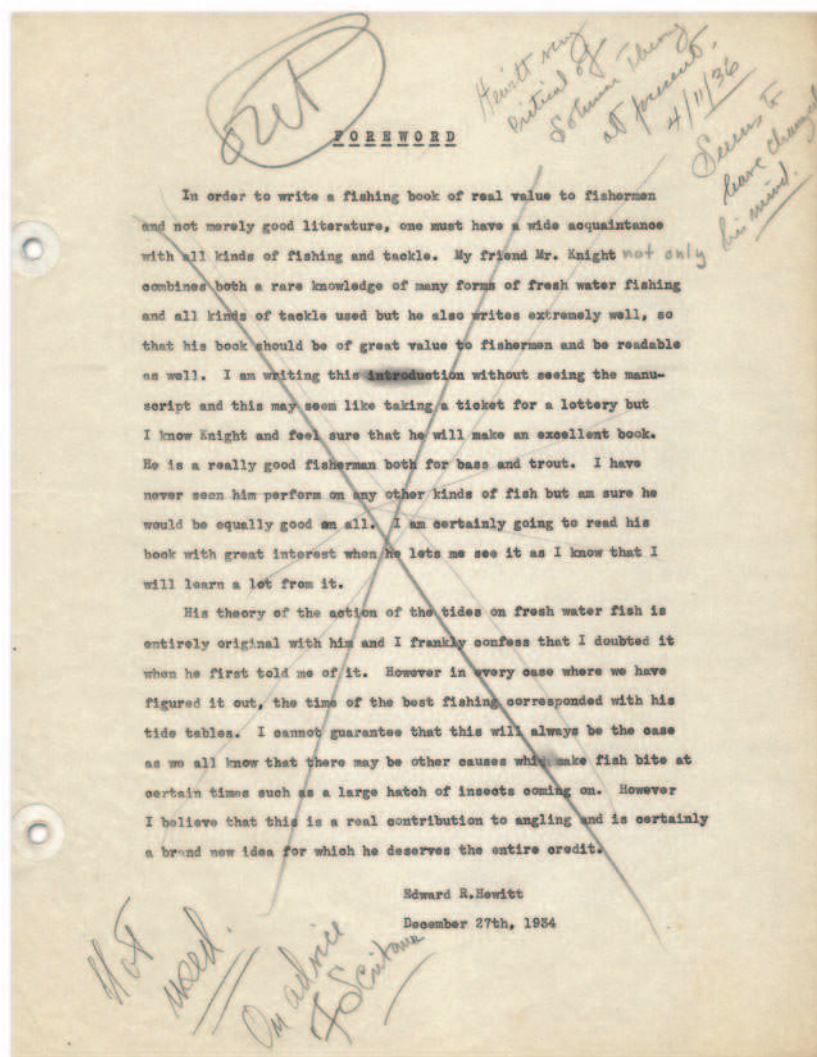
For example, it is a little-known fact that the foreword to *The Modern Angler* had originally been written by his good friend, renowned angling author and fellow Anglers’ Club of New York member, the aforementioned Edward Hewitt. Ironically, Hewitt wrote the foreword two years before publication, on 27 December 1934, without ever seeing Knight’s manuscript—a foreword that was omitted from the final publication.³⁰ In it, Hewitt, admits that “in every case where we have figured it out, the time of the best fishing corresponded with his tide tables,”³¹ but Knight concedes a change of heart by the time of publication. In the manuscript

margins, he wrote, “Hewitt very critical of Solunar Theory at present. 4/11/36. Seems to have changed his mind.”³² Several other mentions of Hewitt in the manuscript are subsequently struck through or marked “omit.” Luckily for us, although not all of Knight’s comrades appreciated his choices, it didn’t stop him from following Dr. Hammond’s sage advice back at Cornell to turn science into art.

The years following the publication of this first book represented a sea change in Knight’s life and work. Despite Hewitt’s reservations, with the success of his first book, Knight retired from the real estate brokerage business in 1938 at age forty-seven to dedicate all his time to writing and publication of the Solunar tables for the general public. Financial wherewithal continuing to be an issue, however, Knight had another timely idea to augment his income: a university-level lecture series on fly fishing. “It occurred to me that a lecture course in one of our metropolitan universities might be an excellent idea both for the university and me. Armed with a letter of introduction, I journeyed to Morningside Heights and had a brief chat with one of the top executives at Columbia University.”³³ Essentially, Knight would teach advanced graduate students to interact with the outdoors intelligently.

Following some initial debate among faculty, Knight got the job, and from 1937 to 1939 he conducted a lecture series known as “The Theory and Technique of Fresh Water Angling.” It was no surprise then when, in September 1940, Harcourt Brace published what would become Knight’s second book, *The Theory and Technique of Fresh Water Angling*, a compilation of his lectures at Columbia by the same name.³⁴ But, despite his publication success and the continued sale of Solunar tables, money was still tight in the Knight household. So in the same month that his second book was published, Knight moved his family to the old house in which he grew up in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.³⁵

By the middle of the following year, not much had changed. If anything, Knight hit another professional bump in the road. In June 1941, just five months before Japan would compel America’s entry into World War II, Scribner’s rejected his third book proposal, *Backyard Ballads*. The book was a short work of nine lighthearted children’s poems, carefully illustrated by Knight himself. Knight wrote in the foreword, “As poetry, it is unlikely to endear us to posterity. But, in the year 1941, when there is so much apprehension and grief in the world, it seems to be not only the best way but the best time to pass these



Edward Hewitt’s unpublished foreword to *The Modern Angler*.

yarns along for the dubious enlightenment of the youth to come.”³⁶ But the editor wasn’t sold. In a tersely written response to Knight’s submission, he explained, “I have had Darrow look at the *Backyard Ballads* and he feels just like I did about the book only even more so. . . . really it is not for us.”³⁷ For better or worse, it seemed that an appointment as poet laureate was not in Knight’s future, and his financial woes continued. In fact, on three separate occasions in 1941, Knight asked Scribner’s for money, complaining about the dire status of the Knight exchequer.³⁸

PUBLICATION LIGHTNING

In 1942, six years after the publication of *The Modern Angler*, lightning struck, and Knight found success again with three more books published. First, there was *Ol’ Bill and Other Stories*, a collection of seven short hunting and fishing stories, which is also Knight’s only book of published fiction.³⁹ Next, based on more than a decade of refined research, he finally formalized his thoughts on his Solunar theory in what would be his

seminal work on the subject: *Moon Up–Moon Down: The Story of the Solunar Theory*, a title first suggested by Knight to Scribner’s shortly before its publication. Gilman Low, then editor of Scribner’s, wrote, “I sincerely believe that this is and should be what might in academic circles be called ‘a life work.’ . . . [y]ou started this whole idea and it seems to me that considering how few really new ideas there are in the world this should be a great chance to demonstrate and prove a theory.”⁴⁰ By the end of the same year, people were using Knight’s Solunar tables for upland hunting and duck flights as much as for trout fishing.⁴¹ Knight’s career was ascendant.

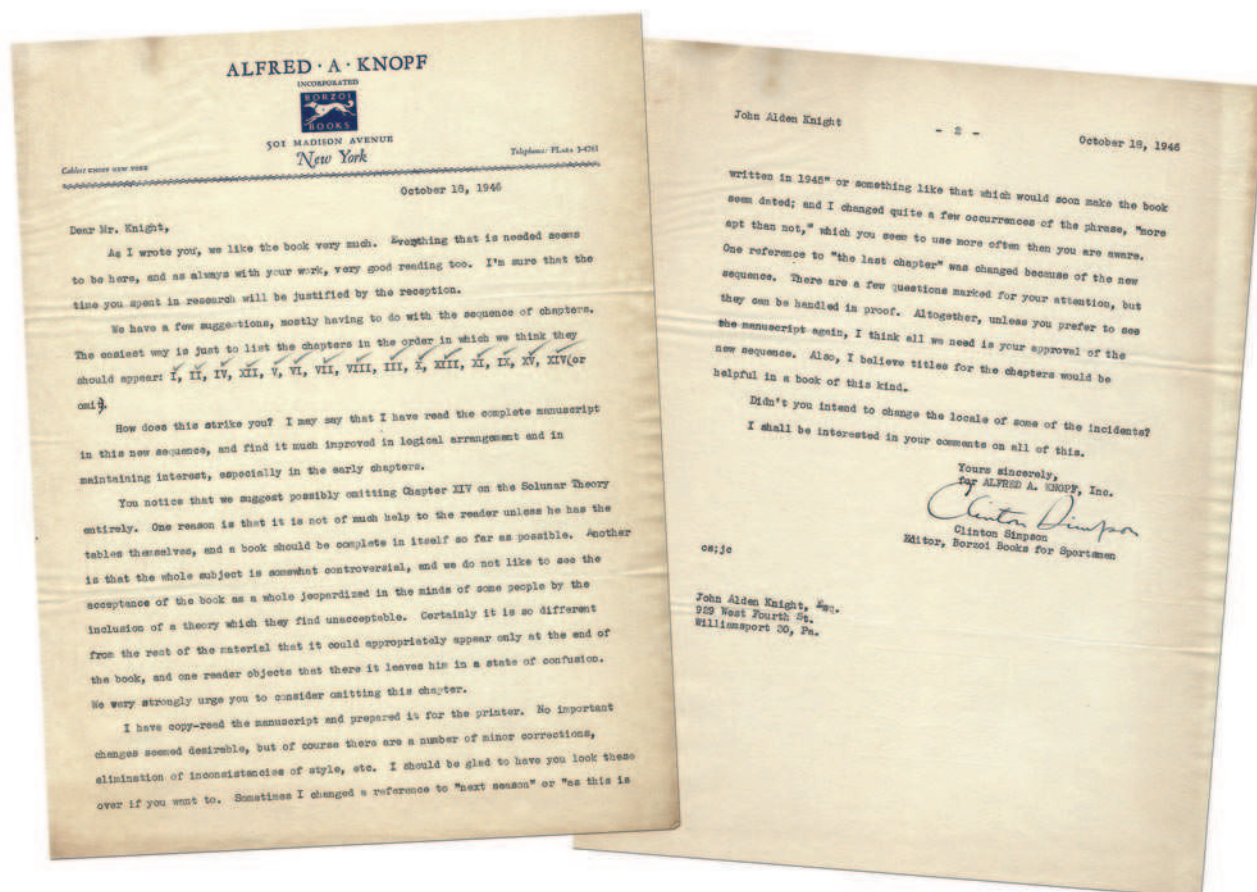
Also in 1942, Putnam published Knight’s fifth book, *Modern Fly Casting: Introducing the Free Wrist Grip and the High Back Cast*, which introduced some new methods and techniques for handling a fly rod that Knight clearly felt were long overdue.⁴² Although in the foreword he cautiously warns the reader that “the basic method of fly casting, as we outline it, does not conform to general usage,”⁴³ it seems apparent that Knight felt his book far more revolutionary when

it came to replacing dated and established methods of fly casting than he let on. Interestingly, in an alternative handwritten manuscript foreword marked “not used” that significantly differs from the published version, Knight boldly proclaims “[t]he beginner of twenty or thirty years ago was taken out on the lawn and handed a fly rod with an action similar to an old-fashioned buggy whip. To keep him from raising his arm on the back cast, a small book or handkerchief was placed beneath his armpit and the cast was executed in the vertical frame. The man who first thought of that book-under-the-arm idea has a lot to answer for.”⁴⁴

From here, Knight was on his way. Between 1944 and 1949, Knight published six more books, many of which have become classics of sporting literature. These include *Field Book of Fresh Water Angling*, *Fishing for Trout and Bass* (originally titled *Fresh-Water Fishing*), *Black Bass*, and *Fresh-Water Tackle*.⁴⁵ In particular, two of the books published in that five-year window, *Woodcock* (1944) and *Ruffed Grouse* (1947),⁴⁶ the latter having been written as “somewhat of a companion piece to *Woodcock*,”⁴⁷ achieved lasting



The author’s copy of Knight’s *Backyard Ballads*, handwritten in black ink on unlined worn paper and bound together with loose string, and the publisher’s original rejection letter. It is believed to be the original and only extant copy of this work.



