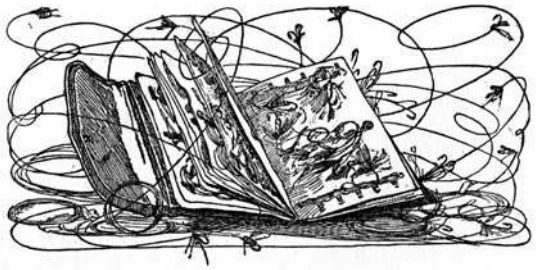
The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

FALL 2023 VOLUME 49 NUMBER 4

Lines of Connection



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

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail runs through my town. The trail—a skinny Vermont state park—stretches almost 20 miles in two sections briefly separated by a dip into New York state. My husband and I enjoy four seasons out there, walking, biking, birding, cross-country skiing. Most of our houseguests end up spending time on it, too.

This was the case a few weeks ago when Deb and Mark came to visit. We ran into other friends on the rail trail, who had in common with our guests both university employment and a love for the BBC Four comedy *Detectorists*. Soon after, we encountered a serious bikepacker, who stopped to chat with us. We don't usually see bikers laden with camping equipment on the trail. He was participating in the Vermont Super 8 Grand Depart, a self-supported ride that starts and ends in Montpelier. Riders sign up for one of three courses: the south lobe (375 miles), the north lobe (280), or the full figure-8 (655). I think our guy was attempting the south lobe.

But as we continued to talk, more personal facts were revealed, and it turned out that Deb and Mark and Super8er all lived in the same New York town three hours away and that Mark and Super8er's wife had worked at the same university and knew each other. And here they all were, meeting on the D&H Rail Trail.

These coincidences happen to everyone, and I wonder (especially given my introversion) how many I miss. Fly fishers, if we stop to talk to one another, often discover mutual friends and few degrees of separation. Once we meet, we become a new connection.

For example, Richard K. Lodge met the author R. Palmer Baker Jr. on the Beaverkill, and the two enjoyed a brief correspondence before Baker's death. A decade later, their presumably completed story took an unexpected turn. "The Old Man and the Stream" begins on page 15.

Fifty-some years ago, David Gray-Clough made a life-changing connection. In "The Leather Shop Man" (page 12), he tells the tale of how he came into unlikely possession, at age sixteen, of a Hardy split-cane fly rod. Stories of kindnesses like this warm my heart.

As do kindnesses born of a critique. Robert DeMott, while acknowledging the amount of impressive gear in fly shops today, mourns the loss of the well-stocked book section, what he sees as "a depressing, though no doubt inevitable, sign of the times." He feels cheated when denied opportunity to browse physical copies, especially new titles, and rightfully notes that there are many gifted authors carrying on fly fishing's literary tradition "with fewer and fewer chances to be discovered by a wide audience in an immediate hands-on way." In "Angling Travels with a Fishful Prof" (page 19), DeMott kindly draws our attention to one of these important books: Michael K. Steinberg's *Searching for Home Waters*.

That I even have access to the aforementioned rail trail is the result of the decline in both slate quarry businesses and railway systems. R. W. Hafer has given a lot of thought to railroads and the connections they have provided. To the glee of some and the horror of others, early rail transport made fishing and outdoor tourism more accessible across the socio-economic spectrum. "This consequent increase in demand put tremendous strain on the limited supply of native fish populations," writes Hafer. "Unless fishing pressure could be constrained, math was not on the side of the fish." Railroads, a major part of the problem, were also one part of a potential solution: spreading species around the country by stocking hatchery fish. Read about "Railroads and Fish Culture in the United States" starting on page 2.

The museum is just now nearing the end of our busy season of public connection. Our kids clinics offered glimpses into the world of fly fishing. Our annual festival drew locals, tourists, serious anglers, and collectors. We sent an exhibit to Illinois. The Old Reel Collectors Association dropped by. And we honored Andy Mill with the 2023 Heritage Award. To find out more, just turn these pages.

Kathleen Achor
Editor

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

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

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

FALL 2023 VOLUME 49 NUMBER 4

ON THE COVER: *In the late 1800s, fish were delivered and distributed by the U.S. Fish Commission to government and private individuals for stocking in local waters. Recipients would meet the commission's fish messengers at a local train depot to pick up their orders. National Archives 22-FFB-1001.*

The American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) is published four times a year by the museum at P.O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Publication dates are winter, spring, summer, and fall. Membership dues include the cost of the journal ($50) and are tax deductible as provided for by law. Membership rates are listed in the back of each issue. All letters, manuscripts, photographs, and materials intended for publication in the journal should be sent to the museum. The museum and journal are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, drawings, photographic material, or memorabilia. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless postage is provided. Contributions to *The American Fly Fisher* are to be considered gratuitous and the property of the museum unless otherwise requested by the contributor. Periodical postage paid at Manchester, Vermont 05254; Manchester, Vermont 05255; and additional offices (USPS 057410). *The American Fly Fisher* (ISSN 0884-3562) EMAIL: amff@amff.org WEBSITE: www.amff.org PHONE: 802-362-3300

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The American Fly Fisher
P.O. Box 42
Manchester, Vermont 05254

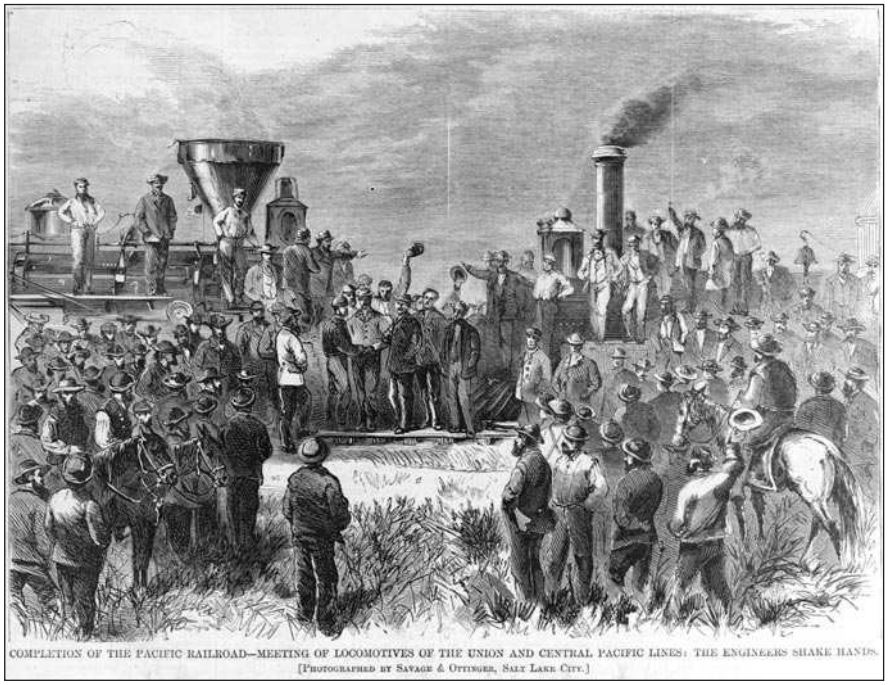
Railroads and Fish Culture in the United States

by R. W. Hafer

Railroads were the disruptors of their day. After the Civil War, they brought about a revolution in transportation, shipping "goods, people, and natural resources much faster than had been possible in previous eras of human history."[1] *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* asserted in 1877 that "there is not a single occupation or interest which [the railroad] has not radically affected."[2] Instrumental as they were in the rapid economic development of the United States, progress came with a cost: no one, then or now, would disagree with the statement that railroads, like many other industries in the so-called Gilded Age, often operated with little thought to their environmental consequences.

This transformation of travel had a dramatic influence on how we lived. Trips from increasingly crowded, noisy, and polluted cities to the countryside became more commonplace to increasing numbers of people across the socio-economic spectrum. Railroads thus helped usher in a time when more and more folks—men *and* women—discovered the outdoors and outdoor sports, especially fishing.[3] Once the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, dramatically lowering the cost of long-distance travel, railroads allowed "western anglers to connect with their peers in the eastern United States . . . while shuttling tourists west to find nature in the Rockies."[4] Instead of just reading about fishing in the West or in the fabled streams of the East, anglers throughout the country now could actually enjoy the experience themselves.[5]

Fred Mather, a noted fish culturist of his time, suggested at the 1896 meeting of the American Fisheries Society that "the continual expansion of railroads has been an important factor in stimulating fish culture," so much so that "it is worth considering."[6] The commercial shipping of fish, especially shad, to markets beyond the East Coast by railroad affected both the availability of fresh fish and their prices across the United States. This article explores the instrumental role of railroads in enabling fish commissions, at the federal and state levels, to spread different species around the country—an undertaking aimed at offsetting the decline in the nation's fish population and promoting sport fishing.

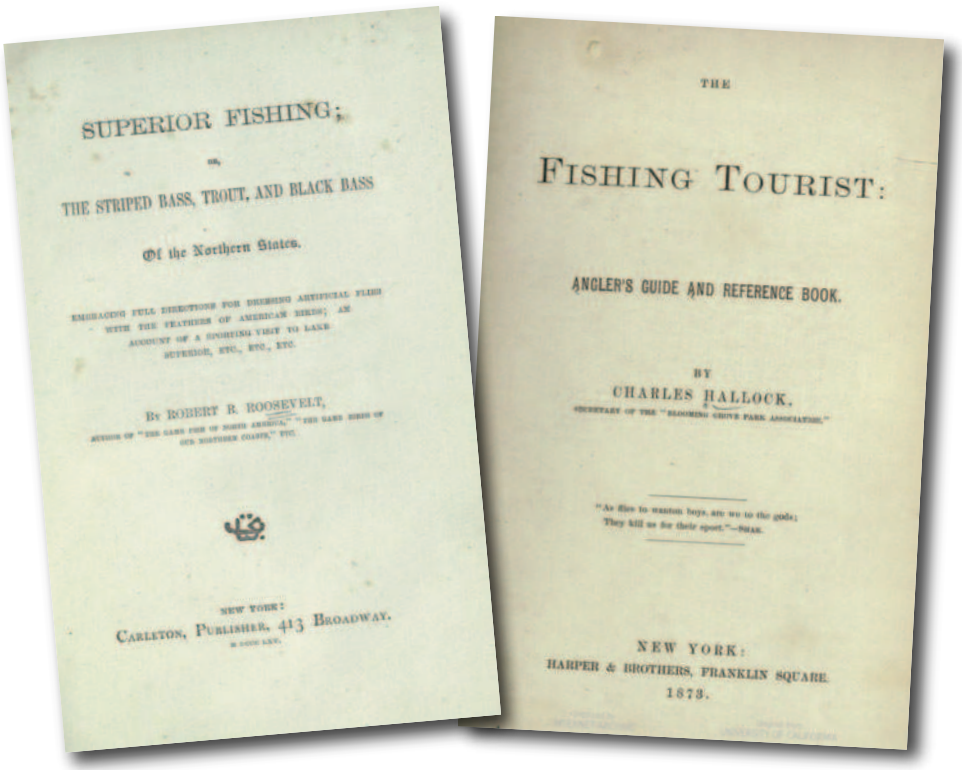


"Completion of the Pacific Railroad—meeting of locomotives of the Union and Central Pacific lines: the engineers shake hands (Photographed by Savage & Ottinger, Salt Lake City)." Harper's Weekly, *5 June 1869, 356. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-116354.*

Did Railroads Destroy the "Good Old Days"?

Before 1850, railroads in the United States served a limited geographic area. That changed dramatically following the Civil War. Between 1850 and 1880, the miles of railroad track increased more than ten-fold, to an estimated 93,000 miles. In the next decade, that figure jumped to 193,000 miles. Not surprisingly, there was a significant expansion in the use of railroads. The number of freight cars went from 30,000 in 1850 to more than 1.3 million by 1900; the number of passenger cars rose to 34,000 from 3,000 over the second half of the 1800s.[7]

The railroad system covered an increasingly broad swath of the country, moving a growing population and more freight. With the meeting up of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Promontory Point in Utah in May 1869, America's first transcontinental railroad allowed residents of the already crowded confines of cities east of Omaha to explore the wide-open spaces of the West. The growing web of railroad tracks in states between the coasts also offered an increasingly cheap and convenient method for a growing legion of outdoor enthusiasts to visit once-inaccessible fishing and hunting grounds.


SUPERIOR FISHING;

THE STRIPED BASS, TROUT, AND BLACK BASS

Of the Northern States.

By ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT,

NEW YORK:
CARLETON, PUBLISHER, 413 BROADWAY.

THE

FISHING TOURIST:

ANGLER'S GUIDE AND REFERENCE BOOK.

BY
CHARLES HALLOCK,

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1873.

Title pages of Robert Barnwell Roosevelt's Superior Fishing; or, The Striped Bass, Trout, and Black Bass of the Northern States *(New York: Carleton, Publisher, 1865) and Charles Hallock's* The Fishing Tourist *(New York: Harper Brothers, 1873).*

The relationship between improved accessibility, better riding conditions, and sheer increase in the number of people getting to the outdoors did not go unnoticed by contemporary anglers and conservationists, many of whom, even as early as the 1860s, waxed nostalgic for the "good old days."[8] One oft-cited defender of the old guard is Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, who, like his more famous nephew Theodore, was influential in political and social circles. And like his nephew, in his day Barnwell Roosevelt was well known for his writings about the outdoors and the sporting life.[9] In his popular book *Superior Fishing*, Roosevelt's disdain for the calamity the railroads unleashed is clear.