Letter to Knight from Clinton Simpson, editor of Knopf's Borzoi Books for Sportsmen, making suggestions that were then rejected by Knight.

praise despite landing clearly outside of Knight's established fly-fishing oeuvre. Both were part of Knopf's famed Borzoi Books for Sportsmen, a series of thirty-seven books published between 1943 and 1955, focused primarily on hunting and fishing pursuits, made more widely known to contemporary collectors of sporting literature by noted bibliographer M. L. Biscotti.⁴⁸ Of potentially more interest to bibliophiles, however, may be the tension and in some cases outright hostility between Knight and his publisher on the timing, content, and structure of *Ruffed Grouse*. The exchange forms a prism through which to view the opposing forces in his life: his stalwart defense of his Solunar theory in the face of open criticism versus the practical need to make a living as a writer subject to the whims of professional publishers fearful of turning away any potential readers.

ROUGH FOR *RUFFED*

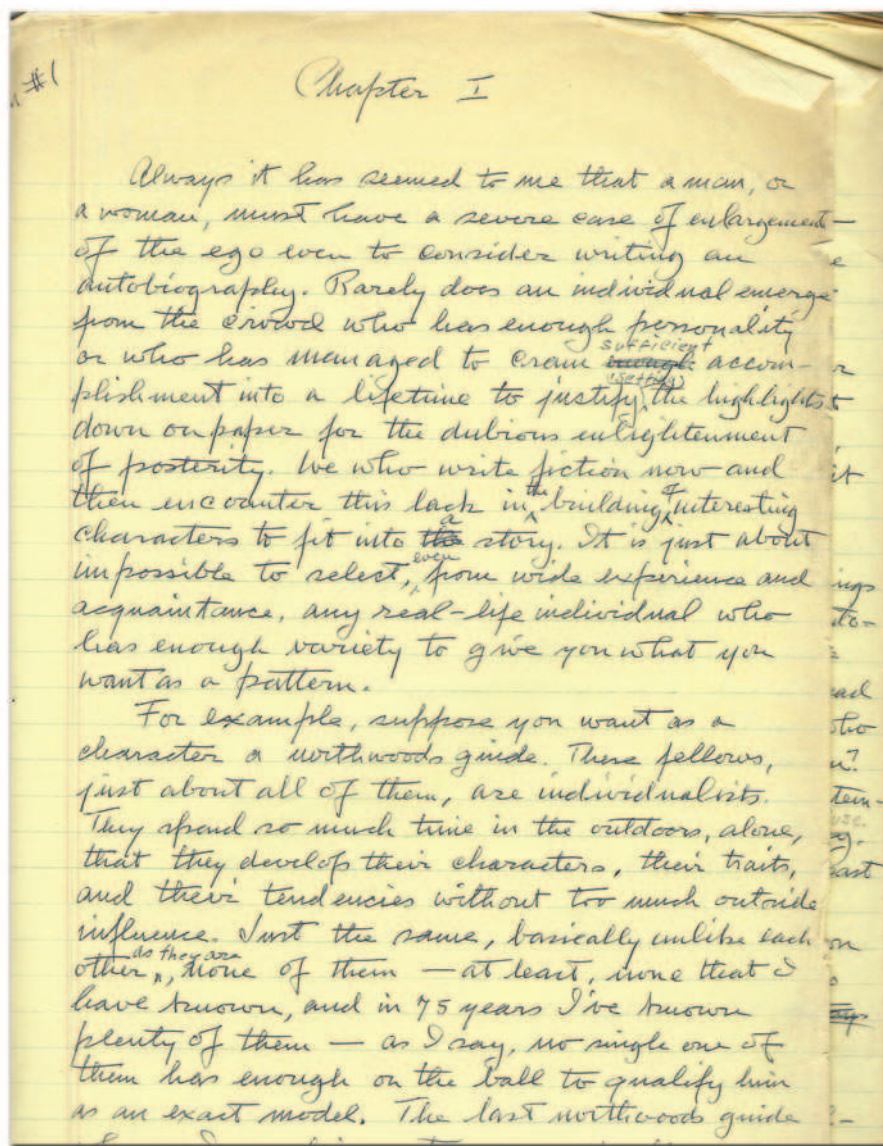
With the success of *Woodcock*, Knopf was understandably eager to publish *Ruffed Grouse*. As is often the case among publishers and writers with different goals, however, agreement on the specifics of

these terms proved elusive. By early 1945, Knopf was eagerly awaiting a completion date: "We are now scheduling our future commitments and would like to know at this time just when you expect to deliver your book on *Grouse*," the editor tersely wrote to Knight on 15 March 1945.⁴⁹ Replying the very next day, Knight quipped, "There is still much work to be done. The division of opinion on several aspects is widely divided, and all the conflicting ideas must be weeded out, collected, and condensed."⁵⁰ Of particular controversy was inclusion of Knight's Solunar tables.

More than a year after this initial exchange, Clinton Simpson, then editor of Knopf's Borzoi Books for Sportsmen, having received the completed manuscript, made, as he refers to them, a "few suggestions, mostly having to do with the sequence of the chapters," with which Knight took issue.⁵¹ Echoing Hewitt's concerns a decade prior, in an 18 October 1946 letter, Simpson wrote, "[y]ou notice that we suggest possibly omitting Chapter IX on the Solunar Theory entirely." He adds, "[o]ne reason is that it is not much help to the reader unless he has the tables themselves . . . Another is that the whole subject is con-

troversial, and we do not like to see the acceptance of the book as a whole jeopardized in the minds of some people by the inclusion of a theory which they find unacceptable. . . . We very strongly urge you to consider omitting this chapter."⁵² Knight responded defiantly.

In a letter to his agent on 11 December 1946, he opened with "I am having a little trouble with Clinton Simpson up at Alfred Knopf, Inc. Why Mr. Knopf didn't get Simpson to write this book on grouse I am not prepared to say, but of all the editors I have had anything to do with so far, he seems to be the most dictatorial." Such throat clearing hinted that Knight had reached his limit with those who still found his life's work dubious. He continued that "he has suggested a completely cockeyed revision of the chapter sequence and he seems to take violent exception to the chapter on grouse behavior which naturally includes the effects of the Solunar periods on the daily habits of these birds." Finally, he closed with "I am enclosing a list showing the chapter sequence as I would like to have it. And I don't want Simpson to change it. . . . he has made all the changes in this book that I propose to stand for."⁵³ The final publication of *Ruffed Grouse* both reflected the



The first page of Knight's autobiography.

chapter sequence proposed by Knight and included significant discussion of Solunar tables. Knight 2, Editor 0.

For many years thereafter, Knight continued to make a living from Solunar table sales and writing articles for outdoor magazines. By 1963, fourteen years had passed since the publication of his previous books, and Knight would be recognized as the Winchester Sportsman of the Year. That year also marked the publication of his final book, *The Complete Book of Fly Casting*, cowritten with his son.⁵⁴ By the time of its publication, his Solunar tables were being distributed to more than 150 newspapers in the Western Hemisphere, published in eleven foreign editions throughout the globe and in seven foreign languages. Moreover, by the time of his death three years later, he had the distinction of having seen more than 500 of his magazine articles published in his lifetime.⁵⁵ He

was posthumously inducted into the International Fly Fishing Hall of Fame on 8 October 2011.

A REVOLUTIONARY

Given the contributions of John Alden Knight to fly fishing and beyond, it is too simple to refer to him as an accomplished angling author or even the founder of the Solunar theory. Rather, in the angling world, he was a revolutionary. In a time long before social media existed, Knight was an influencer and iconoclast, creating a rhetoric that did not exist before. He represented a walking library of practical fishing knowledge that flirted with the boundaries of angling and science. A deliberate tenacity enabled him to escape the demands of inherited notions, staking out territory indistinctly situated between art, science, and conjecture.

Ironically, I think it can be argued that of equal value to him were the negative reactions among his angling network of ostensibly like-thinkers. Would John Alden Knight have been such an indefatigable proponent of the Solunar theory without his critics? In making his mark, he seemed to be searching for nothing less than a new shape for the art of angling. When he found it in the Solunar theory, much of the world wasn't ready. Today, however, countless websites offer Solunar tables for sale, and articles abound.

Thinking back, I have often considered it unfortunate that Knight never finished his autobiography. It is indeed a pity that we only received the tent poles of his worthy tale. I, however, am comforted by the fact that when I walked into that bookshop some years ago, wholly unaware of what was to come, fate, luck, or something inexplicable stepped in and handed me the gift of a lifetime. Come to think of it, I wonder if my visit was during a Solunar period? I'll have to check the tables.

ENDNOTES

1. Although Knight's autobiography is undated, in it he cites his 1963 book, *The Complete Book of Fly Casting*. That would put the date of his autobiographical manuscript somewhere between 1963 and his untimely passing in 1966.
2. John Alden Knight, unpublished autobiography, handwritten manuscript, hereinafter *Autobiography*, 2.
3. *Autobiography*, 86.
4. *Ibid.*, 6.
5. *Ibid.*, 14.
6. *Ibid.*, 29.
7. *Ibid.*, 37–9, 38.
8. *Ibid.*, 92.
9. *Ibid.*, 93.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 86–87.
12. In 1929, Dickinson Seminary became the Williamsport Dickinson Seminary and Junior College, the first private junior college in Pennsylvania. By 1947, it was Lycoming College, a private liberal arts and sciences college. See <https://www.lycoming.edu/about-lycoming/history.aspx>. Accessed 12 August 2021.
13. *Autobiography*, 103.
14. *Ibid.*, 125.
15. *Ibid.*, 96.
16. *Ibid.*, 132.
17. *Ibid.*, 135.
18. *Ibid.*, 152.
19. *Ibid.*, 208.
20. This history is described in a summary that Knight prepared as a corollary to his autobiography.
21. John Alden Knight, *Moon Up–Moon Down* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), 2.

22. John Alden Knight, *The Modern Angler: Including the Solunar Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 192–93.

23. Knight, *Moon Up–Moon Down*, 7.

24. *Ibid.*, Foreword, x.

25. *Ibid.*, 34–36.

26. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

27. *Ibid.*, 11.

28. *Ibid.*, 121.

29. Knight and Hewitt, quoted with Gardner's commentary, in Prescott Le B. Gardner, "The New Bass Champion," *The Anglers' Club Bulletin* (vol. XIV, no. 3, October 1935), 22.

30. The typescript contains a note in Knight's hand on a heavily soiled manila folder cover, "Original MS lost by Scribner. Property of Richard Alden Knight. John Alden Knight. 12/5/36."

31. Edward R. Hewitt, Foreword, 27 December 1934.

32. John Alden Knight, 11 April 1936 margin notes on the eventually omitted Hewitt foreword.

33. Knight, *Moon Up–Moon Down*, 42.

34. John Alden Knight, *The Theory and Technique of Fresh Water Angling* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940).

35. Knight, *Moon Up–Moon Down*, 46.

36. The author's copy, described here, handwritten in black ink on unlined worn paper and bound together with loose string, which also contains the publisher's original rejection letter, is believed to be the original and only extant copy of this work.

37. Letter from Gilman Low, editor at Scribner's, to John Alden Knight, 19 June 1941.

38. In a 5 March 1941 letter from Knight to editor Gilman Low, Knight first asks for an advance royalty, noting, "I realize that this is irregular, but it would help." Next, in a 25 July

1941 letter to Low asking for advance royalties, Knight again writes, "The Knight exchequer is none too happy these days and I would like to continue work on the Solunar book with a free mind." Finally, in a letter to Low dated 23 October 1941, Knight writes, "The dire press of economic necessity seems to have laid its heavy hand upon me once more."

39. John Alden Knight, *Ol' Bill and Other Stories* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942).

40. Letter from Gilman Low, editor at Scribner's, to John Alden Knight, 7 March 1941.

41. Letter dated from Knight to John Mossop, publisher of the Canadian edition of his Solunar tables, 12 January 1942.

42. John Alden Knight, *Modern Fly Casting: Introducing the Free Wrist Grip and the High Back Cast* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942).

43. Knight, *Modern Fly Casting*, foreword, n.p.

44. The original manuscript foreword to which I am referring is written in pencil in Knight's own hand on three pages of lined legal-size paper. It was included as part of a package of materials I acquired that includes the original manuscript of the book, corrected typescripts, and several letters from well-established rod dealers, such as R. L. Winston, discussing Tonkin cane supply.

45. John Alden Knight, *Field Book of Fresh Water Angling* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1944); John Alden Knight, *Fishing for Trout and Bass* (Chicago: Ziff Davis Publishing Co., 1949); John Alden Knight, *Black Bass* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1949); John Alden Knight, *Fresh-Water Tackle* (Chicago: Ziff Davis Publishing Co., 1949). In the original manuscript of *Fishing for Trout and Bass*, handwritten in blue ink on ruled yellow paper, Knight uses the title *Fresh-Water*

Fishing. By 27 February 1948, however, in a typed letter to the editor regarding word count, Knight pencils in script across the top of the page, "Fishing for Trout and Bass."

46. John Alden Knight, *Woodcock* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944); John Alden Knight, *Ruffed Grouse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

47. Knight makes this reference in a letter to the publishers on 8 October 1944. This collection of letters between Knight and his publishers, along with a great deal of correspondence between Knight and those who assisted in the research of the book, such as Arthur Allen of Cornell and Aldo Leopold of the University of Wisconsin, are part of the original manuscript collection to *Ruffed Grouse* that I acquired.

48. M. L. Biscotti, *The Borzoi Books for Sportsmen* (Madison, Ohio: Sunrise Publishing Company, 1992).

49. Letter to Knight from Bernard Smith, Knopf, 15 March 1945.

50. Typed letter dated 16 March 1945 from Knight to Bernard Smith at Knopf in reply to his March 15 inquiry.

51. Letter from Clinton Simpson of Knopf to John Alden Knight, 18 October 1946.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Letter from John Alden Knight to his agent, Lurton Blassingame, 11 December 1946.

54. John Alden Knight and Richard Alden Knight, *The Complete Book of Fly Casting* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963).

55. "John Alden Knight Dead at 75; Writer on Hunting and Fishing," *New York Times* (9 April 1966), 125; <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1966/04/09/356090932.html>. Accessed 13 August 2021. See also Knight and Knight, *The Complete Book of Fly Casting*, 11.



The author's collection of annual Solunar tables.

Arthur Taylor:

Artist, Angler, Conservationist

by Richard Jagels

Photographs by author unless otherwise noted



Last Fling of the Season. Original watercolor by Arthur Taylor, painted circa 2000. Collection of Susan Rioux. Used with permission.

FLY CASTER SET against a dark forbidding background has almost vanished behind an imposing wall of dying ferns and grasses in one of Arthur Taylor's last watercolors. Painted when he was in his seventies and likely a self-portrait, Taylor titled it *Last Fling of the Season*, foreshadowing the close of a year and a career. In his early professional career as a commercial artist in Boston and New York, Taylor honed his skill for revealing the fine details of subjects, but after settling in rural Maine and becoming obsessed with Atlantic salmon fishing, his style became more relaxed, at times impressionistic, as in *Last Fling*, and even more so in an earlier work, *High Tide at the Duck Trap*, painted in the late 1980s.

An earlier watercolor Taylor created for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the U.S. Postal Service in 1999 illustrates how he often com-

bined styles: finely detailing a leaping Atlantic salmon set against a soft misty-morning river backdrop. That painting, through the sale of prints and stamps, raised funds to help salmon restoration efforts on the Merrimack River—an example of the conservation focus that characterized much of Taylor's life after he and his family left the city.

Sometime around 2007, in a radio station studio in Bangor, Maine, I formally met Arthur Taylor for the first time. I knew that in addition to his sporting art, he was a well-respected bamboo fly-rod maker. We were being interviewed on a live broadcast, answering questions about fishing in Maine. I don't recall any of the questions from the interviewer except the first one directed to Arthur. He was asked his opinion about boron rods. With my mouth agape, I was glad we weren't on television. Arthur, with hardly a pause,

handled the question as tactfully as possible. Later we had a chuckle or two in the parking lot, where we spoke about my visiting his studio. Alas, I procrastinated too long; he died in 2010.

A few years later, I briefly met a woman at a social event in my hometown of Winterport, Maine, and in the course of our conversation, I learned she was Susan Rioux, Arthur Taylor's daughter. Not being an angler herself, she seemed reticent to discuss her father's achievements in the sporting world, so I did not pursue it further. I later learned that she most admires her father's nonsporting oil paintings, many of which hang in her home.

By 2017, I had joined the board of directors of the Friends of Craig Brook and within a few months was appointed director of the Craig Brook Museum at the Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery.¹



High Tide at the Duck Trap. Limited-edition print by Arthur Taylor, painted in the late 1980s. Collection of the author. Used with permission.



Early Take. Limited-edition print by Arthur Taylor and U.S. postage stamp commissioned by New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, 1999. Collection of Steve Campbell. Used with permission.

One day, in the process of developing a new exhibit, I was searching for a source of fishing-reel replacement screws and, on a whim, stopped by a local clockmaker's shop. There, among old clocks for sale, I saw some antique fishing gear and an Arthur Taylor print. I had stumbled into the shop of clockmaker Peter Rioux, husband to Susan, Arthur's daughter. That fateful encounter led to further discussions with Peter and Susan and, eventually, to the development of an exhibit at Craig Brook Museum featuring Arthur Taylor's sporting art.²

LIFE'S ARC

Born 22 November 1925, Arthur Taylor was raised in South Boston. After high school, he attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (in Boston, now part of Tufts University) and graduated from the Vesper George School of Art (Vesper George closed its doors in 1983). While in art school, Taylor met classmate Ruth Mallett, who would soon become his wife. Taylor began his career in Boston, but in 1951 he and Ruth moved to New York, where he developed several commercial projects. One example—a painting of the NASA Lunar Probe VIII—can still be seen at the Cape Canaveral Space Center in Florida. In 1966, now parents to three daughters, Arthur and Ruth packed up and moved to a farm in Ruth's hometown of Lee, Maine.

In this rural setting, Taylor became particularly enamored with Atlantic salmon fishing, which, in turn, led to an interest in crafting bamboo fly rods. Over his lifetime, Taylor crafted thirty-seven rods, according to his close friend Steve Campbell.³ The salmon rod he named Nova Scotia Special is likely his most famous, appearing in some of his paintings. During salmon-fishing trips he documented scenes with a small camera that he always kept in his fishing vest. Later, at his home studio, he would recreate angling events in paint. He continued this pattern for the rest of his life, never becoming a plein-air artist. He said in a video produced circa 2001, "I can't sit there on the bank and make sketches all the time. I'd never have time to do the fishing."⁴ In an article Taylor wrote and illustrated for *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, he noted, "A sketch can provide several things. I can search for significant themes. Often several observed elements will connect in a single pattern. I don't look for minute details as a photo can provide that. Instead, I question myself, is there a painting there and will it be meaningful to the viewer?"⁵

For awhile, Taylor continued with commercial art contracts, working for

several Maine ad agencies—even producing a portrait of Steven King’s gothic-style home, unveiled 9 May 1984 at a Bangor reception for the original movie adaptation of King’s *Firestarter*. But, as time passed, he dreamed of merging his interests in art and angling and becoming a sporting artist. The shift was gradual as he made contacts among salmon anglers and sporting-camp owners in Maine, New Hampshire, the Canadian maritime provinces, and Québec. Not incidental to his pondering, of course, was whether his sporting art would find enough advocates to financially support his family. The transition may have been a bit rocky, but his talents and dedication won out.

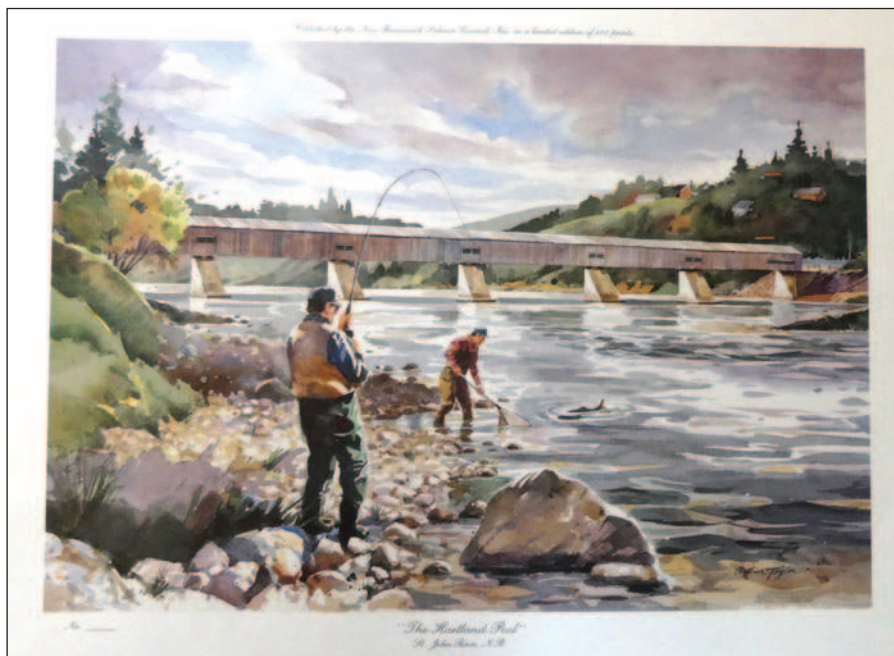
A DEVELOPING CONSERVATION ETHIC

As Taylor witnessed the decline in Atlantic salmon runs in Maine and New Hampshire rivers during the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the nearby Penobscot, he became increasingly concerned. Working with one of Maine’s most passionate river restoration advocates, Clinton “Bill” Townsend, and a small group of like-minded conservationists, Taylor wrote newspaper op-eds and, with James E. Butler, coauthored *Penobscot River Renaissance: Restoring America’s Premier Atlantic Salmon Fishery*.⁶ The book featured the efforts of anglers, conservationists, legislators, and fisheries biologists working to restore the Atlantic salmon fishery of the Penobscot River. Fifteen watercolor paintings and three pen-and-ink drawings by Taylor complement the text.