> When the Erie Railroad was still incomplete, and the tide of explorers had just commenced to penetrate beyond Goshen, and only occasional stragglers reached the land of promise and performance beyond Monticello; the swamps were alive with woodcock and the streams with trout. *But as the railroad advanced and gave improved facility of travel, so-called sportsmen poured over the country in myriads, following up every rivulet and ranging every swamp, killing without mercy thousands of trout and hundreds of birds, boasting of their baskets crowded to overflowing, and counting a day's sport by the hundred; till Bashe's Kill, where the pearly-sided fish once dwelt abundantly, was empty, and the broad Mongaup, the wild Callicoon, and even the joyous Beaver Kill, with its innumerable tributaries, were exhausted.*[10] (emphasis mine)

Roosevelt and others placed most of the blame for fished-out streams on pothunters: commercial fishermen who supplied the seemingly insatiable demand for fish and seafood by major East Coast markets using any means necessary, even dynamiting streams to increase their harvest. Railroads made such incursions to once-pristine areas possible and therefore were a target of Roosevelt's disdain. Railroads also were blamed for providing the unrefined masses—those who did not fit Roosevelt's view of what it meant to be a true sportsman—with easier access to the fishing locations that once were the exclusive purview of the well-to-do. What threatened the "true" sportsmen and conservationists of the day was not the loss of exclusive access to prime fishing waters, "but rather the whole, multifaceted trend toward commercialism and Philistinism that was accompanying the rapid industrialization of American Society."[11]

Railroads thus helped to break down the class structures of what defined the early days of sports fishing. The old guard and their views on the ethos of fishing were under assault: the fragmentation of class privilege was finding its way into fishing, and they blamed railroads for this change.[12]

There are numerous examples of such pre-railroad nostalgia. In an article on how to prevent contracting malaria while fishing the Susquehanna River, one writer took his shot at railroads, observing that "one of the most beautiful trout streams in our grand old State is about to become the prey of the spoiler. It is in contemplation to run a railroad from Tunkhannock into the virgin forest along Bowman's Creek. . . . I do not look with complacency upon the attempt to despoil it."[13] The Reverend William H. H. Murray laments in 1876 that with the influx of anglers into the Adirondacks, "the trout are entirely gone, practically so."[14] What is ironic is the fact that Murray's own book, *Adventures in the Wilderness* (1869), often is credited for making the Adirondacks a popular tourist destination. By the early 1870s, new train lines could take anglers—many of whom ventured forth from New York City—to within 10 miles of the headwaters of the famous Rondout, Neversink, Esopus, Willowemoc, and Beaverkill Rivers. "From that year [1872] forward," writes Catskill authority Austin M. Francis, "Catskill trout fishing began to change radically."[15] And by "change," Francis meant for the worse.

Charles Hallock, another author who often wrote of travel and outdoor adventure, gives us a look at what life on Long Island was like "in those earlier days of undeveloped locomotion."[16] His bucolic depiction of abundant fishing opportunities before improved accessibility via train, like other writings of the day, sends an

ironic message, however. Even though his nostalgic wish is that rail travel had not intervened, his works provide details on how to get there; for example, which ferry service connects to which railroad that would take the outdoorsman to the desired destination, depending on whether one was interested in fishing or hunting.

Before trains invaded the region, "it took a really hardy and determined soul to go [from New York City] by steamer up the Hudson and by stagecoach over the old turnpike roads into the mountains."[17] Railroads opened regions of the country that were known for their trout fishing, at that time considered by sport anglers near the apex of the game-fish pyramid. Eastern urbanites (and, in short order, those from "western" cities like Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, and St. Louis) fanned out into the countryside, "embrac[ing] improvements in travel technology as eagerly as we seem to embrace every other new thing that comes along."[18] This consequent increase in demand put tremendous strain on the limited supply of native fish populations. Unless fishing pressure could be constrained, math was not on the side of the fish. Fred Mather and other fish culturists recognized this early on, stating that "the extension of railroads will always drain the fisheries, which are limited in production, especially in the fresh waters."[19] Some accepted the fait accompli, one writer lamenting that "the brook trout must go," adding "that in this utilitarian age its days are numbered and its fate is irrevocably sealed."[20]

It would be remiss of me not to recognize that railroads were part of the turbulent, dirty, and often reckless industrialization of America. Because railroads often used rivers to guide the location of track, the proximity of construction sometimes led to disaster. Building track often led to silt and soil washing into nearby streams, either killing the resident fish population or, as occurred in the West, inhibiting salmon runs.[21] But the irony is that even though expansion of railroads sometimes damaged the landscape and facilitated the public's assault on the nation's stock of fish, railroads would provide the only realistic means by which fish culturists and fish commissions could attempt to resolve the problem of overfishing. Indeed, only with the cooperation of railroads (and remember, these were private companies) could fish commissions and conservationists deploy what was then considered to be the only viable solution to the problem of dwindling fish stocks. That approach—the "scientific" approach—was to increase the supply of fish to meet both sport and commercial demand through a national, government-led program. Fish would be raised in an expanding network of hatcheries, then stocked in rivers, streams, and lakes throughout the country. As one official suggested, it was "cheaper to make fish so plenty by artificial means, that every fisherman may take all he can catch, than to enforce a code of protection laws."[22] To do this, it would be necessary to rely on the railroads.

Managing Fish by Rail

Robert Roosevelt's 1872 speech to the U.S. House of Representatives offers a glimpse into the faith by many that the science of the nascent fish culture movement—the use of emerging technologies for breeding, rearing, and stocking various species of fish in hatchery conditions—was the most practicable solution to the problem of a declining fish population.

> Their [fish] reproductive power can only maintain a certain equilibrium; incline that toward destruction, and the entire class will quickly disappear. Treat them like wild animals, and they will inevitably be exterminated; domesticate them, as it were, encourage their growth by putting them under healthful influences, protect them from unreasonable disturbance, let them breed in peace, guard the young from injury, assist them by artificial aid, select the best varieties for appropriate waters, and we will soon augment the supply as greatly as we do with either land animals or vegetables.[23]

The newly formed American Fish Culturists Association, not too surprisingly, endorsed this approach. Its members, most of the influential fish culturists of the day (many of whom also owned hatcheries), believed that the government, especially the federal government, should embrace advances in fish culture to resolve the problem of the country's dwindling fish population, especially for "exotic" fish like salmon and trout.[24] If individuals would not restrain their behavior or follow existing game laws, a science-based fish-management policy seemed the only reasonable solution.

A major victory for the association and the fish culture movement was the passage of *Joint Resolution for the Protection and Preservation of the Food Fishes of the Coast of the United States*, or more simply Joint Resolution No. 22. Signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant in early 1871, the resolution created the first U.S. Fish Commission, which would be headed by Spencer Fullerton Baird.[25] It also put the U.S. government squarely into the business of managing—and manipulating—the nation's fish population.

Early into the commission's new role as manager of the nation's fish stock, techniques on how to effectively ship fish eggs and fry long distances were being developed. Railroads stood squarely at the center of this activity.[26] In the early 1870s, two experiments that would shape the future of the commission's fish management program—and the role of railroads—were conducted: one was Livingston Stone's shipping of fertilized salmon eggs from Northern California to hatcheries east of the Mississippi River; the other was Seth Green's transport of shad fry from the East Coast to the West Coast. Obviously, both were possible only because the recent (1869) completion of the transcontinental railroad linked both coasts and sharply reduced travel time and transportation costs.

Livingston Stone worked for the U.S. Fish Commission, his job being collecting and fertilizing salmon eggs taken from spawning salmon in the McCloud River in Northern California for shipment to hatcheries in the East.[27] Beginning in 1872, Stone annually shipped crates containing millions of impregnated salmon eggs eastward. The following description, although it is for a trip made in 1879, captures how it worked:

> [T]he eggs for distribution in the Eastern States and for shipment to Europe were sent from Redding [California] in a refrigerator car, obtained from the Central Pacific Railroad. Mr. Fred Mather, one of the assistants of the Commission, having been instructed to meet the car on its arrival in Chicago, for the purpose of overhauling the eggs and re-icing and reshipping in accordance with the schedule of distribution given him, did so at 6:30 p.m. on the 11th of October.[28]

The eggs then were parceled out in smaller lots and sent, usually by rail, to consignees, mostly federal or state hatcheries, for hatching and stocking by federal and state fish commissions, or sent to individuals who acted as commission surrogates.

The basic idea behind this grand experiment was to stock Pacific salmon in East Coast rivers to replenish the dwindling Atlantic salmon population. In addition, salmon would be planted in rivers and streams in interior states to try to create new spawning runs to the Gulf of Mexico. Pacific salmon fry hatched from these eggs were planted in, for example, tributaries of the Missouri River in Missouri with the idea that eventually they would grow, travel to the Missouri River, thence to the Mississippi River, and finally to the Gulf of Mexico, only to return within a few years to their "birthplace." If successful—and, to state

the obvious, it was not—a new and desirable species of fish would be available to the angler (those who fished for sport and those who sought to put protein on the table) and the burgeoning commercial market across a broad geographic area.[29] Ironically, even though railroads were viewed by many as a (the?) major perpetrator of the decline of fish populations, they provided the only means by which the necessary long-distance transfer of Pacific salmon was possible.

Shipping fish eggs was one thing: shipping live fish thousands of miles was uncharted territory. Railroads again provided the only avenue to success. One of the earliest such long-distance experiments was conducted by Seth Green in 1871.[30] Green and an assistant accompanied four standard 10-gallon milk cans—the preferred mode of transporting fry—filled with 10,000 Eastern shad fry from Albany, New York, to Sacramento, California. It took Green and his cargo eight days to cross the country, a trip that required many train changes and constant oversight of the cans and their occupants (replenishing the water, removing dead fry, constant checks and adjustment of water temperature, etc.). Within a few days after their arrival, Green deposited the shad into the Sacramento River, thus marking the first of many stockings to expand the range of this Eastern food fish into Western waters.[31]

Livingston Stone made the second such trip in 1874, taking a shipment of eight milk cans containing 40,000 shad from Castleton-on-Hudson, New York, to Sacramento. Stone writes that the effort required to care for the fry amounted to "numerous changes of cars and transfers of our freight from one train to another, often in the greatest confusion and hurry." Dealing with railroads was not always smooth, either, "with trunks flying about our heads and feet, and railroad-employees pushing and thrusting us and our cans out of their way." With an obligation to "take on water and even to change the water in the cans, it seemed as if some disaster must certainly come—either that the fish would be injured, or that the cans would be upset, or left behind, or that some of us would be left, or enter the wrong train, or something of the sort happen."[32] Protecting their cargo obviously took precedence over personal comfort. Surmounting these tribulations, one week later Stone was able to successfully release his consignment of shad into the Sacramento River.

The point is that even though it was not easy, railroads proved their worth to the fish commission and to fish culturists as the only feasible way to ship fish eggs and/or fry long distances. Railroads allowed the federal fish commission (and its state counterparts) to increase not only the geographical distribution of fish—Eastern fish to the West and vice versa—but also increased the variety of fish they could transplant. This expanded the commission's influence over the composition of the nation's fish stock—and increased their political capital—because now they could stock many different species of fish into nonnative waters. Sometimes the experiment worked: Eastern shad in the West, rainbow trout from northern California, and carp to almost every state in the country. Sometimes it failed miserably: Pacific salmon sent from California never successfully survived in their new homes. Nevertheless, railroads gave fish culturists and government officials the ability to experiment with managing fish populations like they were domestic livestock. After all, it was a stated goal of the Joint Resolution to increase the availability of fish as a protein source for the country's growing population.

Stephanie Raine / USFWS

A fish transport milk can at the visitor's center of the Leadville Fish Hatchery in Leadville, Colorado. According to the object label, this can "was first used in Yellowstone National Park and then was used at Saratoga National Fish Hatchery in Wyoming."

"This Generous Charity"

Transporting fish eggs and fry required significant coordination between the fish commission, the railroads, and the applicants if orders of fish, always sent in milk cans, were to be delivered on a timely basis. The standard procedure was for fish messengers—commission employees who traveled with the shipments—to telegraph applicants an estimated time of arrival at some nearby train stop where their orders could be picked up. Sounds simple, except for the fact that railroads used a confusing set of local time zones. As one train schedule put it, "The inconvenience of such a system, if system it can be called, must be

apparent to all, but is most annoying to persons [who are] strangers to the fact. From this cause many miscalculations and misconnections have arisen, which not infrequently have been serious consequences to individuals."[33]

As Stone described it, successfully filling orders must have been chaotic at times as the fish messengers wrangled heavy milk cans filled with water and fry from train to train at stations along their route. When the train arrived at the appointed station, fry were transferred from the commission's milk cans into whatever containers the applicant brought. Sometimes applicants were allowed to use the commission's fish cans, but only if they ensured their return to the depot. As part of its service, railroads usually took it upon themselves to see that the cans got back to the commission. But missed connections were bound to occur. Sometimes even punctual applicants "received only a 'forced to plant en route' telegram; if fish look distressed, or started dying, [fish messengers] or railroad employees would dump the cans of fish in the nearest body of water along the tracks."[34]

Despite potential complications, railroads were explicit in how they would help the commission meet its objectives. The detailed instructions handed down from the superintendent of several Maryland rail lines to station masters are illustrative.

> Several shipments of live fish will be made by the Commissioner of Fisheries to parties in the neighborhood of your station. In delivering them to the consignee, you will in no instance issue the vessels in which the fish are sent. The parties receiving the fish must provide vessels for their removal to the ponds.
>
> A blank receipt will be forwarded with each shipment, and you are required to have the same filled up and signed by the consignee, and return the receipt to the Commissioner of Fisheries.
>
> Should the fish not be promptly called for, you are requested by the Commissioner to change the water in the cans once or twice a day, or whenever the fish show signs of distress by coming up and remaining at the top of the water. If the fish are not delivered within 5 days after their arrival, you will report the fact to this office and await instructions. After delivering the fish return the empty cans as soon as possible to this office, regularly way-billed FREE.[35]

There are other examples, but you get the idea.[36] Railroads were active partners with the fish commission in its grand experiment to maintain, replenish, and diversify the nation's fish stock.

This cooperation between the railroads and the fish commission undoubtedly enhanced the public standing of both parties. Commissioner Baird regularly praised the railroads for their assistance in his annual commissioner's report. In the 1881 report, to use one example, Baird offers a hearty acknowledgment to "those railroads that have accorded the facilities for carrying fish in baggage cars and for stopping trains at bridges so as to deposit the young fish."[37] And he let the public and politicians know which railroad in which state was providing assistance: Baird's 1881 report lists 127 railroads that had offered their services to the commission during the year, a list that runs five pages. It was a win-win situation: Baird demonstrated public support for commission activities, and railroads could tout their civic-mindedness.