In the 1980s a dedicated group known as the Penobscot Coalition took on Bangor Hydro-Electric Company to halt the rebuilding of the breached Bangor Dam. After succeeding in that effort, they mounted a campaign to thwart the construction of a proposed Basin Mills dam just upriver from an existing dam in Veazie. That campaign was also successful and during the 1990s set the stage for Facilitators Improving Salmonid Habitat (FISH), with Taylor elected its first president. Members of FISH helped launch the Penobscot River Restoration Project, a coalition that eventually negotiated the removal of the Great Works Dam in 2012, the Veazie Dam in 2013, and the construction of a bypass channel around the Howland Dam in 2016, opening 2,000 miles of the Penobscot River to salmon and other sea-run fish. Taylor, who died in 2010, did not live to see the culmination of his conservation efforts, but he was honored several times in his



Below the Brook. Limited-edition print by Arthur Taylor for the Atlantic Salmon Federation, circa 1983–1986. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.



The Hartland Pool. Limited-edition print by Arthur Taylor for the New Brunswick Salmon Council, circa 1983–1986. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

life with conservation awards, including the prestigious Atlantic Salmon Federation Roll of Honor award in 1988.⁷

As Taylor became well known as an artist and conservationist, his connections expanded. His talents were in high demand to produce commissioned art

prints to raise funds for organizations like the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the New Brunswick Salmon Council, and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Other commissions included magazine and book illustration contracts, including Gerald S. Stein and



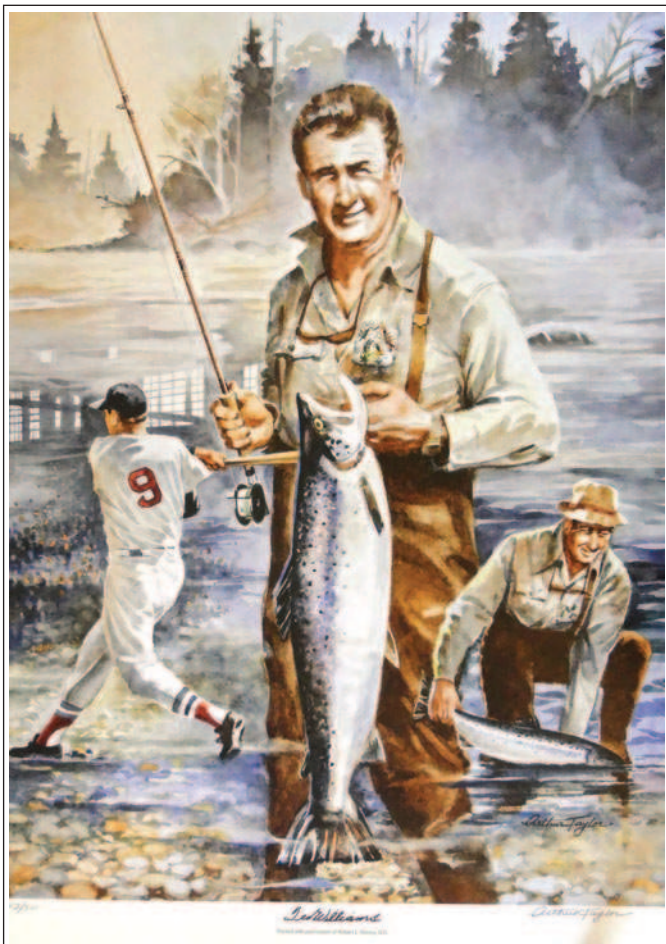
Stan Bogdan at his lathe in his New Hampshire workshop, circa 1995. Original photo by Arthur Taylor. Note the duct tape holding a toolbox lid against the stud wall. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

James W. Schaaf's *Dickerson: The Man and His Rods* and Graydon R. Hilyard's *Bogdan*.⁸ In a letter to Taylor dated 27 April 1992, Gerald Stein wrote: "Jim and I are just blown away by how much your watercolor adds to the book. Your artistry and your ability to capture so much of how Jim and I feel about Dickerson are just wonderful. If this were Japan, we bamboo rod lovers and fishermen would make you a national treasure."⁹

Stan Bogdan was equally effusive in his praise, writing on the title page of Taylor's copy of *Bogdan*, "Thank you for all your help with the book. Your cover painting is spectacular! I'm proud to have you for a friend."¹⁰ That painting and two of the photographs he used to create it are on exhibit at the Craig Brook Museum. On pages 58 and 59 in the *Bogdan* book, Taylor described his evolving working plan and some of the many draft sketches he produced. This was one of the more complex, composite paintings that Taylor ever created. It showcased his ability to merge a photographic level of detail on the inner workings of the Bogdan reel with the empathetic portraits of Bogdan as reel maker and fisherman. To me, this is quintessential Taylor, right down to the piece of duct tape holding a toolbox cover against a wall stud in Bogdan's workshop, a sly detail most viewers never notice.



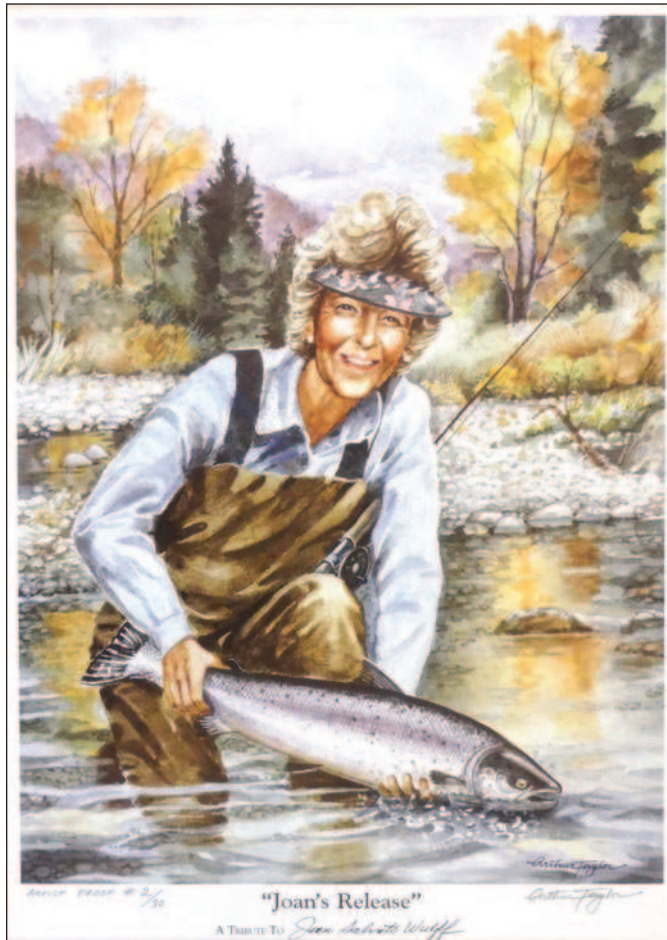
Composite watercolor of Stan Bogdan by Arthur Taylor. This painting—created from photographs that the artist took circa 1995—became the cover of Graydon R. Hilyard's *Bogdan*. It includes the duct tape on the wall seen in Taylor's photo. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.



Ted Williams. Limited-edition tribute print by Arthur Taylor for the Miramichi Salmon Association, circa 1999–2000. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

One of Taylor's better-known commemorative prints is that of angler and baseball great Ted Williams, commissioned by the Miramichi Salmon Association to raise funds for salmon conservation on that river. A limited edition of just fifty was authorized, but the continuing sales of unauthorized photocopies of this and other Taylor prints on eBay attest to the perpetual popularity of Taylor's sporting art. In 2005, Joan Salvato Wulff (considered by many the first lady of fly fishing) was honored with a Taylor portrait commissioned to support salmon restoration on the Merrimack River. Taylor created that portrait from photos Wulff sent him. A first version was redone when Taylor, always looking for artistic perfection, decided to "deemphasize the rod and reel" by moving the rod from under Wulff's right arm to under her left arm.¹¹

Along with crafting bamboo rods, Taylor developed an interest in collecting classic angling gear, especially fly rods and reels produced by the best makers. In part this was likely linked to his friendships with some of those makers. Eventually he produced a limited-edition print series he called Angling Collectibles in Print celebrating such notable rod and reel makers as Fred Thomas,



Joan's Release. Limited-edition print by Arthur Taylor for New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, 2005, with proceeds to benefit the Merrimack River Anadromous Fish Restoration Program. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

Edward vom Hofe, Lyle Dickerson, Arthur L. Walker, and Stan Bogdan. In some of the reel prints he would slip in the image of one of his own Nova Scotia Special rods, his whimsical subterfuge, again, sneaking into his artwork.

A LASTING IMPRINT

Lasting memories of Arthur Taylor's creativity can be found in the paintings that adorn walls of sporting camps and private

and corporate collections in North America and Europe. Yet a deeper imprint is seen in the conservation efforts he championed and the many individuals he befriended and influenced. Not least among those friends was budding rod maker Steve Campbell of Brewer, Maine.¹² Soon after Taylor's death, Campbell told *Bangor Daily News* outdoors reporter John Holyoke, "Twenty years ago, the whole world changed for me when I met [Taylor]. I was learning to

make rods, but he introduced me to everything and everyone in the bamboo world. I wouldn't have met Sam Carlson, who is the man I bought the Thomas Rod Company from, if it wasn't for Arthur. Arthur was friends with him. Arthur was friends with everybody."¹³

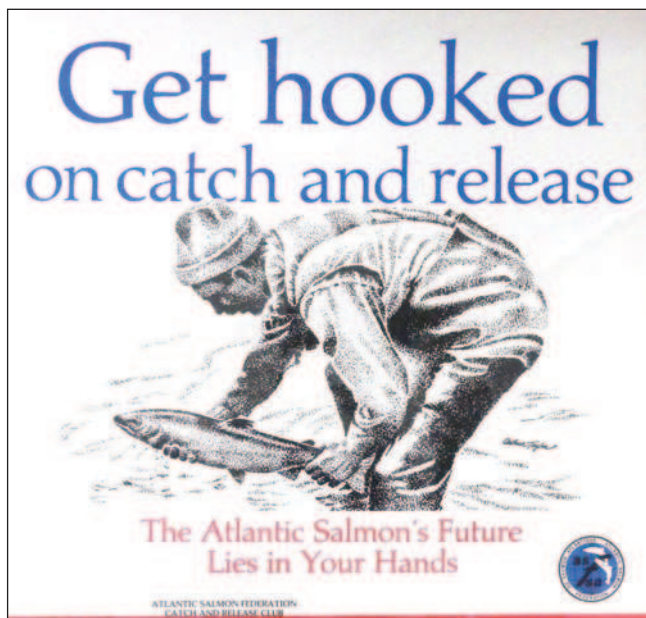
A simple art piece that Arthur produced in the early 1980s for the Atlantic Salmon Federation may have had as profound an effect on changing Atlantic salmon anglers' practices in Maine and

Clockwise from right: A Tribute to Bogdan Reels (OPUS No. 1). One in Taylor's Angling Collectibles in Print series, circa 1983–1985. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

A Tribute to Edward Vom-Hofe Reels (OPUS No. 3). One in Taylor's Angling Collectibles in Print series, circa 1983–1985. This spelling of Edward vom Hofe was used in Taylor's brochure for these prints. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

Arthur Taylor enjoying his favorite activity. Photographer and date of original photo are unknown. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.





Get hooked on catch and release. Poster by Arthur Taylor for the Atlantic Salmon Federation's Catch and Release Club, circa 1983–1984. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.

Bumper stickers, pins, and banquet ticket designed by Arthur Taylor in 1988 that were used in the successful effort to halt the construction of a planned Basin Mills dam on the Penobscot River, Orono, Maine. Courtesy of Friends of Craig Brook.