State fish commissions that had joined the federal program to stock and relocate fish also relied on railroads to transport fish. They, too, publicized their gratitude to railroads. In one of its biannual reports, the Missouri Fish Commission states that "all the railroad companies in Missouri, without exception, when called upon, have given us free transportation" for the state's fish messengers and their milk cans. "This generous charity," the report continues, "has enabled us to begin stocking waters with valuable fish. Without this aid, we could have done nothing in this direction."[38] The importance of railroads could not have been stated any more succinctly.

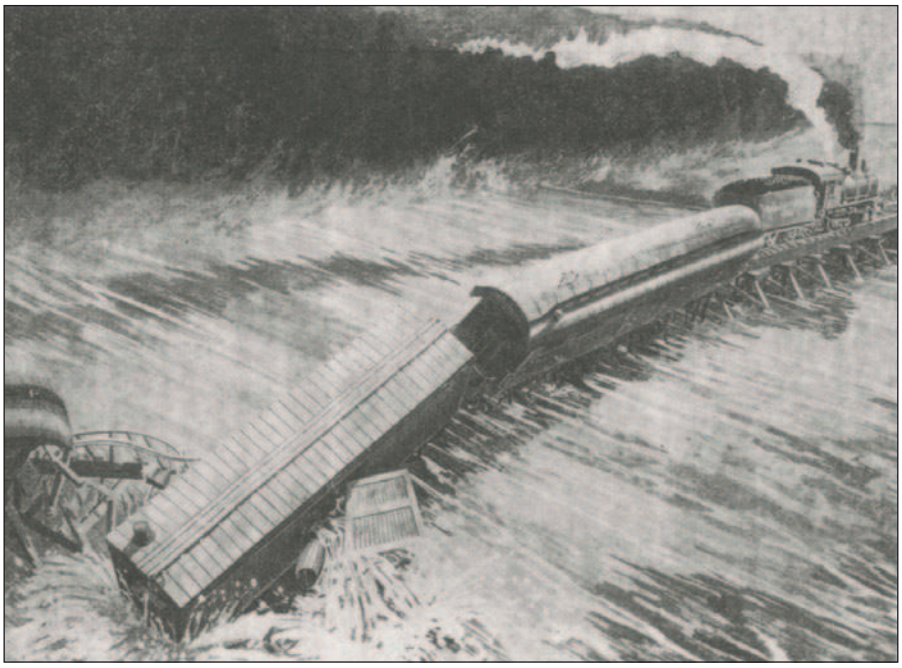
The Fish Car

Federal and state fish commissions relied on railroads to deliver fish messengers and their milk cans full of fry. As important as this delivery method was and would continue to be into the next century, it soon became obvious that if this piscatorial experiment was going to succeed at the scale thought necessary, an improvement in fish transport technology was needed. If railroads had thus far been influential in helping the commissions transplant fish, it increased dramatically with the introduction of the so-called fish car.

The first fish car was a modified fruit car purchased by the California Fish Commission from the Central Pacific Railroad. Because a fruit car traveled at passenger-train speed, it could make quicker trips than the slower freight trains. The car was fitted to transport many milk cans full of fry. To make replenishing water easier, the car held a water tank with a capacity of about 1,250 gallons. It had a large ice container, ice being needed, depending on the season, to control water temperature in the cans. The car also had basic berths for the crew of fish messengers, usually three or four men. This fish car was a major innovation, allowing the commission to transport many more than the usual five or six cans of fry to be deposited.

The first fish car took its one and only voyage in 1873. Livingston Stone brought the car east from California to his home-

Fish were delivered and distributed by the U.S. Fish Commission to government and private individuals for stocking in local waters. Recipients, like these above, would meet the commission's fish messengers at a local train depot to pick up their orders. National Archives 22-FFB-1001.



An artist's rendition of the wreck of the fish car outside Omaha, Nebraska, in 1873. Source: David J. Jones, "A History of Nebraska's Fishery Resources," Nebraska Games and Parks Commission Publications *31 (1963), 21. Used with permission from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.*

town of Charleston, New Hampshire. There it was loaded with cans of varied species of fish; some cans even contained lobsters and oysters. Some of this menagerie was destined to be deposited in inland western waters, others in rivers leading to the Pacific Ocean. After several days of travel, the car made it to Omaha, Nebraska, the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad. Unfortunately, that is as far west as it got. On Sunday, June 8, soon after Stone and his crew had settled in after departing from Omaha around noon, the train crashed through a trestle over the flooding Elkhorn River about 30 miles to the west. The crash not only caused loss of human life, but the "Celebrated California Aquarium Car" and its entire contents were lost.[39]

For the next few years, the commission again relied on shipping fish via milk cans accompanied by fish messengers on commercial railroads. Although practical, this approach simply was inadequate to transport large numbers of fish over long distances, which was necessary if the commission's experiment was to succeed. Baird argued in his 1881 *Report* that "where we can introduce a car-load of fish instead of a tenth or twentieth of that quantity, our chances of success in stocking waters are probably increased far beyond the difference in the ratio."[40] That year the commission took a major step forward, purchasing its own fish car.

The U.S. Fish Commission's Fish Car No. 1 began life as a baggage car owned by the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad. It was retrofitted to hold enough milk cans to ship one to two *million* fish and provide living accommodations for a crew of five. The original car also was modified so that it could travel with faster passenger trains to avoid the delays often associated with freight trains. Car No. 1's trial run took place in June 1881 with a load of 1,150,000 fish, most likely shad, being sent from the hatchery at Havre de Grace in Maryland to locations near the Kennebec and Mattawamkeag Rivers in Maine. But it wasn't until early January 1882 that the fish car's real potential was demonstrated.

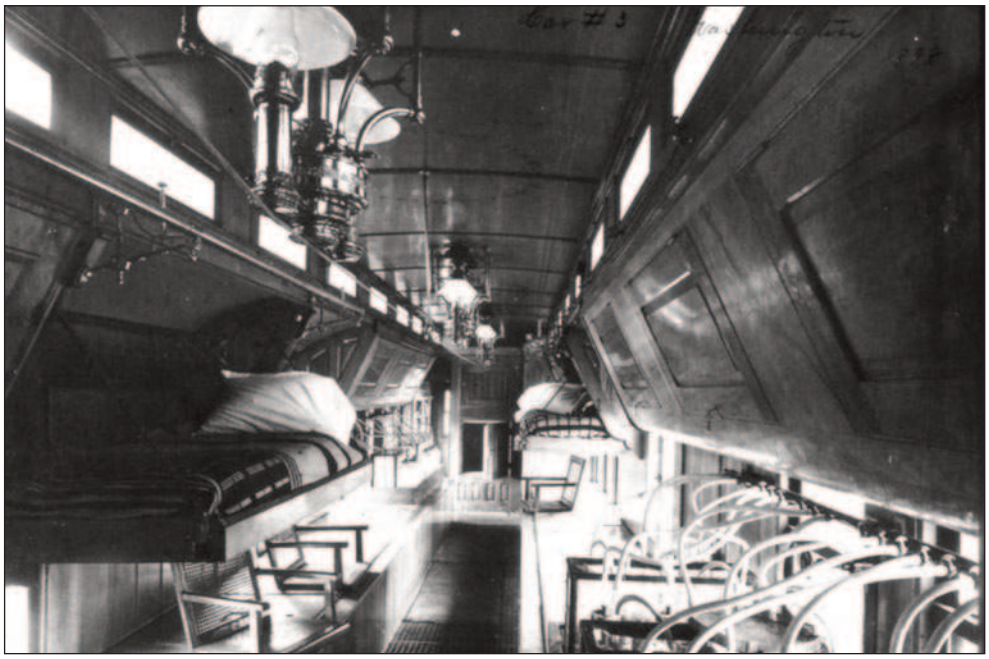
While the commission was experimenting with sending salmon, shad, and trout from coast to coast and points in between, it also hatched an idea that would become a national sensation: the introduction of German carp into American waters. During the first year in which carp were distributed, 1876, the commission shipped only 11,000 fry to applicants. Within a few short years, introducing carp far and wide into American waters became all the rage. The commission was overwhelmed by the number of requests.

In keeping with the principles of the Joint Resolution—including increasing the fish population as a way to provide a protein source for the populace—carp fit the bill perfectly. The fecund and hardy carp was touted as a potential major food source. Politicians seized on an opportunity to garner public support and votes; the commission, ever vigilant of its budgetary needs, acted to keep the politicians content.[41] There were so many applications that the commission faced the logistical problem of how to ship the carp in the most effective way over a wide geographical range.[42] Because meeting the surging demand for carp severely strained the commission's ability to supply it using conventional means, the fish car offered the only practical solution.

Marshall McDonald of the U.S. Fish Commission developed the plan by which carp would be distributed using the commission's fish car. The idea was that once it had depleted its initial hold of carp along the route, the fish car would be restocked with carp fry from milk cans sent ahead, along with messengers, by express rail.[43] Before the fish car's publicized departure, details of the route were determined and notifications sent to applicants about where and when they could collect their carp. This ambitious scheme could work only with the assistance of numerous railroads helping the commission coordinate this impressive undertaking.

The car was loaded in Washington, D.C., and set out on the Pennsylvania Railroad for St. Louis, Missouri. Here distributions were made to applicants in Missouri and Iowa. From St. Louis the car took the Iron Mountain Line to Texarkana, Arkansas, and then made its way to numerous cities in Texas (Sherman, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, Laredo, and Houston). Distributions were made along this route. The astonishing fact is that while some applicants ordered and received thousands of fry, others acquired only a small number of carp. The data show—yes, the commission reported the name of each applicant along with the number of carp delivered—that no order, even those with fewer than fifty fish, was too small for the commission to fill. Increasing the fish population was the objective, but Baird, the local fish commissioners, and the local politicians in those states receiving carp distributions were not about to let such a public relations achievement pass them by.[44]

Once the trip was completed, the commission made sure to publicly express its gratitude to the private railroads involved. "The satisfactory issue of our work," McDonald writes in the commission's 1881 annual report, "is largely due to the liberal facilities accorded us by the various lines of railroad traversed. Anything in the way of supplies or service was unfailingly rendered. . . . From Saint Louis westward until our return to that point, free transportation . . . was granted



The interior of a fish car, showing berths for fish messengers. National Archives FFB-384.

on all lines of railroad traversed by us."[45] Thus began an era in which the railroads added the transport of fish using fish cars to its carrying milk cans of fry and their attendant fish messengers.

Given the success of the first fish car, in 1882 Fish Car No. 2 was built for the commission by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.[46] It was an improvement over its predecessor, able to carry as much as 20,000 pounds of fish and equipment at passenger train speed. The commission quickly invested in additional fish cars, each with improved capabilities.[47] Fish Car No. 3 featured a design change by U.S. Fish Commission Superintendent Frank Clark. Clark's idea was to build a fish car for carrying fertilized eggs that would be hatched en route, producing fry for deposit at its destination.[48] "Nothing of the kind has ever been undertaken," extolled the *Chicago Tribune*, adding that "it will result in a great saving of the time now lost in returning to the hatcheries for fresh supplies."[49]

Newer cars added new innovations.[50] The fish car that joined the fleet in 1893 was fitted out with cedar tanks and air pumps that kept the fish pails aerated. This car allowed attendants to transport 150 10-gallon cans containing up to 15,000 3-inch fish (not fry). Two more cars were added by 1900, and by 1929, when the last fish car entered the fleet—a massive 10-ton car measuring 81 feet—the commission had ten fish cars criss-crossing the country, visiting every state and racking up hundreds of thousands of miles in the process. And all the while railroads provided this use of their lines to the commission for free or at deeply discounted rates.

States Join the Club

Many state fish commissions acquired fish cars to move fish within their borders. Missouri's fish commissioners lobbied the state legislature for a fish car in 1882, declaring that it would allow them to economically distribute "live fish by the many thousands in a lively and healthy condition, instead of a few hundred at a time in a sickly condition and at undue expense, by tubs and cans, as we are now compelled to do."[51] No doubt using a similar argument, other states joined the club of fish-car owners. To provide an idea of which states participated in this venture, Table 1 provides a list of states and when they purchased their first fish car. Interestingly, the Missouri State Fish Commission appears to be the first to have done so. Unfortunately, their prized car was destroyed by fire only a year into its use.[52]

This development means that not only were railroads subsidizing the federal commission with reduced rates for mes-

Table 1
State Fish Cars

State	Year Built	Name
Iowa State Fish and Game Commission	1897*	Hawkeye
Missouri State Fish Commission	1882	NA
	1885	Walton
Nebraska Fish Commission	1889	Antelope
New York Fisheries, Game and Forest Commission	1891	Adirondack
Ohio Fish Commission	1891*	Buckeye No. 1
Pennsylvania Fish Commission	1892	Susquehanna
Wisconsin Fish Commission	1893	Badger No. 1

NA: not available
*These years represent the first mention of the car.
Source: William D. Middleton, "First Class for Fish," *Railroad History* 192 (Spring-Summer 2005), 56–63.

sengers and for hauling its fish cars thousands of miles, but also similar services were being afforded state commissions.

Miles and Miles of Traveling Fish

Just how many miles of free or reduced-cost transport are we talking about? Almost every *Commissioner's Report of the U.S. Fish Commission* after 1881 includes, along with the thanks of the commissioner, a tabulation of the rail miles traveled by its fish cars and fish messengers. Also included is a separate list of the railroads used by the commission.[53]

To give some perspective on the scope of the commission's use of messengers and fish cars—and the railroad's assistance—Table 2 provides a summary of these figures for select years between 1882 and 1900. Included in the table are data on the number of fish cars operated by the commission, total miles traveled by these cars, how many of these miles were traveled free of charge, and the total fish messenger miles, most of which also were provided for free by railroads.