Canada as did progressive fishing regulations. Peter Rioux showed me the poster when I first visited his clock shop. It depicts an angler in midstream, gently releasing a salmon back to the river. Above it reads, "Get hooked on catch and release" and below, "The Atlantic Salmon's Future Lies in Your Hands." At a time when releasing salmon was not a common practice, this poster, along with bumper stickers and pins that Taylor produced to publicize the struggle to restore salmon runs in the Penobscot, fostered a change in public perceptions about the river and its fisheries. His legacy—and now ours for our children and grandchildren—is a freer-flowing river with much improved passage for anadromous fish-spawning runs.

Brook Museum in the resource center and offers educational and watershed stewardship activities in support of the Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, which is operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the Department of the Interior (the only national Atlantic salmon hatchery in the United States).

2. Susan Rioux, in addition to providing much information used in this article, also bequeathed to the Friends of Craig Brook a number of Arthur Taylor-related items, including a portfolio of his prints to use for fundraising or for its collection.

3. Steve Campbell is the current owner of the Thomas Rod Company, 19 Sargent Drive, Brewer, Maine.

4. Arthur Taylor, *A Life on the River*, VHS tape given to Craig Brook Museum by Susan Rioux. Unidentified as to date of production or producer, it was made circa 2001 and seems to have been commissioned by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. DVD copies of the tape are archived at Craig Brook Museum and the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

5. Arthur Taylor, "Miramichi Revisited," *Atlantic Salmon Journal* (Summer 2002, vol. 51, no. 2), 22.

6. James E. Butler and Arthur Taylor, *Penobscot River Renaissance: Restoring America's Premier Atlantic Salmon Fishery* (Camden, Me.: The Silver Quill Press, 1992).

7. Awards given to Arthur Taylor now part of Craig Brook Museum include Coastal America Partnership Award to FISH: Penobscot Watershed Anadromous Fish Restoration Team, 1999; Veazie Salmon Club Normand Bacon Sportsman Award, 1997; Atlantic Salmon Certificate of Appreciation, Montreal dinner, 1990; and Atlantic Salmon Federation Roll of Honor for commitment to Atlantic Salmon Conservation, 1988.

8. Gerald S. Stein and James W. Schaaf, *Dickerson: The Man and His Rods* (Grand Junction, Colo.: Centennial Publications, 1991); Graydon R. Hilyard, *Bogdan* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Amato Publications, 2006).

9. Letter from Gerald Stein to Arthur Taylor, 27 April 1992, archived at Craig Brook Museum.

10. Taylor's copy of *Bogdan* is in the collection of Susan Rioux.

11. Letter from Arthur Taylor to Joan Wulff, 20 October 2004. This letter—along with others that Wulff gave to me—is archived at Craig Brook Museum.

12. See Richard Jagels, "Thomas Rods: Connected to Place, Cosmic in Reputation," *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 2012, vol. 38, no. 4), 2–10, for more on Steve Campbell and the Thomas Rod Company.

13. John Holyoke, "Friend Grateful for Taylor's Impact," *Bangor (ME) Daily News* (8–9 May 2010), section D (Maine Outdoors), 6.

ENDNOTES

1. Friends of Craig Brook, Inc., PO Box A, 306 Hatchery Road, East Orland, Maine 04431, www.friendsofcraigbrook.com, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1995. It develops and operates the Craig

Charles III: Angler and King

by John Mundt

Vest photos by Sara Wilcox



The front and back of King Charles III's fishing vest, as well as the card included with the mailing.

IN 2001, I FOLLOWED A WHIM and sought counsel on how to write a proper letter to a member of the British royal family. The hope was to one day see the American Museum of Fly Fishing acquire a piece of tackle used by a royal family member. After assuming it had come to nothing, I was elated when Sara Wilcox rang several months later to report that a package addressed to me had arrived by Royal Mail—she asked what she should do with it. “Open it!” I remember bellying with excitement. Inside was a fishing vest and letter sent from St. James’s Palace, home to then Prince Charles. One could immediately tell that this vest had been donned by an angler who used it often.

Newly crowned King Charles III is one of us: a member of the world community and an avid angler. As patron of the Flyfishers’ Club of London, he penned the following words in the foreword

of its centennial history in 1984: “There will always be the same joy, as long as stretches of river remain flowing through unspoilt countryside, of a day spent with a fly rod in perfect solitude . . . proving that *there is more to fishing than just catching fish*.” As a patron of both the Atlantic Salmon Trust and the Salmon and Trout Association, he has been steadfast in his efforts to ensure that the sport we so cherish can long endure.

Looking back on that 2001 day during this coronation year, I found myself chuckling when reading the following news bit from 2017 in the *Daily Mail*.

The Prince of Wales plans to extend his summer holiday at the Queen’s Balmoral estate “for an extra week because the fly fishing is so good,” according to a royal photographer. . . . [T]he heir to the throne already plans to stay for seven days longer



In this undated photo, then Prince Charles fly fishes for salmon on the River Dee near Balmoral wearing the same vest he donated to the museum in 2001.

The letter accompanying the vest. In it, Assistant Private Secretary Nigel Baker notes, "The jacket is a trusted friend that has stood The Prince of Wales in good stead on many expeditions on the Dee and the Spey, and His Royal Highness is delighted that it may now find a suitable home to do justice to the great service it has done him."



than planned so he can continue to pursue one of his favourite hobbies. . . . Fly fishing is a favoured pastime of several members of the royal family, with the late Queen mother a fan of the sport, while Prince Philip has also been known to take part in the activity while at Balmoral.²

The angling community also appreciates His Majesty's respect for the pillars of our sport. When the esteemed fly tier Megan Boyd passed into eternity the same year we received the vest, the *New York Times* reported the following in her obituary:

An aide to Prince Charles once showed up and asked that she quickly whip up a masterpiece or two. She declined, saying that [she] was going to a Scottish dance in the village. She loved the traditional dances.

The prince held no grudge. He visited her last year in the nursing home where she had lived in recent years.³

Raising my glass during this coronation year, your correspondent is proud to report that he shares three things in common with His Majesty: having Queen Elizabeth II on the throne the day we each were born; a height of 5 feet, 10 inches; and a love of fly fishing and its traditions. To me it seems fitting that 6 May 2023 falls just before the beginning of the Duffers' Fortnight⁴ in Hampshire, England, and that the coronation celebrations will not interfere with His Majesty's trout fishing. Long live the King!



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

ENDNOTES

1. Charles, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, Foreword, in Jack Chance and Julian Paget, eds., *The Flyfishers': An Anthology to Mark the Centenary of The Flyfishers' Club* (London: The Flyfishers' Club, 1984), vi. Emphasis in quotation is mine, where His Royal Highness is quoting the motto of the Flyfishers' Club of London.

2. Jessica Green, "Prince Charles plans to extend his summer holiday at Balmoral 'for an extra week because the fishing is so good', royal photographer says," *Daily Mail*, 6 August 2020 (www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8599367/Prince-Charles-plans-extend-summer-holiday-Balmoral-extra-week.html). Accessed 15 February 2023.

3. Douglas Martin, "Megan Boyd, Eccentric Master of Fish Flies, Dies at 86," *New York Times*, 11 December 2001 (www.nytimes.com/2001/12/11/sports/megan-boyd-eccentric-master-of-fish-flies-dies-at-86.html). Accessed 15 February 2023.

4. According to Charles Rangeley-Wilson, the Duffer's Fortnight is "a blessed window of time between mid May and early June, [when] the allegedly educated trout of the English chalkstreams become so easy even a duffer can catch them." Charles Rangeley-Wilson, "Essential Mayfly Kit: Demystifying Duffer's Fortnight," *The Field*, 23 May 2020 (<https://www.thefield.co.uk/fishing/essential-mayfly-kit-demystifying-duffers-fortnight-44291>). Accessed 27 February 2023.



The James Ratcliffe Birdcage Reel

Jim Schottenham



Above: A J. Ratcliffe reel mounted on a circa 1880s rod handle.

Right: J. Ratcliffe's ad on page 464 of the 1873 Rochester Directory. <https://www.libraryweb.org/rochcitydir/images/1873/1873complete.pdf>. Accessed 1 March 2022.

J. RATCLIFFE,
 Manufacturer of
FISHING TACKLE,
 And dealer in
 Hooks, Lines, Rods, Trout and Bass Flies, Trolling Spoons,
 Powder, Shot, Caps, Wads, &c.,
No. 7 Market Street, Rochester, N. Y.
Repairing Neatly and Promptly Attended to.

SOMETIMES THAT NEEDLE in the haystack pops right up and immediately gets your attention. That was the case when fellow Old Reel Collectors Association member David Lehmann came across a tidbit about James Ratcliffe of Rochester, New York, while researching the lures Ratcliffe produced in the late 1800s. There on the pages of *Commerce, Manufactures and Resources of Rochester* (1881) was a statement that helped solve a decades-old mystery as to the origin of the Billingshurst-style reels that first appeared after the death of William Billingshurst in 1880.

The birdcage reel of Billingshurst's design was offered beginning in the late 1850s, receiving a patent for what is accepted as the first American "fly reel" in 1859. Billingshurst applied for and received a reissue of his patent in 1873, protecting his invention for another seven years, which ultimately coincided with his passing. Soon thereafter, unmarked birdcage reels

closely resembling the original Billingshurst began appearing, such as in the A. F. Seeberger & Co. catalog of 1888 and the Clark & Horrocks tackle catalog of 1902. These reels were sold as the Matthew's Skeleton and the Billingshurst Single Action Safety Reel, respectively.

With Lehmann's discovery, we can now pin the manufacturing on James Ratcliffe of Rochester. Clearly outlining the details, the following was offered on page 86 of *Commerce, Manufactures and Resources*:

J. RATCLIFFE

Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Sporting Goods, Fishing Tackle and Sportsmen's supplies; No. 14 Arcade, West Gallery.

Those of our readers who are more or less attached to the delightful and invigorating sports of field and water, will doubtless feel under some obligations to us for calling their attention to the enterprise of Mr. Ratcliffe, who, for more than thirteen

In addition to these various woods, Shingles and Lath are handled. Bills of all kinds are saved to order and upon the shortest notice, and one of the features of the business, to which special attention is given, is the furnishing of large contract work, and jobbing to consumers direct.

In carrying on a business of such magnitude it is necessary to possess every facility for its thorough prosecution. The facilities enjoyed by Craig & Crouches are excellent, occupying as they do two acres of ground on Griffith street, about six acres on what is known as the Island, besides possession docks at Tonawanda on the Niagara River, where all lumber can be transferred direct from the lakes to railway cars, thus saving the heavy outlay attendant upon more primitive modes of handling the material.

The share which the firm takes in promoting the well-being of this community can be at once understood when it is stated that they find employment for about forty operatives.

Individually, the firm is composed of H. H. Craig, G. W. Crouch and C. T. Crouch. The Messrs. Crouch also carry on an extensive Saw-Mill and Lumber Yard at South St. Paul street near the Canal Bridge, and for a quarter of a century have been largely engaged in business in this city, of which they are natives. H. H. Craig is native of Canada, where he was born in 1841, but has resided in this city for over a quarter of a century, and has become thoroughly identified with our commercial as well as our municipal growth and prosperity.

His efforts and time in this last direction have been devoted to serving two terms in the Common Council, besides taking an active part, as a High School Commissioner. During the famous controversy for the establishment of the High School, at this present writing he is on what is known as the Elevated Track Commission, appointed by a special act of the Legislature of the State of New York.

In all the trusts delegated to him Mr. Craig has labored for the good of this community, and well merits the esteem with which he is regarded.

In conclusion, we may state that the business of Craig & Crouches ramifies throughout this and the States of Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New England; and it is quite within our province to commend the concern to our readers abroad, as well as at home, and to assure them that nothing will be left undone to make business transactions between themselves and their customers entirely satisfactory.