Table 2
U.S. Fish Commission Summary of Fish Car and Messenger Miles, Selected Years: 1882–1900

Year	Number of Cars	Total Miles	Free Miles	Messenger Miles
1882	2	34,502	NA	NA
1884	2	46,258	21,865	NA
1889–90	3	75,312	41,330	50,009
1895	4	93,377	65,189	75,384
1900	5	101,796	42,746	157,297

NA: not available
Sources:
1882: *Report of the Commissioner for 1882*, 919.
1884: *Report of the Commissioner for 1884*, LXXI–LXXII.
1889–90: *Report of the Commissioner for 1889–91*, 60.
1895: *Report of the Commissioner for 1895*, 51.
1900: *Report of the Commissioner for 1900*, 16.

As reported, the commission's first two fish cars were traveling more than 46,000 miles by 1884, a 34 percent increase compared with only two years earlier. To put this into context, in 1884 these two fish cars were traveling a distance slightly less than two times around the Earth distributing fish around the country. Because the number of federal fish hatcheries, located mostly east of the Mississippi River, had increased to about a dozen by this time, the fish cars allowed the commission to take hatchery-raised fish—and fish much larger than fry—to an ever-increasing number of states. By the end of the 1880s, the commission's stocking activities had expanded to such an extent that its fish cars were logging more than 75,000 miles per year. With more cars added to the fleet, this increased to more than 100,000 miles per year by 1900. And remember that these figures are only for the federal fish cars; I have no data on the miles traveled by fish cars operated by state commissions, but it must have been significant.

The commissioner's reports acknowledged the individual railroads that provided their services for good reason. As you can see in column four of Table 2, the free miles traveled by federal fish cars often amounted to more than half of the total miles. And even though the commission increasingly relied on its fish cars to achieve its stocking objectives, the miles traveled by federal fish messengers on various lines also expanded significantly over time. Notice that by 1890, messengers traveled (usually for free) some 50,000 miles, a distance that tripled by 1900. These numbers reveal not only the widening scope of the fish commissions' activities, but also the crucial supporting role played by the railroad companies across the country.

New York's Adirondack. From R. E. Gooding, New York State Conservation Commission Bureau of Fish Culture. Extract from the Fourth Annual Report, New York State Conservation Commission*, 1914. Courtesy of the Freshwater and Marine Image Bank.*

Beginning in the 1880s and for the next forty years, railroads were the dominant mode used by the U.S. Fish Commission and its state counterparts to transport fish and other aquatic life from coast to coast and everywhere in between. But new technologies replace old, and by the late 1920s, alternative means of transporting fish were coming into use. In 1928 an airplane was used to ship brook and rainbow trout from Northville, Michigan, to Dayton, Ohio. More damaging to the reign of the fish car was the truck. Trucks with special water tanks could carry as many fish as fish cars, were less costly to operate, and were able to provide more accessible service across the nation's expanding roadways from the many federal hatcheries that now dotted the landscape. After a long and highly productive run, the fish car era came to an end in the 1940s when the last car, No. 10, was retired in 1947.[54]

Sensible or Reckless?

Railroads in the United States were a boon to travel, transport, and economic growth in the second half of the nineteenth century. Railroads also provided the nascent U.S. Fish Commission and their state counterparts the technological apparatus to achieve their goal of rebuilding and managing the nation's fish stock. Trains allowed for comparatively rapid transport of fish fry, and later larger fish could be taken to widespread locales for stocking. First carrying milk cans full of fry and later—with the advent of the fish car—thousands of larger hatchery-raised fish, railroads enabled the fish commissions to realize their goal of managing the nation's fish stock. Eastern shad and a variety of other species went west; salmon and trout from California headed east. In short order, rainbow trout and carp would find a home in nearly every state. And although it remains a topic of debate whether this meddling with the native fish population and its environs proved sensible or reckless, it is safe to say that fish culture as it evolved in the United States simply would not have been possible were it not for railroads.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank, without implicating, Dan Brennan, Jen Brown, Anders Halverson, Lynn Morrow, Mike Kruse, John Reiger, and Paul Schullery for comments and suggestions that have improved an earlier version of this paper.

Endnotes

1. Jen Corrine Brown, *Trout Culture: How Fly Fishing Forever Changed the Rocky Mountain West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 24.

2. Edward Howland, "A Railroad Study," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June–November 1877, vol. LV), 614–22, 614.

3. This was especially important for women during the Victorian era. As I have written elsewhere, "a consequence of boosting the number of people interested in and participating in the sport of fishing, railroads also drew an increasing number of women into the sport. During the late 1800s, women's involvement [in fishing] took place within the strict confines of what Victorian society deemed 'proper' behavior and attire." See R. W. Hafer, "Trains and Trout: Railroads and the Evolution of Sport Fishing in America," *Railroad History* 226 (Spring-Summer 2022), 10–23, 16.

4. Brown, *Trout Culture*, 24.

5. Residents in the middle of the country often read of hunting and fishing adventures in the East and the West. For some Missouri examples, "Fall Life in the Adirondacks: Deer Shooting and Trouting in the Great Forest," *Daily Missouri Republican* (25 October 1864), 1; "Hints for Male Tourists: Chiefly in Relation to Catching Trout," *St. Louis Republican* (11 July 1875), 4; and "A Day's Fishing in Devil's Gulch," *St. Joseph Daily Herald* (6 September 1891), 10, are representative. Except for those of means, being able to access such destinations, especially from the middle of the country, was almost unheard of until the expansion of the railroad system.

6. Fred Mather, "The Influence of Railroads on Fish Culture," *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* (January 1896, vol. 24, no. 1), 17–27, 17.

7. These figures come from John H. White Jr., "Technology and Operating Practice in the Nineteenth Century," in William D. Middleton, George Smerk, and Roberta L. Diehl, eds., *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 38. In addition to sheer increase in mileage and cars, numerous technological advances, such as more powerful locomotives pulling longer and heavier trains, improved couplers, and better brakes meant increased efficiencies and comfort in rail travel, along with lower costs to shippers and passengers alike.

8. Jen Corrine Brown argues that "with the intention of saving fish, leisure-class anglers hoped to control the fishing practices of others, but as territorial angling laws indicated, they often did so through the lens of race, class, gender, and national identity." Brown, *Trout Culture*, 40.

9. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, *Superior Fishing: or the Striped Bass, Trout, and Black Bass of the Northern States* (New York: Carleton, Publisher, 1865) was considered one of the most influential books on angling in the United States at the time.

10. Roosevelt, *Superior Fishing*, 185–86. The Erie Railroad began operations in 1851 under the name New York & Erie Railway Co. It ran from a depot just north of New York City to Dunkirk, a small town southwest of Buffalo. Touted as the "technological marvel of the age," the Erie went bankrupt in 1859. The reorganized version was eventually taken over by Jay Gould. See H. Roger Grant, "Erie Railroad," in William D. Middleton, George Smerk, and Roberta L. Diehl, eds., *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 433–34.

11. John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, 3rd edition (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001), 54.

12. Of course, exclusive fishing clubs springing up around the country sought to maintain exclusivity. For more on the role of clubs, see Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987), especially Chapter 12.

13. J.H.O., "The Upper Susquehanna—Malarial Hints," *The American Angler* (23 December 1884), 401–02.

14. Reverend William H. H. Murray, "Rod and Gun and American Sportsman," *American Sportsman* (7 October 1876, IX), 5, quoted in Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, 57.

15. Austin M. Francis, *Catskill Rivers: Birthplace of American Fly Fishing* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014), 25.

16. Charles Hallock, "Long Island: An 1873 Perspective," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 1993, vol. 19, no. 1), 21. This is an excerpt from Hallock's *The Fishing Tourist* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1873).

17. Francis, *Catskill Rivers*, 25.

18. Paul Schullery, *If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2008), 30.

19. Mather, "The Influence of Railroads on Fish Culture," 23.

20. J. N. Henshall, "Black Bass in Trout Waters," *Forest and Stream* (23 July 1886). Quoted in Anders Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish: How Rainbow Trout Beguiled America and Overran the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014), 14. This apparent acquiescence to the negative externalities of industrialization may seem deplorable to modern readers but at the time was considered by many a necessary cost if America was to achieve its true destiny as a major economic and social power. And although the achievements of the day were lauded, the consequences also became the targets of scorn and protest. For a look at this love-hate relationship between modernization and its costs, see Gib Prettyman, "Harper's 'Weekly' and the Spectacle of Industrialization," *American Periodicals* (2001, vol. 11), 24–48.

21. One example is Livingston Stone's ability to procure salmon eggs at a hatchery on the McCloud River in northern California. In the early 1880s, the Central Pacific Railroad Company was engaged in ongoing extension of the line north of Redding along the Little Sacramento River. Silt often muddied the river and inhibited the spawning run. Adding insult to injury, the ease of harvesting salmon during the spawning run to provide a readily available (and free) source of protein for the railroad's construction crews also affected the spawning runs. For a discussion of this episode, see, among others, R. W. Hafer, "How Rainbow Trout Came to Missouri (and Your State Too): Part II: The Great Experiment," *The American Fly Fisher* (Summer 2021, vol. 47, no. 3), 2–11.

22. This sentiment was made by George B. Goode, assistant director of the U.S. National Museum. George B. Goode, "The Status of the U.S. Fish Commission in 1884," *U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. Report of the Commissioner for 1884, Appendix E* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 1152. Goode's quote appears in Ronald M. Yoshiyama and Frank W. Fisher, "Long Time Past: Baird Station and the McCloud Wintu," *Fisheries* (2001, vol. 26, no. 3), 6–22.

23. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, *Fish Culture Compared in Importance with Agriculture: Speech of Hon. Robert B. Roosevelt of New York, in the House of Representatives, May 13, 1872* (Washington, D.C.: F. and J. Rives and Geo. A. Bailey, 1872), 14.

24. Because many members of the association were hatchery owners, the government's involvement in fish management was a way to bolster (and protect) their business interests.

Their pursuit of saving fish was not, therefore, completely altruistic. On this point, see Joel W. Hedgpeth, "Livingston Stone and Fish Culture in California," *California Fish and Game* (July 1941, vol. 47, no. 8), 1–22, especially fn. 4.

25. For more on the events surrounding the passage of the resolution and Baird's role, see Dean Conrad Allard Jr., *Spencer Fullerton Baird and the U.S. Fish Commission* (New York: Arno Press, 1978).

26. Fish culturists had used railroads to transport fish for some time. "Appendix II: Journeys of Live Fish and Eggs" in Livingston Stone, *Domesticated Trout: How to Breed and Grow Them* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873) provides tips and techniques of shipping fish relatively short distances by rail.

27. Stone's salmon operation and later trout-taking activities are much written about. See, among others, R. W. Hafer, "How Rainbow Trout Came to Missouri (and Your State Too): Part II: The Great Experiment" (note 21, above) and the articles cited therein.

28. Spencer Baird, "The Propagation of Food Fishes," *Report of the Commissioner for 1879, Part D* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), xxvii–li, xxviii.

29. The experiment included more than just salmon. Other major fish species transported around the country for stocking in nonnative waters were Eastern shad, brook trout, and rainbow trout, as well as carp, bullhead, tench, and many others. This expansion of the numbers of fish being stocked reflects an important aspect of the resolution: the government's commitment to increase the nation's stock of fish as a food source. This point was crucial to Congress's passage of the resolution, especially by representatives from interior states.

30. Seth Green was perhaps the most influential fish culturist of his time. His experiments with crossbreeding different cold-water species, his early work in conservation, and his work with the U.S. Fish Commission brought him national and international acclaim. See, among others, Sylvia R. Black, "Seth Green: Father of Fish Culture," *Rochester History* (July 1944, vol. vi, no. 3), 1–24, or Joel W. Hedgpeth, "Founders of Fish Culture," *The Progressive Fish-Culturist* (1941, vol. 5, no. 55), 11–14, for more on Green's life and influence.

31. For more, see, among others, Robert Behnke, "Livingston Stone, J. B. Campbell, and the Origins of Hatchery Rainbow Trout," *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 1990, vol. 16, no. 3), 20–22. In the ensuing years, shad were also transplanted to many other areas of the country with limited success.

32. Livingston Stone, "Report of Operations in California in 1873," *Report of the Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries for 1873–74 and 1874–75* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 377–427, 401.

33. Cited in Matthew W. White, "The Economics of Time Zones," unpublished manuscript, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, March 2005. As railroads expanded rapidly after the Civil War, they operated with myriad schedules, often based on mean local sun times. For example, the Pittsburgh station posted six different times for departures and arrivals. The station in Buffalo had three clocks, each with a different railroad time. Imagine the confusion that arose for a company like the Union Pacific, whose system ran across six different local times. After more than a decade of confusion, William F. Allen, managing editor of the Official Guide of the Railways and secretary of the General Time Convention, conceived a plan in 1881 to divide the country into four time zones. By 1883, railroads agreed to adopt these time zones for their schedules, and at noon on Sunday, 18 November 1883, standard railroad time, as it was often called, became reality. It took until 1918 for the U.S. Congress to officially adopt standard time. For more on how railroads helped standardize time across the country, see John F. Stover, *American Railroads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 157–58.

34. Brown, *Trout Culture*, 50.

35. Cited in T. B. Ferguson, *Report of T. B. Ferguson, Commissioner of Fisheries of Maryland* (Hagerstown, Md.: Bell & Co., Printers, January 1881), lxxii.

36. The general superintendent of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway Company informed his conductors and baggage-masters that they "will permit . . . Fish Commission deputy's cans of living fish to be carried in the baggage cars." This quote is taken from NOAA Fisheries Service Center, retrieved from https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/about-us/northeast-fisheries-historical-highlights-timeline. Accessed 24 August 2022.

37. Spencer Baird, *Commissioner's Report for 1881* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), lxvii–lxxi, xliii.

38. *Missouri Fish Commission Report for 1885–86* (Jefferson City, Mo.: Tribune Printing Company, State Printers and Binders, 1887), 17. They also could be punishing: in another report, the commission stated that assistance came from "all the railroad companies with only one exception, (that of the Chicago & Alton R.R.) when called upon . . ." Makes you wonder what the folks at the Chicago & Alton railroad did—or didn't do—that made them the target for the commission's public shaming.

39. Stone's account of the accident can be found in Livingston Stone, "Report of Operations in California in 1873," *Report of the Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries for 1873–74 and 1874–75* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 385–90. This quote is from the headline in the *Omaha Herald* newspaper, found in Frank E. Raymond, "Livingston Stone, Pioneer Fisheries Scientist: His Career in California," *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 1990, vol. 16, no. 1), 18–22.

40. Baird, *Commissioner's Report for 1881*, xliii. The following details are provided in his report.

41. For an interesting look at the intersection of introducing carp and local politics, see Robin W. Doughty, "Wildlife Conservation in Late Nineteenth-Century Texas: The Carp Experiment," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (October 1980, vol. 84, no. 2), 169–96.

42. In 1881 the number of applicants was about 100,000; by 1885 it had jumped to almost 350,000.

43. The plan is detailed in Marshall McDonald, "Report of Distribution of Carp, during the Season of 1881–82, by the United States Fish Commission," *Report of the Commissioner for 1881* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), 1121–26.

44. I can only imagine that the arrival of the commission's fish car must have been exciting news in many of the towns it visited.

45. McDonald, "Report of Distribution of Carp," 1125.

46. Information is from John R. Leonard, *The Fish Car Era of the National Fish Hatchery System* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1979).

47. The concurrent increase in the number of federal fish hatcheries around the country necessitated an increase in fish cars if the commission intended to extend its fish-stocking activities.

48. Its inaugural trip to test this in 1886 contained a shipment of some 600,000 shad eggs headed for Portland, Oregon, from the Battery Station hatchery on the Susquehanna River in Maryland. Once the car reached Portland, newly hatched shad fry were planted into the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

49. The entire *Tribune* article was reprinted in *Forest and Stream* (13 September 1883), 128.

50. The following relies on Leonard, *The Fish Car Era of the National Fish Hatchery System.*

51. I. G. W. Steedman, *Missouri Fish Commission Report for 1883–84* (Jefferson City, Mo.: Tribune Printing Company, State Printers and Binders, 1885), 3.

52. In addition to the source listed in Table 1, see the following for more information about some of the fish cars listed. Missouri: R. W. Hafer, *From Northern California to the Ozarks of Missouri: How Rainbow Trout Came to the Show-Me State* (Amazon, 2020), Chapter 3; Nebraska: Darin Kinsey, "The Fish Car Era in Nebraska," *Railroad History* (Autumn 1997, no. 177), 43–67; New York: James Lindsey, "The Fish Car—Adirondack—An Era Passes," *The New York State Conservationist* (December–January 1958–59, vol. 13, no. 3), 31; Pennsylvania: Robert Weber, Russell T. Greene, John Arway, R. Scott Carney, and Leroy Young, *History of the Management of Trout Fisheries in Pennsylvania, Division of Fisheries Management* (June 2010), 11–13.

53. Many of the commissioner's reports named the railroads and listed the number of miles over which the fish cars and/or messengers traveled. In doing so, the commissioner conferred equal praise on railroads that provided thousands of free miles and those that provided just a few. The *Report of the Commissioner for 1889–91*, for instance, includes the Duluth and Iron Range railroad and the Union Pacific railroad, even though the former provided 12 miles of free transportation compared with 15,379 miles from the latter. Just think: the Duluth and Iron Range could boast that it had assisted the commission just like the Union Pacific.

54. See Leonard, *The Fish Car Era of the National Fish Hatchery System.*

The Leather Shop Man

by David Gray-Clough

May 1966 and half-term break was upon us. I was just sixteen, in the lower sixth form at school, and absolutely mad keen on fishing. I was also the proud possessor of a Hardy split-cane fly rod. How that came about is a story in itself.

I had always bought my fishing tackle from a little shop in Harrogate called the Leather Shop. It was an odd shop, located in an alley next to the Cock and Castle pub. The Leather Shop did indeed sell leather goods, ranging from school satchels to dog leads, as well as fishing rods, tackle, and bait, but it was clear that fishing was the first love of the man who owned and ran the shop. I had been a regular customer for years, and he always took time to have a chat with me. The truth was that I didn't spend a lot—I didn't have much money—so it was usually only half a dozen flies or the odd cast or two.

He was an oldish man, I realized, with thinning black hair. Somehow I had a sense that he was not in the best of health. He was rather bent in the shoulder and probably not able to get out fishing as much as he would have liked, so when I came into his shop he always liked to ask me how I was getting on with my own fishing.

Whatever I'd been up to I would tell him, carefully editing out all references to my many poaching activities. He liked to hear that I was a fly fisherman and that by now I was actually catching trout and grayling on the fly, despite the fact that I owned only the dreaded Japanese leger/float fly rod bought for me in Ireland years earlier by my parents. It was a terrible fly rod, far too soft and soggy in action, but it was all I had.

I may have mentioned this to the man in the Leather Shop, but if I spoke about the rod to him I had done it inadvertently. I certainly wasn't begging for assistance with my fly-rod woes, so it was a great surprise to me when he raised the subject.

One afternoon, on my way to my Saturday waiter's job at the Grand Hotel, I dropped in to the Leather Shop, intending just to have a look at some of the proper fly rods on sale. I didn't have the money to buy any of them, but I wanted to set myself a target, some figure for which I could aim to save. It was nice to drool over the unattainable!

I explained this to the Leather Shop man. He went slowly to the wall where the fly rods were stacked, ready assembled and price ticketed. These varied from 7-foot-6 up to 10 feet long; in the mid-1960s they were all fiberglass, then the newest material. (This was long before the invention of carbon fiber.)

"Try one," he said kindly.

I shook my head. If I did feel one in my hands, I'd only want it all the more, and I just didn't have the money.

"Go on," he insisted. "We're not busy. Take your time." There were no other customers, so we had the shop to ourselves.

He wouldn't take no for an answer and unclipped one of the rods from its rack on the wall, handing it to me.

"Try it for balance. It's got to feel right in the hand."

I took hold of the rod. I couldn't help but notice the price handwritten on the little card attached to the first ring. It was way beyond my budget.

"Wait a minute," he said. "You can't tell the balance like that. Without the weight of the reel, you won't know if it will suit you. You need the reel on the rod to get the proper balance."

He went to the glass display cupboard, bent down, and took out a box. *Hardy*, it said. The best fishing tackle in the world.

He opened the box, took out the reel—a Hardy Marquis, I think it was—and handed it to me.

I fitted it into the seating on the rod butt.

"Now try it."

I did as he instructed. I felt the grip on the cork, weighed the reel against the weight of the rod, and grinned a great big grin. It was so much better than my own rod.

He was smiling too. "Well, how's that?"

"Miles better." I passed it back to him. "I'd love it, but I just can't afford it. Sorry."

He took the rod back from me and started to take the reel out of its fixings.

"Thanks for letting me have a go with it," I said, for he was a kind man to take so much trouble. He knew I didn't have the money, but letting me try one out was very generous of him, and the rod was something for which to aim.

He fitted the rod back into the wall fittings, and turned to me. I was about to leave, when he stopped me.

"Tell you what," he said, "I've got something here."

I paused.

"It's not the latest rod"—he indicated the ones on the wall—"but it's a nice little rod. Might just suit you."

I shook my head, regretting that I'd started this. "I'd better be going. Maybe one day . . . "

"No, wait a minute." He bent down behind the counter. "Have a look at this. See what you think."

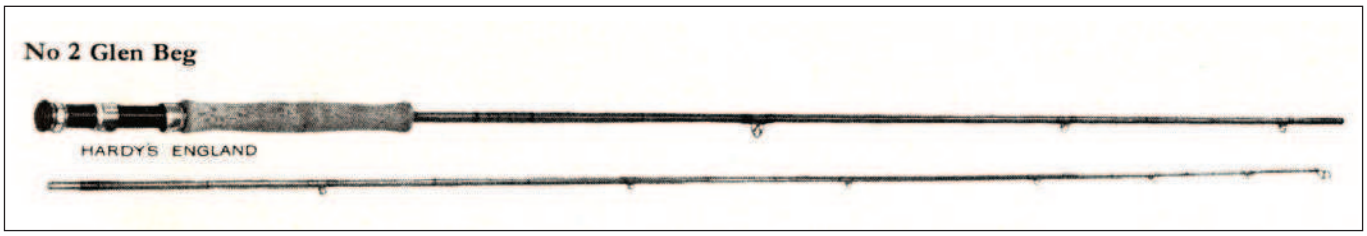
He brought out a rod bag, a brown canvas one. It was obviously not brand new, because the bag had a small muddy stain, but it was very nearly new. More significantly, this bag had a black and green maker's tag. And the tag read *Hardy*.

Hardy
Alnwick
England

Only the Rolls Royce of fly rods.

He'd undone the string and opened the top now. Out came the butt, drawn out delicately and carefully by the Leather Shop man. The cork had a few tiny bites where the hook had been sunk into the butt, but it was almost new.

Out came the rest: a beautiful split-cane rod, a wonderful golden brown color to the wood, varnished red silk, golden agate linings to the rings, a piece of pure fishing perfection.



The Glen Beg as it appeared on page 25 of Hardy's Anglers Guide and Catalogue 1966*; it is described as "[a] superb and delicate rod capable of great precision in casting and ideal for dry fly work. Will also handle wet fly beautifully."*

He laid it on the counter.

While I marveled at it, he drew out the second section. Equally beautiful, and equally elegant. It was both stylish and fragile, tapering to an impossibly fine point and a jeweled top ring.

He lay it on the glass counter beside its fellow section.

"Hardy," he said. "Glen Beg, 8 foot of Palakona cane. What do you think of that?"

"It's beautiful, absolutely beautiful." I stroked it gently. "Just beautiful."

He smiled, seeing how entranced I was.

I came to my senses. "But not for me! No chance! I could never afford a rod like that."

"How do you know?"

I shook my head. "'Cos I earn just five bob a week, working Saturday afternoon at the Grand Hotel."

As I stood there, dreaming of what it would be like to own this rod, he watched me closely.

"Go on," he said. "Put it together."

"No. I'd better not."

"Like this." He picked up the top section, indicating I should hold the butt section. "Careful. Don't force it. They fit precisely."

He put the two pieces together, slotting them softly one into the other. He held it out to me.

Oh my God. If there is perfection in the world, it was that rod.

He handed me the Hardy reel. I fitted it into the butt. My hands were shaky and sweating.

"How's that feel?"

I weighed the rod in my hand, lifting it gently, imagining what it would be like to cast such a masterpiece. It was so light and delicate, so sensitive to every touch. I turned to him and grinned. I hadn't words to express my feelings.

But it was no use. I couldn't possibly own a rod like this one. Reluctantly, I passed it back to him.

"Someday maybe, when I'm a rich man!"

He smiled and took the rod from me, hefted it in his own hand. He was looking into the distance, staring at the tip of the rod as if he had just cast out the line.

Immediately I sensed that he was no longer with me, but was once more a young man himself, out on the river, with this wonderful rod in his hand. He didn't say anything; he didn't need to. I could tell where he'd gone though, by the wistful smile on his face as he imagined he was once again casting a fly. He didn't say anything, but the pleasure on his face said it all.

I coughed.

"I'd better be off," I said. "Got work at two o' clock." I pointed to the rod. "Thanks for letting me try it out."

He didn't say anything, so I opened the door and left him, still staring at the Hardy in his hand.

It was two weeks before I came back to the Leather Shop. In the meantime I'd sneaked off all my school rugby sessions and worked instead at the Grand, thereby earning an unexpected windfall from my extra tips. For once, I had funds and so was determined to spend it on something at the Leather Shop. Not the Hardy of course, as it would be years before I could afford such a rod. It was a rich man's rod.

"Hello son," said the Leather Shop man brightly.

I didn't know his name, nor did he mine. He was on his own, just pottering about.

"Just want a few flies please. Greenwell's and a few Tup's Indispensables if you've got them."

He lifted out the glass-topped display box of wet flies. It was divided into little compartments, each with its collection of a particular type of fly. I leaned over and began to point out the ones I wanted.

He surprised me by interrupting the process. "I've been thinking about you," he said quietly.

I glanced at the wall full of fly rods. Even the cheapest fiberglass rod was way out of my financial reach.

"Yes," he said, "I've been thinking."

He disappeared beneath the counter. Out came the fly rod. The Hardy fly rod.

"It's secondhand," he said, opening up the rod bag.

I stared, mesmerized.

"So it's not as much as you might expect."

He undid the bag, took out both pieces and passed them to me. I took them reverentially. It was as flawless as I had remembered.

"Fit it together."

He watched as I did so with great care.

"It belonged to a gentleman," he explained. "A real gentleman. He'd just bought it, but then something happened and he could no longer use it, so he sold it back to me."

I wasn't really listening, just staring at the wonderful rod.

He handed me the reel.

Oh my God. I just drooled. It was even better than I had remembered in so many dreams.

"It's hand built. Up at Alnwick. Look." He showed me where the rod joined the butt. There was black writing and an AFTM number.

Neo Cane
Glen Beg
8'
#6

"See that number." He pointed with his finger at the lower end of the rod.

There next to the butt was written "N.E. 7231."

"That shows it's a unique rod, numbered so it can be traced."

A unique rod. Handmade. Individually numbered.

I prepared to pass it back to him.

"Nine quid," he said suddenly.

I must have misheard. Nine quid! What was he talking about? Nine pounds. A ridiculously low price. He couldn't possibly be asking only nine pounds for this Hardy fly rod, this masterpiece of the fishing-tackle world. This rod was worth a great deal more, really, a great deal more. Nine pounds was a ludicrous price to ask.

I looked at his face for confirmation.

He nodded and smiled. "Nine pounds to you."

My mind was spinning. Nine pounds, only nine pounds! Why, that amount was nearly attainable! In a year maybe, I would have enough if I worked hard and saved it all.

I shook my head. "I'd love it," I said. "But I haven't got that much."