J. RATCLIFFE.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALER IN SPORTING GOODS, FISHING TACKLE AND SPORTSMEN'S SUPPLIES; No. 14 ARCADE, WEST GALLERY.

Those of our readers who are more or less attached to the delightful and invigorating sports of field and water, will doubtless feel under some obligations to us for calling their attention to the enterprise of Mr. J. Ratcliffe, who, for more than thirteen years, has been engaged in an enterprise which is greatly calculated to enhance their pleasures, and promote success in the fascinating pursuits, to which reference is made.

In many respects, the establishment of Mr. Ratcliffe is unique, in so far as the stock carried is of considerable extent, and embraces certain lines of goods not procurable elsewhere. This statement is particularly true with regard to the celebrated *Billinghurst Patent Reel*, of which the sole and exclusive right to manufacture is vested in Mr. Ratcliffe. On the corner of Main and Water streets is located the factory where these goods are made to supply a demand from all parts of the country, this reel being universally regarded by accomplished anglers as the best extant.

Flies are also manufactured for Bass, Trout, Salmon and other fish, while the stock of Trolling Spoons is as extensive and superior as could be wished, while in Rods, Lines, Hooks, Nets, Baskets, and, in short, all the endless paraphernalia of the fisherman, the assortment is all that the most enthusiastic disciple of Isaak Walton could desire.

In the direction of hunting implements and furnishing goods, the store is equally well equipped, the stock embracing fine and medium guns of the best make, Breech and Muzzle-Loading Rifles, Ammunition, Cartridges, Small Arms, Caps, Wads, Shot, Powder, Game Bags, Flasks, Pouches, Swords, Wrenches, Extra Pieces, and every conceivable article demanded by the modern Nimrod.

Manufacturing, as above remarked, a large line of the goods in which he deals, and furnishing dealers as well as private consumers, Mr. Ratcliffe is enabled to accord terms and prices unusually advantageous.

Those at a distance may order by mail with the assured conviction of receiving prompt replies, honorable treatment and uniform courtesy, as well as concessions in price that must result in permanent business relations.

Our space forbids a detailed enumeration of the stock carried by this house; but buyers may send with confidence for any article that properly comes under the headings mentioned, secure in getting exactly what they need, and that, too, without delay.

M. C. REYNOLDS & CO.

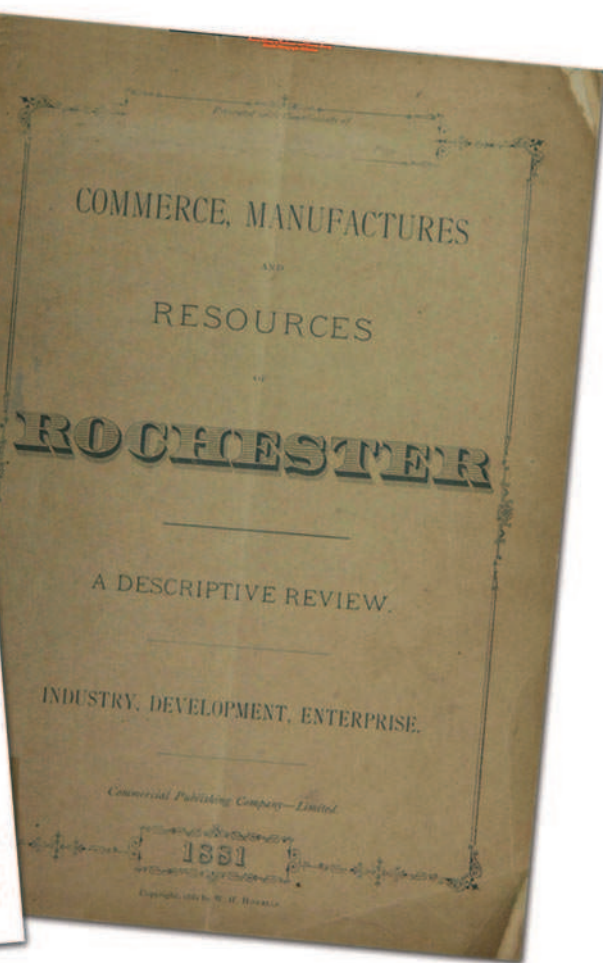
MILLINERY AND FANCY GOODS, LADIES' FURNISHING GOODS, ORNAMENTAL HAIR MANUFACTORY, 98 STATE STREET.

This establishment is one which requires special notice at our hands, as under the partnership two distinct and important branches of business are carried on.

A good many years ago Mrs. M. C. Reynolds established herself in the Hair Working business, and so continued until 1877, when she entered into partnership with Mrs. M. F. Kelly, and added to the original venture that of Millinery, &c.

The premises which they occupy are located on State street, No. 98, running back to a depth of fifty feet. Here both branches of business are conducted, and in the busy millinery season about a dozen hands find employment in that department.

We will first mention the original business with which the house was started, viz., that of Hair Working. In it Mrs. Reynolds has had much experience, and is engaged in manufacturing Hair



Above: The cover and page 86 from *Commerce, Manufactures and Resources of Rochester, 1881*. http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/books/Commerce_manufactures_resources_of_Rochester.pdf. Accessed 1 March 2022.

Right: From the 1902 Clark & Horrocks catalog.

years, has been engaged in an enterprise which is greatly calculated to enhance their pleasures, and promote success in the fascinating pursuits to which reference is made.

In many respects, the establishment of Mr. Ratcliffe is unique, in so far as the stock carried is of considerable extent, and embraces certain lines of goods not procurable elsewhere. This statement is particularly true with regard to the celebrated *Billinghurst Patent Reel*, of which the sole and exclusive right to manufacture is vested in Mr. Ratcliffe. On the corner of Main and Water streets is located the factory where these goods are made to supply a demand from all parts of the country, this reel being universally regarded by accomplished anglers as the best extant.

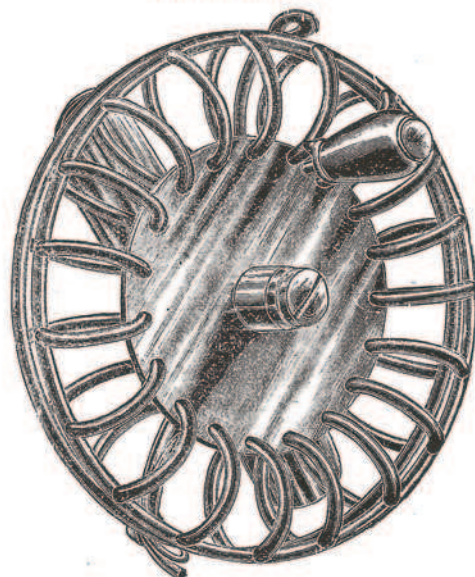
Flies are also manufactured for Bass, Trout, Salmon and other fish, while the stock of Trolling Spoons is as extensive and superior as could be wished, while in Rods, Lines, Hooks, Nets, Baskets, and, in short, all the endless paraphernalia of the fisherman, the assortment is all that the most enthusiastic disciple of Isaak Walton could desire.

There are two examples residing in the museum's permanent collection that will now be properly identified as J. Ratcliffe reels, thanks in large part to that needle found by Mr. Lehmann.

JIM SCHOTTENHAM
CURATOR

Billinghurst Single Action, Safety Reel.

Nickel Plated.



100 Yards.

Singularly Influential: A Biography of Alfred Ronalds

by Beverley F. Ronalds



Alfred Ronalds's specimens of his Fly 31, the Dark Mackerel, in the insect collection he made when researching *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*, now held by the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. The collection was reorganized by Martin Mosely in 1930. Photo by Beverley Ronalds.

IN WRITING *Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer* (Medlar Press, 2022), I greatly enjoyed getting to know my great-great-grandfather, the esteemed fly-fishing author Alfred Ronalds. My research drew on the rich angling literature of the past two hundred years—as well as the Ronalds family's papers held in Britain, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere—to paint the first detailed picture of an accomplished and complex man.

Alfred Ronalds (1802–1860) published *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* in London in 1836. He also created a fly case as a *Companion* to the book, which contained his forty-seven recommended artificial flies alongside their names and instructions for their use. The book has seen many subsequent editions, and the *Companion* continued to be made and sold by tackle shops for more than a century. In the Summer 2020 issue of the *American Fly Fisher*, Andrew Herd described *The*

Fly-Fisher's Entomology as “the single most influential work ever published” on fly fishing (page 2).

Why is the book so revered and how was its author able to create it? My great-great-grandfather Alfred brought disparate fields together to offer a new perspective. His small book incorporated large steps forward in the science, the practice, and the art of fly fishing, and each of these aspects has been built upon by subsequent authors. He began with biological research into the habits of trout and grayling, including analyzing how their stomach contents varied through the seasons. As the father of angling entomology, he then studied and described the fish's favored insects and identified each, using both formal classifications and common names to help anglers distinguish them. Over time, this also encouraged rationalization of the numerous local names and imitations then in use.

Turning to the practice of fishing, Alfred designed “excellent” artificial flies to mimic each identified insect. This required examination, hunting, and collection of specific feathers and fur from a large assortment of birds and animals, with the aid of his hunting horses and pack of hounds. His angling tips included illustrating the consequences of refraction on the window of vision of the fish and how to make use of the undulations created by a rising trout. Finally, being artistic, he drew, etched, printed, and colored his plates of insects and corresponding artificial flies and in doing so set a new standard for angling illustration.

Alfred Ronalds himself has been rather a mystery to angling historians. It was known that his father was a merchant who died when Alfred was young and that Alfred did not attend university. There was no record of him demonstrating his broad skill set before his revolutionary book appeared when he turned thirty-four. In the years after publication, he retreated to a remote corner of Wales and then to Australia—a place that at that time had no trout.

It has been little recognized that Alfred’s family, although very private, was wealthy and talented and that he had an intellectual and inspirational upbringing. His principal mentor was his oldest brother, (later Sir) Francis Ronalds, who was a prolific inventor. Alfred followed in his brother’s footsteps by also becoming a gentleman scientist, and they together explored diverse scientific, practical, and artistic topics for many years. Sir Francis and other family members wrote and illustrated books on their discoveries; Alfred was almost destined to publish on the family’s enjoyable pastime of fly fishing.

The Fly-Fisher’s Entomology and the artificial flies Alfred made for sale proved to be very popular, but this was a mixed blessing.

As a visionary and creative person, he yearned for new challenges rather than continuing to hand-make the tens of thousands of colored plates and artificial flies required for new editions of the book. His inheritance, which had supported him through the years of research and production of the book and fly case, was now gone, and his growing renown did not sit well with him.

Sir Francis and other family members took on production of the fourth edition of the book for him, and the tackle maker Eaton & Deller was commissioned to make the fly cases. For the fifth edition, the family passed control to the publisher Longman. The company employed Reverend Barnard Smith as editor, and he introduced his own ideas and altered various facts in the book, including the scientific names of many of Alfred’s insects. This was of little concern to Alfred, however, who had left fly fishing behind. The errors were not rectified in subsequent editions, after the author died; the more recent editions therefore do not fully reflect his thinking.

Alfred Ronalds had escaped to Australia with his children in 1848 after his wife Margaret died. Over the next decade he applied himself enthusiastically to an eclectic but useful array of activities for the youthful colony, including engraving, printing, lithography, book production, surveying, mapmaking, woodworking, marble and gold mining, water supply, construction, and horticulture. In doing so, he built a new legacy as a noteworthy Australian pioneer.

~

Beverley F. Ronalds is a retired academic and a fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering.