"Pay me what you can. Ten bob a week."

I was stunned, too shocked to reply. Ten bob a week. I could manage that—it was two afternoons working at the Grand. Ten bob a week! A pound in a fortnight.

I was absolutely staggered. This was just incredible generosity on the part of the Leather Shop man. It was madness. He couldn't be making any profit selling it at that price. He could surely sell it for much more than nine pounds.

I had to make sure he wasn't just teasing me.

"Are you sure?"

He nodded. "Ten bob a week will do fine."

"Right!" I held out my hand. "I'll take it!" I shook his hand vigorously. He was grinning as much as I was.

"Will you take the reel too?"

"No, the reel will have to wait. I've got an old one and it'll have to do." I passed him back the rod. "Take this. I'll be back in five minutes."

The author took this photo of his rod and tackle in February 2023 next to the River Nidd at Hampsthwaite, where he has fished for many years.

By good fortune I had my post office book with me. I raced along Oxford Street to the post office and took out almost my entire life savings. Three pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence. Two shillings was left in the account.

Then I rushed back and gave it to the Leather Shop man, with the promise I would pay him the rest in ten-shilling installments.

And so I left the Leather Shop the proud owner of a Hardy fly rod. A split-cane 8-foot Palakona, with its own identity number. Only the best fly rod in the world! Me, a scruffy penniless sixth former, I had a Hardy! I squeezed it in my hand, I cradled it lovingly to my chest, unable to believe it was actually mine. I could hardly wait to show it to my parents, to my friends, and, above all, to use it.

To this day I don't know why the Leather Shop man did it. I have often thought about his reasons for making such a wonderful and generous gift. I can only think that perhaps he saw something of himself in me. I could see by the expression on his face when he was holding it that he was miles away, on a riverbank somewhere. He had just cast out, and the flies were drifting downstream.

In his imagination he was holding the line tightly in his left hand, expecting any second that there could be the tug of a taking trout, hoping that he would be quick enough to strike and catch.

Or perhaps he was not thinking of himself, but of me and the use I would get out of it. He could tell how obsessed I was with fly fishing. Maybe that was why he gave it away. Who knows?

I still have the Hardy. It sits in my study beside me now as I write, fifty-five years later. I use it every week of the fishing season, and it's as good as the day I was given it: perfect, clean, undamaged.

Every time I go fishing and I unfurl the knot and open the bag I think of that kind old Leather Shop man, and when I take the two pieces out and slide them together I remember the day he demonstrated to me how carefully and precisely it should be done.

The rod always attracts attention from passersby. No one else in the club has a rod like it. They may have their expensive Orvises, their Greys and Wychwoods, their carbon fibers, but I have my Hardy. My split-cane Palakona. My Glen Beg.

When people see the glistening varnish, that superb golden brown wood, those lovely red silk ring bindings, they marvel.

"That's a lovely rod," they say, even if they know nothing about fishing.

One day I was in the car park by the Nidd at Summerbridge. The car boot was open and I was tackling up when a fisherman went by. Seeing the rod propped against the car, he stopped.

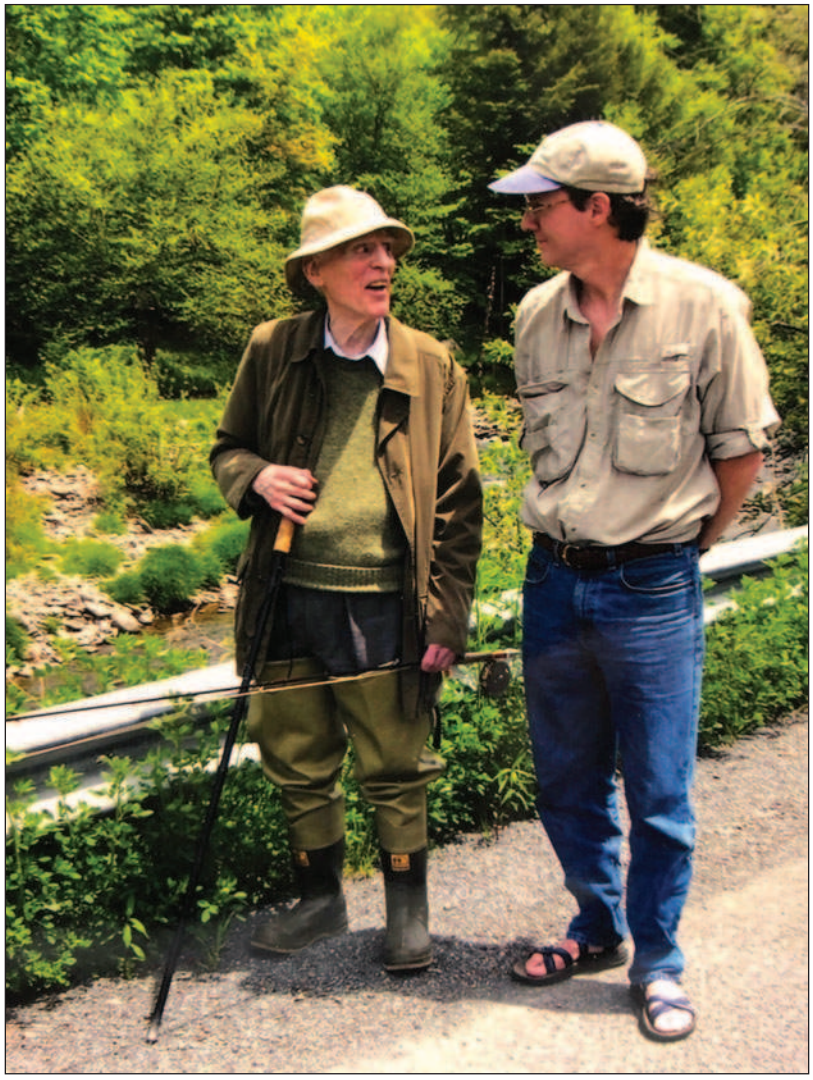
"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "That's a beautiful rod!"

I agreed that it was. He then offered me a huge amount of money for it. Not a chance. I would never part with my Hardy Glen Beg. Of all the possessions I have collected throughout my life it is, without any doubt whatsoever, my prized possession.

No doubt the Leather Shop man is long dead and gone, but I can tell you, my friend, your memory lives on, for by giving me that rod you showed you had the spirit and generosity of a true fisherman. A gentleman. So here's to you! And to the coming season, when I will be out with my Hardy Glen Beg on the River Nidd on the very first day.

The Old Man and the Stream

by Richard K. Lodge



Palmer Baker and Richard Lodge along the Beaverkill in June 2005. Photo by Jeffrey Hill. Author's collection.

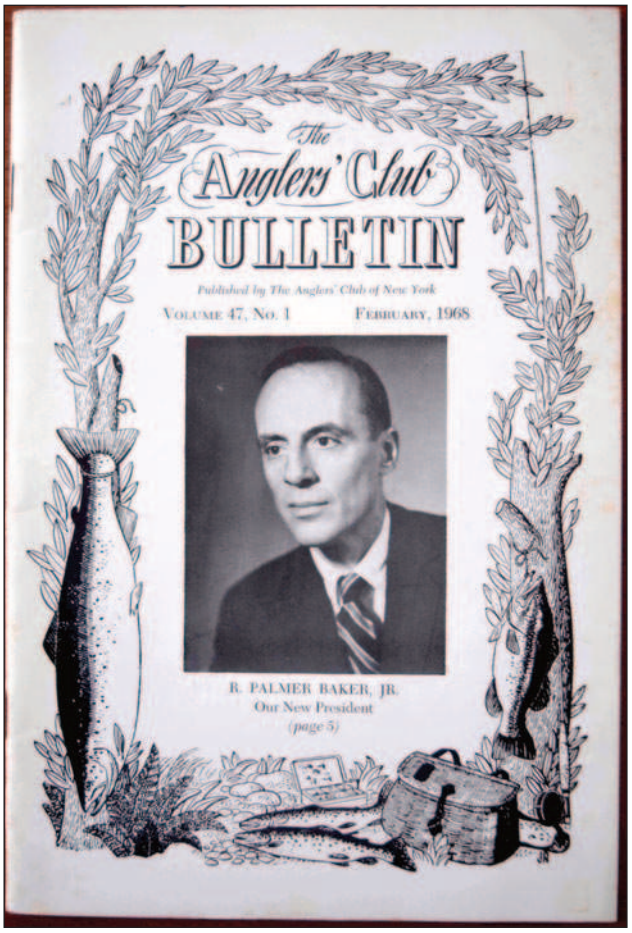
If not for the graphite rod in his hand, the man in the baggy brown coat, olive-drab sweater, floppy hat, and hip waders could have just stepped out of a British chalk stream, circa 1910.

He was walking on the narrow gravel road that threads along private water on the upper Beaverkill one sunny June day in 2005. My fishing buddy and I had taken a break, so the gentleman stopped to chat. He had spent the first two hours drifting a size 12 Hare's Ear Nymph through the depths of promising pools.

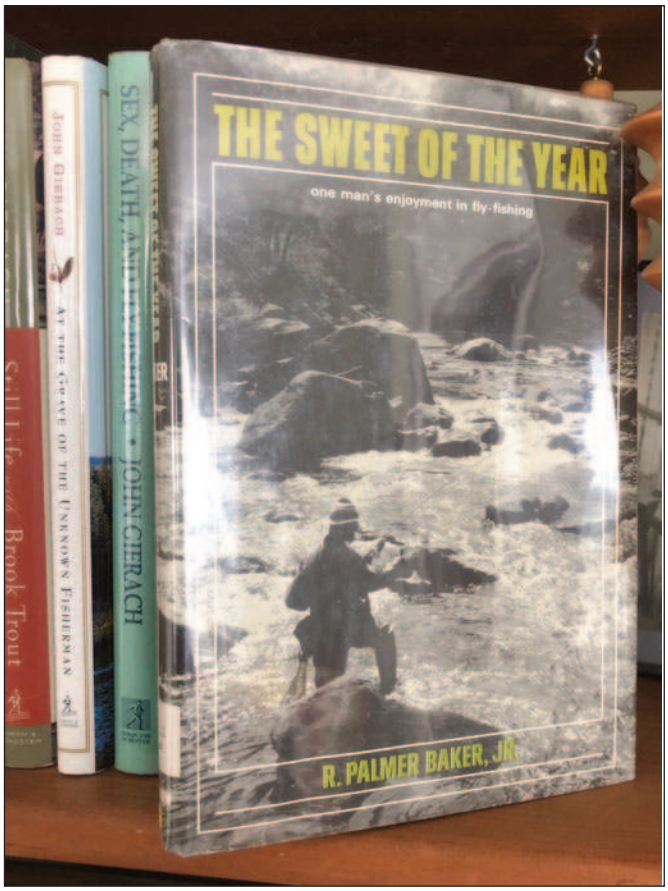
Any luck? The obvious question by anyone and to anyone along a stream in the Catskills on a beautiful morning. Yes, he'd caught and released two native brown trout and was having a wonderful time. This was familiar water to him; the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, and upper Neversink had been his destination every year for weeks at a time since 1950. We introduced ourselves all around. His name was Palmer Baker, and he had driven up from New York City a few days before.

Baker looked a little like English angler G. E. M. Skues—without a monocle—fresh out of the wayback machine. *Would Mr. Baker mind posing with me for a photo?,* I asked. Together we stood talking, two fishermen from different times, while my friend took the picture. We wished each other luck, and the elderly gentleman walked down the road, fly rod in his left hand and a well-used wading staff in the right.

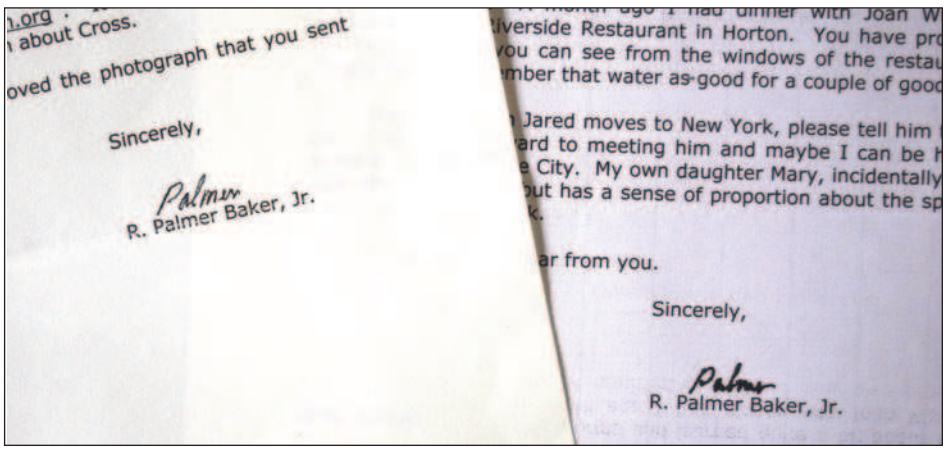
It wasn't until days later when I went online that I made the connection: the fisherman was R. Palmer Baker Jr. The publishing house William Morrow & Co. had released his book,



R. Palmer Baker Jr., president of the Anglers' Club in 1968, appeared on the cover of the Bulletin *in February of that year.*



R. Palmer Baker Jr.'s The Sweet of the Year. *Author's collection.*


about Cross.
oved the photograph that you sent
Sincerely,
R. Palmer Baker, Jr.
iverside Restaurant in Horton. You have pr
ou can see from the windows of the restau
mber that water as good for a couple of gooc
Jared moves to New York, please tell him
ard to meeting him and maybe I can be h
City. My own daughter Mary, incidentally
ut has a sense of proportion about the sp
ar from you.
Sincerely,
R. Palmer Baker, Jr.

Letters from R. Palmer Baker Jr. to the author, sent in 2005 and mentioning fishing on the Beaverkill. Author's collection.

The Sweet of the Year, in 1965, a collection of fishing stories Baker had written for the *Anglers' Club Bulletin*. Baker, it turned out, had served as president of the Anglers' Club of New York in 1968 and as editor of the *Bulletin* for a year in the 1990s. In his day job, he was an attorney for a law firm in New York City representing a private foundation that funded research for childhood diseases and domestic violence prevention.

At the time I met Baker, I had been visiting the Catskills to fish and continue digging into details about the late fly tier Reuben "Rube" Cross, who lived in Neversink, and later, Lew Beach, until his house burned down in May 1941. Cross and his wife Bessie eventurally moved to Providence, although he returned to fish his home waters before he died in 1958. I wrote to Baker on the off chance he and Cross had met in the Catskills.

"I am sorry to say that I never met Reuben Cross in the early years when I was fishing the Beaverkill and other Catskill streams,"[1] Baker replied. In my letter I had enclosed a copy of the photo of the two of us by the river and he thanked me for it, adding, "My daughter loved the photograph that you sent."[2]

We exchanged letters over the next six months. His were always typewritten by his secretary and signed by him, which added an old-fashioned feel to our communication. No e-mail, no internet, nothing hurried about it.

I told him I hoped to fish the Beaverkill again that fall. In late August he wrote, "When you get back to the river, you will see that the floods last year did a lot of damage, including a loss of insect life, but I have no doubt that it will recover and continue as the great fishery that it is."[3] The previous month he'd had dinner with Joan Wulff and Ted Rogowski at the Riverside Café in Horton, New York, adding, "You have probably fished the big pool that you can see from the windows of the restaurant."[4] (I had fished that pool in previous years, and it left me wondering if Baker and Wulff had watched me and grimaced over my sometimes-awkward casting.) In closing, he wrote, "My own daughter Mary, incidentally, does really well with the fly rod, but has a sense of proportion about the sport that you and I both seem to lack."[5]

In his 1965 book of stories, Baker recalled the day years before when his eight-year-old daughter caught her first trout in an Adirondack brook.

> Near a plank bridge on a wood road she found a grasshopper, and I baited the hook for her. Dappled in sunlight and shade, the current flowed over pebbles and deepened under the bridge.
>
> The little girl in her blue jeans, carrying a nondescript rod and wearing her mother's fishing hat, wriggled along the planks and dropped her baited hook on the upstream side. The grasshopper floated under the bridge. The rod jerked. There was a splash, and in one jubilant swing the trout came out of the water and landed almost in her lap.[6]

That little girl in jeans had long since grown up. Meanwhile, Baker practiced law and, as he grew older, turned more of his attention to fly fishing.

In our correspondence I wrote about my interest in old tackle, reels in particular. In one letter, Baker confided "how beguiling it can be to collect fishing reels" and that he had concluded he might be a closet fly reel collector.[7] He still fished with a Hardy LRH he bought at the Angler's Roost in the Chrysler Building in the early 1950s in preparation for his first trip to the Beaverkill, but had accumulated half a dozen other Hardys, including a diminutive St. George. "Putting my fishing gear in order for the winter, I came across a reel made for William Mills and Co. given to me by my new father-in-law in 1944 together with a 7-foot Leonard rod that in the hands of Mr. Mills could cast a number 3 or 4 silk line 80 feet."[8] The reel was tiny, not more than 2 inches in diameter, "truly gem-like," he wrote.[9]

"I enjoyed your September 18 letter very much," Baker added. "I wanted to make another trip to the Beaverkill in early October but never got there. Based on your letter, I have made a note to fish the Butternut Grove water this coming season and I look forward to seeing you."[10]

A month later I mailed Baker a copy of "Fishing the March Brown Slovenske," a story he wrote for the Spring/Summer 1974 *Anglers' Club Bulletin*. In reply, he thanked me for sending it—although I later realized he probably had every copy of the *Bulletin* ever published on a bookshelf in his study. "I thought that was a pretty good article!" he wrote. "These days I use a grey fox variant in preference to the March Brown. The difference between the two flies is slight and the bigger trout love them from the beginning of the season."[11]

In closing, he offered to recommend me as a nonresident member of the Anglers' Club. "Do give me a call some time and I will make the sales pitch to you," he wrote.[12]

Some of Palmer Baker's fly boxes and a Hardy St. George used by Baker. Author's collection.

The diminutive single-action Leonard Mills fly reel given to Palmer Baker by his father-in-law. Author's collection.

Life got busy for me around that time. I never called, and our correspondence drifted away. Palmer Baker died a little more than two years later, in March 2008, at the age of eighty-nine.

I found his obituary one morning when I opened the *New York Times*.[13] It recounted his very full life. He was a partner in the law firm of Lord, Day & Lord before retiring in 1988 at age seventy. Soon after, he went back to work to help create and guide the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, a leading research institution that had spent $1.2 billion on research since its founding in 1971. He was also involved in setting up the Vera Institute of Justice, a nonprofit research and policy organization studying prison violence and parole policies. He was chair in the 1970s and 1980s of the Argus Community, a South Bronx nonprofit serving people dealing with mental illness, addiction, or homelessness.

Baker was a Harvard graduate, a hospital trustee, a father, and a Navy veteran of World War II. But nowhere in the obituary did it mention that he published a book of fly-fishing stories, that he served as president of the Anglers' Club in 1968, or that several times a year he donned hip boots and a wool sweater to stalk trout in the Catskills.

In 2018, I was two years into a stint as editor of the *Daily News* of Newburyport in northeastern Massachusetts. I had exchanged e-mails and had a few phone conversations with a local woman named Mary Baker Eaton, a local artist and activist working to preserve the historic architecture and character of Newburyport. One day she stopped by the office. When she saw me, she looked a little stunned, then bemused. "You're in a picture with my dad that's on a shelf in my house," she said.

Her dad was Palmer Baker, and it was only then that I put the pieces—and the names—together and recalled the photo my friend Jeff had taken of Baker and me along the Beaverkill in 2005. Mary Baker Eaton was Palmer's only child—the one he had referred to years before when he wrote, "my daughter loved the photograph." She was that daughter, and I was that anonymous man standing with her father. Her dad had given her the photograph years before, and it had been on a bookshelf in her home ever since.

After Baker died, his daughter drove to New York City to gather up his possessions and empty his apartment. As a girl she had often gone fly fishing with him but had given it up years ago. Among his belongings she packed up seven or eight Hardy reels, that Leonard Mills fly reel, a pile of fly boxes, and a dozen fly rods, including that little 7-foot Leonard.

Inside one pocket of his Orvis fishing vest she found a New York State fishing license, the last one he had purchased and carried on his final trip to the Catskills. Among his fishing gear she also found the folding metal wading staff, its black finish worn off at the tip by the stones of countless miles of Catskill streams. It's the same staff he carried in the photo from 2005, and it's now the one I carry when I step into a rushing stream.

~

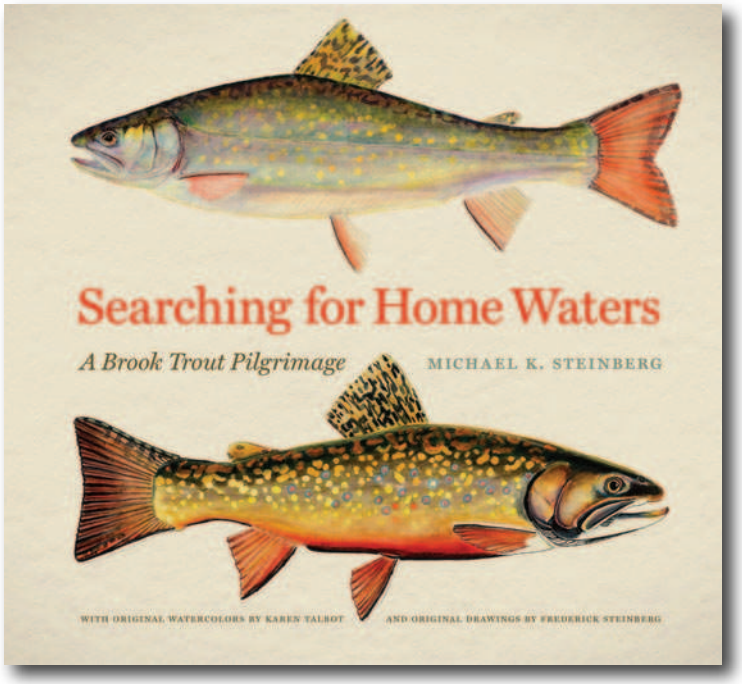
ENDNOTES

1. Letter from R. Palmer Baker Jr. to Richard K. Lodge, 28 July 2005.
2. Ibid.
3. Letter from R. Palmer Baker Jr. to Richard K. Lodge, 23 August 2005.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. R. Palmer Baker Jr., "The Little Trout," in *The Sweet of the Year: One Man's Enjoyment of Fly-Fishing* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1965), 37–39, 37.
7. Letter from R. Palmer Baker Jr. to Richard K. Lodge, 8 November 2005.
8. Ibid. The reel made for "William Mills and Co." is marked Leonard Mills, a name that gives credit to both the Leonard Rod Co. and William Mills & Son.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Letter from R. Palmer Baker Jr. to Richard K. Lodge, 30 November 2005.
12. Ibid.
13. Dennis Hevesi, "R. P. Baker, Lawyer and Humanitarian, Dies at 89," *New York Times* (9 March 2008). https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/09/nyregion/09baker.html, accessed 24 May 2023.

BOOK REVIEW

Angling Travels with a Fishful Prof

by Robert DeMott



There are a dozen fly shops within an easy drive of the Madison River cabin I rent every summer in Montana. Over the decades, I've regularly made the rounds of those specialized angling emporiums where I bought my share of fishing gear, talked strategies with and sought directions from shop staff, pored over fly bins looking for the next can't-miss pattern (increasingly something in the articulated streamer or Perdigon jig style), compared notes on this or that equipment, oohed and aahed over the latest $1,000 fly rods and $800 fly reels, told the usual whoppers about fish caught and lost, and generally immersed myself in the seductive materiality of fly-angling culture, which seems to grow exponentially in size, volume, and allure each season and to which very few of us are immune.

All of which is to say that we are experiencing a boom in nearly every facet of the sport. One area that hasn't grown, however, and in fact has shrunk almost out of existence in many fly shops, is the book section. Suddenly, a few years back, in what seems like the blink of an eye, a tidal change occurred, and fly shops that carried even a modest smattering of both practical and literary titles eliminated their stock or reduced it drastically before turning over the allotted display area to other consumer items: clothing, bric-a-brac and geegaws, high-end logo mugs, fly-tying paraphernalia, wading staffs, how-to videos, and more. I realize that tastes change and objects of desire are constantly mutable, but as an unrepentant English professor, the demise of dedicated book sections strikes me as a depressing, though no doubt inevitable, sign of the times.

Although the causes for such a drastic swerve are no doubt many and varied, the bottom line is that many people might not know the pleasures they are missing by passing up that tried-and-true, old-school icon: the singular fly-fishing volume. Big-box retailers are not likely to carry them, which is why browsing new titles in dedicated fly-fishing stores used to be an important part of my discovery process. I feel cheated if I can't browse newly published titles face-to-face, pick a book off the shelf, page through it on my way to deciding to buy it (or not). For a geezer like me, books are still the heart and soul of our fly-fishing tradition, and the fact is they keep turning up, written by truly gifted angler/authors in ever-increasing numbers, but with fewer and fewer chances to be discovered by a wide audience in an immediate hands-on way. For that, and for many other estimable reasons, *Searching for Home Waters: A Brook Trout Pilgrimage* deserves our undivided attention. It would be a shame if American fly shops pass on carrying this important, well-written, informative book.

Michael Steinberg, a widely published geography professor at New College of the University of Alabama and an at-large editor of the lively e-zine *Southern Culture on the Fly*, has followed up a previous book, *Stalking the Ghost Bird: The Elusive Ivory-Billed Woodpecker in Louisiana* (2008), with an arresting, multifaceted, must-read volume that is a love letter to native brook trout and the watery Eastern environs they call home. The handsomely produced horizontal landscape-style (10 by 9 inches) book is formatted with double columns of text, includes a portfolio of thirteen original watercolors by Karen Talbot, and is interspersed with original sketches of aquatic and terrestrial insects by the author's brother, Frederick Steinberg. A treat to behold, it is a testament to the bookmaking prowess of the University of Georgia Press, which benefited from its association with George F. Thompson Publishing and the Center for the Study of Place, and from the support of

Southern Highlands Reserve. If you love the intricate beauty of a hand-tied trout fly or Winslow Homer's celebrated 1892 painting *A Brook Trout*, you will appreciate and savor this volume for similar reasons.

Professor Steinberg's stated goal was to catch wild native brook trout in each eastern state that participates in the conservatorial, multiorganizational Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (https://easternbrooktrout.org). But in fact his larger purpose is multifaceted, because his book is part personal memoir, part recovery narrative (he was diagnosed with cancer as a younger man), part road travelogue, part environmental and natural history, part paean to moving waters, and part fly-fishing adventure (he calls it a "pilgrimage, a journey of the heart" [page xii]), which is to say it has many distinct and yet compatible threads and skeins that are deftly intertwined. Steinberg's odyssey passes through fifteen eastern states, from "the Deep South to New England" (12), before reaching Labrador in eastern Canada, the terminus of his search, where he lands and releases the biggest brook trout of his life.

Steinberg narrates his own deeply personal attraction to brook trout, his growth as a fly angler, and his belief in the importance of *topophilia* (love of place), the intimate connection with and affection for particular geographical sites—in his case, the localized "home" waters that brookies inhabit. Coined by late University of Wisconsin humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in 1974, it is a concept at the heart of Steinberg's purposeful journey. "That very idea of home and water shows succinctly why the personal and natural are nearly inseparable for fly fishers. The environments where I fish reflect critical parts of my personality, my family life, and my professional life. . . . So I cannot tell the story of a stream or fish without also describing my own story and journey" (xii).