A plate of insects and their imitations drawn and engraved by Alfred Ronalds in The Fly-Fisher’s Entomology (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1836, facing page 74 [plate X]).

Beverley F. Ronalds's *Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer*

by J. Keith Harwood

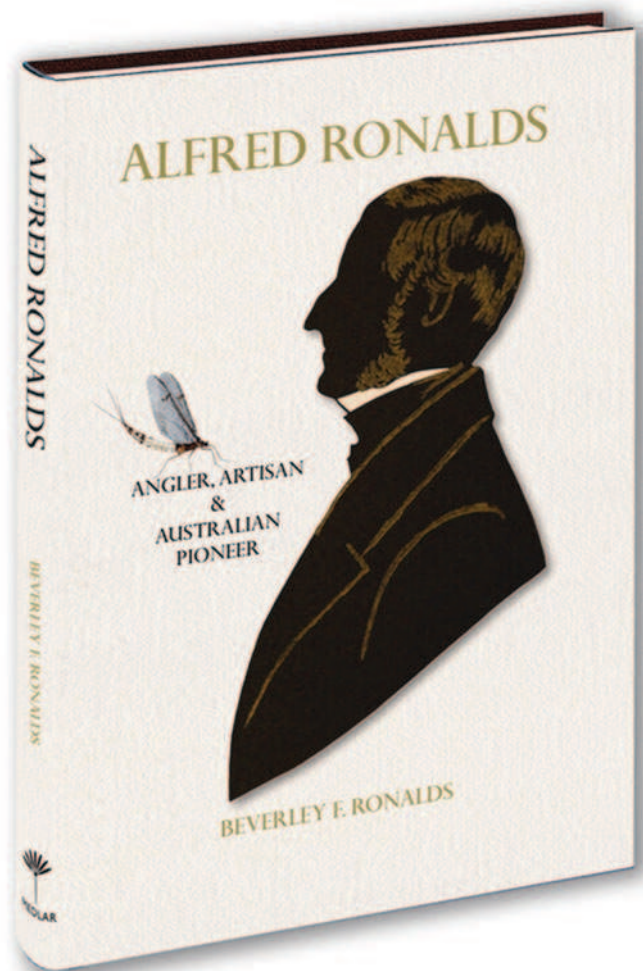
EVEN THOUGH I possess a copy of Alfred Ronalds's seminal work, *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (first published in 1836), and a leather fly book containing extracts from the sixth edition, complete with a number of flies, I confess that I knew virtually nothing of Ronalds himself—until I read this fascinating biography.

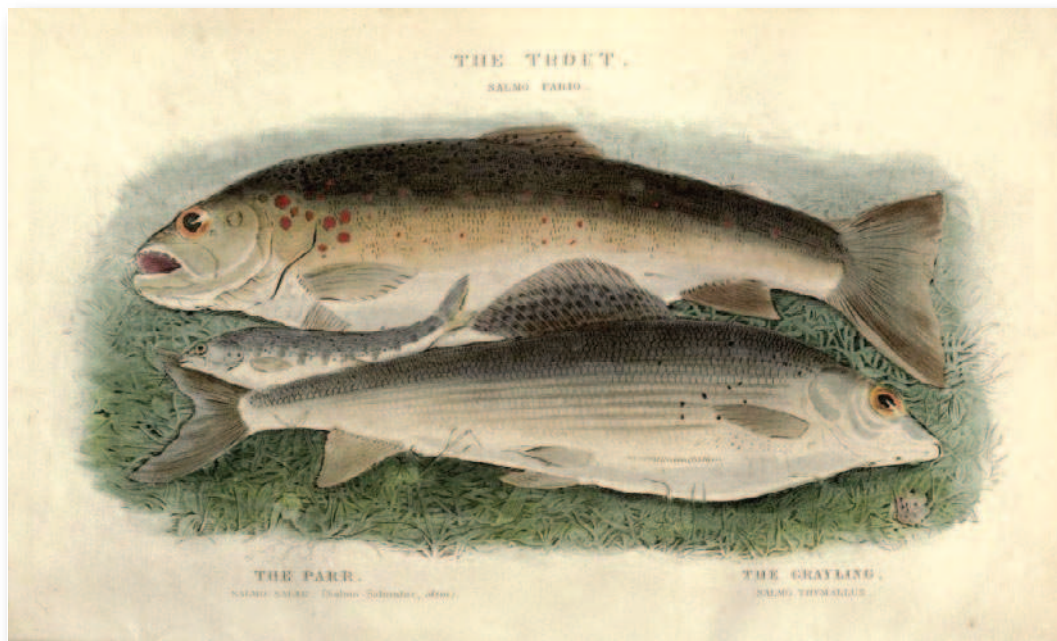
Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer was written by his great-great-granddaughter, a retired university professor. (Some words about the book by author Beverley Ronalds can be found on page 21 in this issue.) As is befitting an academic, the book is meticulously researched and uses primary sources (diaries, photographs, and family documents) found on three continents.

The book is divided into eight chapters, each containing a number of subsections. The first three chapters deal with Ronalds's early life and education, his scientific and artistic skills, and his nomadic lifestyle. During his relatively short life (he was only fifty-seven when he died), he lived in approximately twenty different abodes on two continents. He was married twice and had twelve children. He was born in July 1802, the eleventh of twelve children, into a family of wealthy London merchants. Sadly, his father passed away when Ronalds was only four, but throughout his life, he was very much influenced by his elder brother Frank (Sir Francis Ronalds, 1788–1873). Brother Frank was knighted for his invention of the first working electric telegraph; he was multi-talented and particularly interested in the emerging science of electricity, as well as in natural phenomena. He found it difficult to devote himself to a single area of science, however, and during his lifetime is credited with roughly 200 diverse inventions. Alfred gained a great deal of scientific knowledge and practical skill from working with his elder brother and even claimed to have helped him perfect his electric telegraph. Unlike Frank and other members of his family, though, Ronalds possessed little business acumen. Throughout his life he was frequently in financial difficulty and had to be bailed out by his mother on occasion.

Chapter 4 of the new biography, "Fly Fishing Author," is of most interest to anglers and bibliophiles and focuses on *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*. Between 1836, when it was first published, and 1921, the book ran to twelve editions; reprints of the book are still available today. During his early life, Ronalds was a keen angler. He fished several rivers, including the New

River (a tributary of the Lea), the Wandle, and—following his move to Staffordshire in 1829—the Trent, Tame, Sow, and Blithe. In 1832, Ronalds and his first wife, Margaret, moved to Lea Fields, a farm about 6 kilometers from Uttoxeter. The eastern boundary of the estate was formed by the River Blithe,





From the ninth edition of Alfred Ronalds, *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (London: Longmans, Green, 1883), frontispiece.

and it was here that he began research for his book. This took three years and involved building an octagonal fishing observatory over the stream, where he could study the aquatic flies seen on the river during the fishing season (March to September). His purpose was to create a month-by-month catalog of recommended flies and how to make them, thus combining his practical angling skills with biological research. In his research he was assisted by his brother Frank and a local Anglican minister, the Reverend Thomas Browne.

Although *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* was published by Longmans in 1836, it was very much a family production. Frank edited the book and wrote the preface; sister Emily and cousin Betsey assisted in hand-coloring the numerous plates. A second edition of the book followed three years later, but after the third edition in 1844 and the death of his first wife in 1847, Ronalds became bored with the project and emigrated to Australia a year later.

The fifth (1856) and subsequent editions of the book were edited anonymously by "Piscator," whom Beverley Ronalds has identified as the Reverend Barnard Smith, a Cambridge academic and later rector of Glaston in Rutland. Piscator made several changes to the book by increasing its length from 112 to 130 pages, changing some of the tying details, and introducing a new insect, the Orange Dun. Changes were also made to the engraved plates, which, to quote Sir Herbert Maxwell's introduction in the 1913 edition, "suffered grievously" in later editions (page xii).

Chapter 5 deals primarily with Ronalds's life in Australia, where he embarked on a career as an engraver and lithographer, using skills he learned from Frank. In March 1849, he set up in business in Geelong and began advertising his new engraving and copperplate printing services. In November of that year, he married Mary Ann Harlow, whom he met on the ship to Australia. A year later, he was commissioned by the municipality of Geelong to engrave its corporation seal, which is illustrated in the book.

In 1851, gold was discovered in an area to the north of Ballarat in the state of Victoria, which sparked a gold rush. The resulting involvement of most of Ronalds's customers

brought about the demise of his engraving business. Not to be deterred, he quickly published a booklet titled *A Treatise on Gold Discovery and Gold Washing*, which dealt with gold-bearing ores and a patented washing machine to separate the gold from the ore. By December of that year Ronalds, too, had joined in the gold rush, set up as a prospector, and achieved a certain amount of success.

Chapter 6 tells the story of the final venture before Ronalds's untimely death on 23 April 1860: the establishment of a garden nursery at Ballarat where the family had moved in 1852. Sadly, his sudden death left his family in considerable debt and resulted in the loss of the nursery. The final two chapters deal with his death and burial and give an overview of the lives of his talented children. The eldest, Maria, followed in her father's footsteps and established a fly-tying business in Australia, where she designed a wide range of flies in imitation of local insects (see Beverley F. Ronalds, "Maria Ronalds Shanklin: Pioneer Fly Tier in Australia," *The American Fly Fisher* [vol. 47, no. 1, Winter 2021]).

As is to be expected of the Medlar Press, the book is beautifully produced and contains numerous well-chosen black-and-white and color illustrations. I thoroughly enjoyed the book, which is beautifully written and gives a fascinating insight into one of our most important angling authors. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested in the history of fly fishing and fly tying or in the pioneering spirit of nineteenth-century Australia.



Keith Harwood, a retired teacher of Latin and Greek, is the author of multiple angling books by the Medlar Press.

Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer
by Beverley F. Ronalds
The Medlar Press, 2022
£35 plus postage and packing
228 pages
www.medlarpress.com

The Reel Thing

by Joe A. Pisarro

In the early 1990s, the museum published a newsletter called the Greenheart Gazette. For this publication, longtime volunteer Joe Pisarro—for whom the museum's Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award is named—wrote a column called "The Reel Thing." This piece appeared in Volume 1, Number 2 (Winter 1990/1991).

IF I HAVE CONTRIBUTED ANYTHING to the sport of fly fishing, it's been to establish irrefutably that it's possible to fish for a quarter century and never once give any work to a taxidermist. Not that I have any desire to have a glassy-eyed mount glaring down from my wall, understand. Rather, it's simply to emphasize the point that my life has not been distinguished by fish—or events—of memorable proportions.

With rare exceptions.

Some years ago, I attended a regional conclave of the Federation of Fly Fishers at a slightly run-down resort, a hostelry more accustomed to catering to honeymoon couples than to fly fishermen.

At the end of a day of meetings, seminars, and fly-tying classes, Arnold Gingrich, Charles Ritz, and I headed for the lounge for a bit of relaxation and a before-dinner drink. No waiters were in sight, which meant we would have to order our drinks at the already-crowded bar. We elbowed our way through. The bartender was frantically trying to keep up with the customers, but we finally managed to get his attention. He took one look at us, then announced firmly, "Sorry, I can't serve you in here. You don't have a jacket and tie." Slightly stunned, we looked at each other. Sure enough, none of us was wearing a jacket or tie. They hadn't been required for fly tying.

"Sorry, house rule," the bartender apologized and moved to tend to the wants of his more sartorially acceptable customers.

Properly chastened, we slunk out to seek a watering hole where the tailoring requirements were a bit looser. It was only later that the incongruity, not to say absurdity, of the event struck me.

Now, being asked to leave, not always as politely, was no novelty for me. But in this case, I was reminded of something that Gingrich once wrote: "It wonders me." I mean, after all, we're not dealing here with the Plaza Hotel or the Claridge, but with a second- or third-rate resort way out in the boondocks. Formal dress would be the last thing I would expect. Shows you how a guy can be wrong. Wonderment number one.

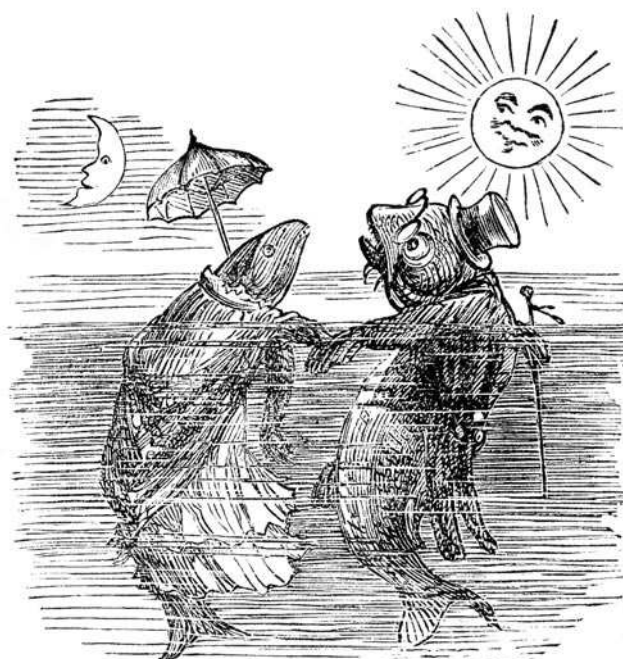
Wonderment number two is, for me, the big one, the most bewildering one. As I said, my getting tossed out of places was not unheard of. But consider my fellow-evacuees and consider also the reason for the bounce.

One was the longtime editor and publisher of *Esquire*, the magazine that for decades set the country's standards for

men's fashions—including jackets and ties. Did Gingrich need lessons in matters sartorial? (Though it must be admitted his disreputable attire astream would never have qualified him for Abercrombie & Fitch or, for that matter, his own *Esquire*. Maybe he thought that if he dressed like a poacher, he might be able to fish like one.)

We come, then, to Charles Ritz, whose very name is synonymous with elegance, style, and chic. Unlike Gingrich, he was a fashion plate on stream or river. Probably he felt a trout or salmon was more deserving of his sartorial best than a yokel bartender at some pokey resort.

Now I would be the first to agree that this event isn't as memorable as, say, the sinking of the *Titanic* or bringing to net an 8-pound brown trout on a size 20 dry fly. On the other hand, being bounced out of a nothing bar in company with Arnold Gingrich and Charles Ritz for lack of sartorial splendor is for me a memorable moment of high order; one that offers some solace for the absence of memorable trout in my life.



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



AMERICAN
MUSEUM OF
FLY FISHING

16th Annual Fly-Fishing

FESTIVAL

*Saturday, August 12, 2023
Manchester, Vermont*

Schedule of Events

- 11:00 am: Casting competition
- 12:00 pm: AMFF Ambassador Steve Ramirez on fly fishing and mental health
- 2:00 pm: AMFF Ambassador Rachel Finn discusses *After You've Gone*
- 3:00 pm: Raffle drawing at admissions tent

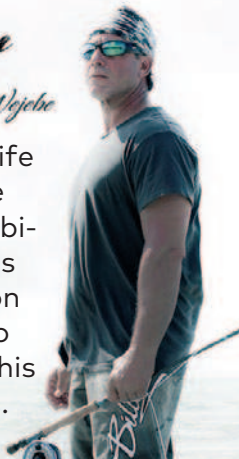
Happening all day:

- Vendors and nonprofits
- Free tackle appraisals with Bob Selb, Fred Kretchman, and Carmine Lisella
- Local food and beverage trucks
- Free casting lessons with Rachel Finn
- Free fly-tying demonstrations
- Book signings with Steve Ramirez and Steve Woit
- Children's activities
- Live music
- Free museum admission



Guiding Star *The Legacy of Jose Wejebe*

Highlighting the angling life and adventures of Jose Wejebe, AMFF's new exhibition opens August 12. His daughter Krissy will be on hand from 1 to 2 p.m. to celebrate her father and his many accomplishments.



Join us for a special screening August 12 at 7 p.m. at BBA's Riley Center to benefit the AMFF and the Southwestern Chapter of Trout Unlimited.



Scan to purchase tickets

Visit amff.org for more details



AMFF Welcomes New Gallery Assistants in Missouri and Vermont

The museum welcomes two new gallery assistants to our staff.

Bill Butts has been an avid angler and fly tier for fifty-five years and currently serves as president of the Southwest Missouri Fly Fishers. Since 1974, he has been an active promoter of fly fishing, sharing his skills and passion for the sport with others. Today, he enjoys speaking to groups and writing about fly fishing for the temperate basses (striped, hybrid striped, and white), and is in the infancy stage of writing a book on the subject. We are thrilled to have Bill representing AMFF at our Wonders of Wildlife gallery in Springfield, Missouri.

Ryan Whiteoak comes to us with a film and photography background and a love for the French New Wave film movement. He enjoys snowboarding, jazz, biking, and hiking with his adopted American Staffordshire terrier, Achilles. He recently moved to Vermont by way of LA to both slow down everyday life and enjoy new experiences—one of those being working at AMFF! Ryan brings previous work experience at Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Painted Bride Art Center to our Manchester, Vermont, campus.



Bill Butts. Photo courtesy of Bill Butts.



Ryan Whiteoak. Photo courtesy of Ryan Whiteoak.

Recent Donations to the Collection

We continue to thank **Joan Wulff** (Lew Beach, New York) for her myriad contributions to our permanent collection. Recently she donated some personal objects, including an affidavit for a fish she landed in 1976, her marriage certificate to Lee Wulff, Lee Wulff's passport, and a brochure promoting Lee Wulff's film productions. In addition, Wulff donated several Garcia Mitchell reels that she and Lee used.

Craig Barber (Athens, Georgia) donated a collection of seven Yawman & Erbe automatic keyless fly reels. **Joe Cresta** (Wakefield, Massachusetts) also gave us a reel, a Tibor Riptide, formerly used by Jack Gartside. **Steven McGrath** (Attleboro, Massachusetts) donated a John Kenealy bamboo fly rod.

Marcia Woolman (The Plains, Virginia) sent us an original fly-fishing poem written by angler and author George Harvey. And **Paul Schullery** (Manchester, Vermont) brought us a copy of the 2002 fly-fishing edition of *Montana The Magazine of Western History* for our library.

Upcoming Events

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

July 6, 13, 20, 27
Kids Clinics
10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

August 12
Fly-Fishing Festival
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

August 12
Mending the Line screening
7:00 p.m.
Burr and Burton Academy Riley Center
Manchester, Vermont

September 28
Reel Talk with AMFF Curator Jim Schottenham
Virtual talk on Zoom
3:00 p.m.

October 18
Annual Members Meeting on Zoom
10:00 a.m.

October 19
Heritage Award Event honoring Andy Mill
Chelsea Piers
New York City
6:00 p.m.

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or amff@amff.org. The museum's e-mail newsletter offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

On May 18, trustees and members gathered at the beautiful Equinox Pond in Manchester, Vermont—just a short distance from the museum—for an afternoon of fishing and friendship.

Sara Wilcox



CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Franks is the head of U.S. wealth management 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 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. His work has been published in the *American Fly Fisher* and a variety of professional finance journals. Franks is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and a member of the Anglers' Club of New York. He splits his time between Connecticut and New Hampshire with his wife, Norene, and their three German short-haired pointers.

Author photo



William Krohn



Richard Jagels is emeritus professor of forest biology, University of Maine, and currently museum director, Friends of Craig Brook, at Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, East Orland, Maine. When not targeting Maine's iconic trout and landlocked salmon for catch-and-release, he devotes his efforts toward catch-and-kill of illegally stocked, nonnative, predatory northern pike in Pushaw Stream, a tributary of the Penobscot River, home to Maine's endangered Atlantic salmon.

Remembering Foster Bam

Margot Page



Foster Bam (left), then chair of the board of trustees, posed at a 20 August 1993 cocktail party celebrating the museum's twenty-fifth anniversary with Executive Director Don Johnson (center) and Board President Wallace J. Murray III.

IF YOU WERE A FLY on the wall of a room full of nonprofit professionals, you would undoubtedly hear conversations about the effectiveness of various boards. In fact, it's one of the most common questions I'm asked by other leaders and executive directors. Having a productive and supportive nonprofit board of trustees is one of the most important goals of every single nonprofit. And if it isn't, it should be.

The AMFF board is a beautiful mix of longtime guardians with deep institutional knowledge and new trustees with fresh perspectives, all of whom provide invaluable guidance, support, and expertise. There are countless reasons individuals choose to serve in this capacity: as a way to give back, to delve deeper into their passions, for the love of an institution (sometimes passed from one generation to the next), to make business connections, or to form friendships. The last, which may seem peripheral, happens to be the inspiration for these words from AMFF Trustee Richard Tisch in memory of Foster Bam, who passed away peacefully at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut, on May 11.

Though Foster Bam will no longer cast a fly and though his wit and keen intellect, after ninety-six years, will no longer be part of our lives, we will not forget his great generosity to the museum.

Foster was an extraordinary man. He was an AMFF trustee for more than thirty-five years and served as chairman and president. In 2002, he received the museum's prestigious Heritage Award. He was facilitator of AMFF's seminal exhibits at Yale's Peabody Museum: *Anglers All* in 1992 and *Seeing Wonders: The Nature of Fly Fishing* in 2008. He was a perennial member of our President's Council.

Additionally, Foster was a gifted photographer, underwater and above, whose images have graced the annual calendar of the California Academy of Sciences for many years. And only Foster would have had a fish named after him, *Chromis bami*: a damselfish from one of the Pitcairn Islands in the Pacific Ocean, renowned for its pugnacious qualities.

His e-mails often ended "sent from outer space," where he probably now resides, watching over us with a twinkle in his eye.

Foster joined the board in 1985 and in recent years told me he would be a "lifer." He was a dedicated supporter of the museum and a devoted friend. He will be missed by so many, and his contributions will be felt for many years to come.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BRIAN COX SINQUA WALLS PERRY MATTFELD
WITH PATRICIA HEATON AND WES STUDI

MENDING THE LINE

For some, the path
starts on the river.



Scan for movie trailer
and tickets to the
August 12 screening in
Manchester, Vermont

NEW FOX ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS AN AUTUMN ENTERTAINMENT CKM ENTERTAINMENT AUGUST POINT PRODUCTION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH STORM CASTLE CREATIVE AND MEYERBAUER ENTERTAINMENT AND WHIPPOURWILL PRODUCTIONS
A JOSHUA CALDWELL FILM "MENDING THE LINE" BRIAN COX SINQUA WALLS PERRY MATTFELD CHRIS CALUST WITH PATRICIA HEATON AND WES STUDI
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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARK COMORA BRIAN COX SINQUA WALLS PRODUCED BY KELLY MCKENROY CO-PRODUCED BY SCOTT MACLEOD PRODUCED BY CARL EFFENSON PRODUCED BY STEPHEN CAMELIO JOSHUA CALDWELL
CASTING BY JESSICA L. HARRIS COSTUME DESIGNER JESSICA L. HARRIS MUSIC BY JESSICA L. HARRIS
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JUNE 9

ONLY IN THEATERS

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