As one might expect from a professional geographer, his richly inflected narrative is organized "spatially" and follows the "natural geography of the Appalachian Mountains" (13), so each chapter has a local flavor and finish to it, but also, like links in a chain, contributes to a cumulative effect suffused with "mindfulness" (12). The book's geographical progression provides a clearly etched narrative arc and creates a profound impact on Steinberg's fishful education. He showcases the native Eastern brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) as a species whose presence indicates healthy waterways and ecosystems throughout its historical range. Of particular interest to readers of the *American Fly Fisher* is Chapter 13, devoted in part to Steinberg's connection with the Green Mountain's small freestone streams, his appreciation for its literary anglers W. D. Wetherell and Craig Nova, and visits to Orvis's flagship store in Manchester, Vermont, and the nearby American Museum of Fly Fishing, home of "its first-rate journal" (132).

Intermittently over a period of four years, Steinberg fished his way north in pursuit of native brookies, those iconic piscine gems, toward which he feels a deep, soulful attachment. "There isn't a more striking fish in the East," he claims (1). The fragile and sometimes fraught relationship between wild trout and clean water (exacerbated, for example, by urbanization, acid mine drainage, acid rain, clear-cutting, channelization, and stocking of hatchery-bred fish) is an essential aspect of Steinberg's quest. It is informed by his running commentary on the many conservation organizations that back the restoration and preservation of brook trout throughout their native range by mitigating environmental degradation, neglect, and mishandling that often characterize the brook trout's precarious situation. His encounters with brookies in their proper regional environment are augmented and deepened by informative meetings with knowledgeable local experts—state fisheries biologists, environmental professionals, fly shop owners, and river guides—as well as by his own extensive reading and research, the latter of which is documented in a bibliography of sources (169–77).

Behind the single grip-and-grin photo of the author holding a brag-worthy Labrador brookie that appears on the title page (the only hero photo in the entire book), there are many layers of regional cultural history, aquatic science, stream dynamics, and natural activity that make up a dramatic and appealing angling backstory. Much like Craig Nova's *Brook Trout and the Writing Life*, George Black's *The Trout Pool Paradox*, Chris Dombrowski's *Body of Water*, and Monte Burke's *Lords of the Fly*, to name a few stellar recent examples, *Searching for Home Waters* tells a complex story of a fish and its context. Steinberg takes us behind the authorial curtain to reveal the complicated workings and relationships that make certain kinds of angling not only good experiences, but downright sustainable and memorable. Speaking of a banner day catching brilliantly colored, stunning-looking "Halloween pumpkin brookies" (78) in a once-dead, now-resurrected mountain freestone stream in West Virginia that responded to the pH-sweetening effects of crushed limestone treatment (leeched directly into the headwaters), he says, the "stream stands out in my mind as another shining example of the good works provided by groups such as Trout Unlimited. Somebody has to pay for, haul, and dump that limestone, and TU members always seem to be there" (79).

Steinberg is passionate about his subject, which he manages with generosity, elegance, and a sure sense of pacing. This book wears its learning lightly; urgently, yes, because the subject truly matters, but never stridently. Steinberg is a fine prose writer. His sentences are clean, direct, lively, often lyrical and moving. His ego never gets in the way of telling a compelling, literate, honest story, especially on those days when he had no angling success to speak of. The common barb—"all fishermen are liars"—can't be applied here. Often he fails to reach the Zen-like equilibrium of perfect fly-fishing moments, but he seems unaffected by that. Moreover, when he does achieve success, he resists making transcendent leaps into the purple-prose stratosphere, but remains solidly anchored in the here-and-now world. Even after landing his brook-trout-of-a-lifetime in Labrador, he writes: "I broke down my rod, sat on a nearby boulder, swatted black flies, breathed deeply in the late afternoon sun as the floatplane approached in the distance, and savored the moment. Indeed, I had seen the snow leopard and it was wonderful. It was time to go home" (166).

I probably won't find Steinberg's book in the dozen or so Western fly shops I frequent each summer, but here's hoping someone somewhere will discover *Searching for Home Waters* in a favorite local, hold-out fly shop where its presence hasn't yet been totally eclipsed by an array of fly-fishing lifestyle objects. It will invite being picked up, perused, purchased, and taken home where it belongs, and, of course, read from cover to cover—more than once. It is worthy of no less.

Robert DeMott, a retired English professor, is a Fly Fishers International casting instructor, former guide, and author of many books, most recently Steinbeck's Imaginarium: Essays on Writing, Fishing, and Other Critical Matters *(University of New Mexico Press, 2022).*

Searching for Home Waters: A Brook Trout Pilgrimage
by Michael K. Steinberg
University of Georgia Press, 2023
$39.95 (hardcover)
179 pages
https://ugapress.org

Museum Wish List

The American Museum of Fly Fishing is actively seeking artifacts to enhance planned exhibits and general collection items that we feel will strengthen our educational displays. These include:

- An Edward Vom Hofe Model 360 Perfection fly reel, circa 1900–1942
- Nick Podolsky hand-carved fish, circa 1996–2013
- Streamer flies tied by the Letourneau brothers, Gene and Emile, circa 1940s
- Handmade bamboo fly rods by contemporary builders such as Marc Aroner, Per Brandin, Jim Becker, Hoagy Carmichael, and Fred Kretchman
- Talbot Ben Hur fly reel, circa 1902–1915

The late Nick Podolsky (1960–2013) was a guide and manager of the Umba fishing camp in Russia, as well as a skilled artist. His carved fish are often signed simply "Nick" on a strip of wood added to the mount. Photo courtesy of Bonhams.

Edward Vom Hofe Model 360 Perfection fly reel. The museum is looking for any size of this reel, produced from the early 1900s to 1942. Photo courtesy of Dean Smith.

Jim Schottenham

The Queen Bee streamer fly, tied by AMFF Ambassador Scott Biron, in the style of Emile Letourneau.

Jim Schottenham

The Talbot Ben Hur fly reel was introduced circa 1902/1903 and was cataloged in two sizes. Offered through companies such as Abercrombie & Fitch, these reels are often found with additional stampings from the retailers, as in the above example.

Hand-made bamboo fly rod made by Fred Kretchman. Rods from the wish list above are welcome in any length or model. Photo courtesy of Fred Kretchman.

If you have any of the above items and would consider donating to the museum's permanent collection, please contact Curator Jim Schottenham via e-mail at jschottenham@amff.org or by calling (802) 362-3300.

Fly-Fishing Festival

On August 12 the American Museum of Fly Fishing hosted its sixteenth annual Fly-Fishing Festival. More than 600 visitors came to explore the wide variety of offerings, and our steadfast and growing community of vendors, artists, craftspeople, industry professionals, and angling-related nonprofits gave the grounds a true feeling of camaraderie.

The day included fly tying with Paul Sinicki, Kelly Bedford, Mike Rice, Bill Newcomb, Rich Strolis, George Butts, Mark Dysinger, Scott Biron, Lisa Weiner, and Mike Stewart. Bob Selb, Fred Kretchman, and Carmine Lisella were on hand for complimentary appraisals all day. AMFF Ambassador Rachel Finn and volunteer Paul Sinicki shared their expertise, teaching people fly-casting techniques.

The casting competition, hosted by Orvis, brought a field of competitors to the course and included a youth division for budding anglers. The Leigh H. Perkins Gallery hosted both author Steve Ramirez, who spoke about mental health and fly fishing, and guide Rachel Finn, subject of the short film *After You've Gone*, which was screened to an enthusiastic crowd. Krissy Wejebe, daughter of the late Jose Wejebe (host of the long-running TV show *Spanish Fly*), was on hand to celebrate the opening of our newest exhibit, *Guiding Star: The Legacy of Jose Wejebe*. The day concluded with a screening of *Mending the Line*—a film about veterans and the healing powers of fly fishing—and discussion with film director Josh Caldwell and advisor Steve Ramirez.

Special appreciation goes to our sponsors and raffle donors: Costa, Express Copy, Mother Myrick's, Mud Dog Saltwater Flies, the Works Cafe, Smuggler's Notch, Apricot Lane, WEQX, Finn and Stone Insurance, Groomingdale's of Arlington LLC, Mulligans of Manchester, Orvis, R. K. Miles, Kimpton-Taconic Hotel, Wagatha's, Pets Etc., Al Ducci's, the Crooked Ram, Above All Vermont, Stewart's Shops, the Jose Wejebe Memorial Foundation, and Yeti. All 400 raffle tickets were sold.

Thank you to those who supported the event and made this year's festival such a success—we were especially pleased that the weather was so beautiful. We look forward to seeing you again on Saturday, August 10, 2024!

Sara Wilcox

Under the main tent.

Sara Wilcox

The weather certainly smiled on the festival this year.

Baylee Bordwell

A group of youngsters at the children's activities table.

Baylee Bordwell

Orvis's Tom Zemianek supervised the casting competition, which included a separate category for kids this year.

Sara Wilcox

AMFF Ambassador Steve Ramirez gave a presentation on fly fishing and mental health.

Sara Wilcox

The fly-tier's tent, as always, drew plenty of attention.

Krissy Wejebe stands between Costa's Steve Spurgeon (left) and Eric Crawford (right) in front of Guiding Star: The Legacy of Jose Wejebe. *AMFF's new exhibition honoring her late father debuted at the festival. Photo courtesy of Krissy Wejebe.*

Kathleen Achor

Following a screening of her short film After You've Gone, *AMFF Ambassador Rachel Finn discussed the filming experience.*

Sara Wilcox

Visitors explored the offerings of a wide variety of vendors.

AMFF Honors Andy Mill with the 2023 Heritage Award

AMFF President Fred Polhemus (right) congratulates Andy Mill for being the recipient of the museum's 2023 Heritage Award.

All photos by Joe Klementovich except where noted

Andy Mill was all smiles throughout the evening.

The American Museum of Fly Fishing hosted its Heritage Award event honoring Andy Mill on October 19 in New York City. The Heritage Award was established to honor and celebrate individuals and organizations whose commitment to the museum, the sport of fly fishing, and the conservation of our natural resources sets standards to which we should all aspire.

More than one hundred guests gathered on the water at Chelsea Piers to celebrate Andy Mill and a life spent outdoors. During a cocktail reception overlooking the Hudson River, artist Mark Susinno went to work at his easel to create a piece for the live auction while guests greeted old friends and new. Dinner kicked off with a tribute video narrated by Nicky Mill, Andy's son, which is available to view at amff.org/events in the event recaps section.

Under the gavel of newly minted auctioneer Alec Griswold, the evening moved into an electric live auction, a resounding success for the museum's fundraising initiatives. Enthusiasm was high when Andy's longtime friend and 2021 Izaak Walton Award recipient Captain Paul Dixon took the stage to introduce Andy. By random draw, Paul's commemorative YETI rambler held the winning door-prize ticket for a day of bluefin tuna fishing donated by Peter Jenkins. Paul paid it forward by trying his hand at live auctioneering, selling his door prize and raising additional funds for the museum.

AMFF President Fred Polhemus then presented a one-of-a-kind VK Steelworks–made Heritage Award to Andy. Val Kropiwinicki's incredible artistry was apparent as he explained how he tied in both Andy's love of tarpon fishing and his Olympic skiing history. Andy in turn made donations to the museum's permanent collection: one of only two copies of his *A Passion for Tarpon* book manuscript, the fly stretcher used for all his tournament wins, and one of the reels he had on the boat for all of those wins. He delivered a rousing and emotional speech to a standing ovation before Monte Burke joined him on stage for an insightful interview that reminded guests of the most compelling episodes of *The Millhouse Podcast*. The work Andy has done with that podcast, chronicling fly fishing's most iconic luminaries and guides, is among the many reasons he is our Heritage Award recipient.

AMFF would like to thank our Leadership Circle Donors: Mark Comora, Andy Mill, Johnny Morris, Briggs Forelli, Gary Grant, Captain Robert L. W. McGraw/The Donald C. McGraw Foundation/Black Rock Foundation, Rob Oden, Papa's Pilar Rum, Fred Polhemus, W. Dodd Russell, Paul Segal, Adelaide Skoglund and Bill Legg, Richard Tisch, Charles Thacher, Tom Weber, and Chris Wittman.

We are grateful to our auction donors: Arms Reach, David Atwood, Battenkill Preserve, Bear's Den, Scott Biron, Bob's Maple Shop, Bromley Mountain, Chandler 4 Corners, C. D. Clarke, Tom Colicchio, Mark Comora, Frank Conroy, Peter Corbin, Costa, Harry Desmond and Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing, Derek DeYoung, Paul Dixon, Duck Camp, Equinox Resort and Spa, Chris Evert, Fishewear, Fishpond, Tadd Fore and Ozark Water Fly Fishing, Pat Gerschel, Guy Harvey Foundation, James Heckman, Kerry Heffernan, Inn at Manchester, Peter Kaminsky, Richard Landerman, Ted LeBow, Liberty Skis, Carmine Lisella, Annie Margarita, Walter Matia, Patrick McEvoy, Andy Mill, Chris Miller, Mulligan's of Manchester, John Mundt, Old Custom Sports, Papa's Pilar Rum, Fred Polhemus, Poncho Outdoors, Justin Rea and StingRea Charters, REC Components, Mike Rice, Abby Schuster and Kismet Outfitters, Scientific Anglers, Scott Fly Rods, Simms, Smuggler's Notch Distillery, Solo Stove, Soul Fly Lodge, Rich Strolis, Mark Susinno, Tamarack Preserve, Temple Fork Outfitters, Three Forks Ranch in memory of the late Foster Bam, Richard Tisch, VAER, Vermont Teddy Bear Company, VK Steelworks, WhiteRoom Skis, Yellowfin, and YETI.

And to all those who attended the event and supported the auctions, we thank you.

Paul Dixon, recipient of AMFF's Izaak Walton Award in 2021, introduces his longtime friend Andy Mill.

Val Kropiwnicki

Val Kropiwnicki designed and tied this year's Heritage Award, Connected.923.SSP.

Auctioneer Alec Griswold works the crowd.

Award creator Val Kropiwnicki (right) explains the design of the Heritage Award. For a detailed description of the award, visit the event recaps section at amff.org/events.

Special guest Monte Burke (left) interviews the evening's honoree.

Andy Mills and artist Mark Susinno (right) sign the piece Susinno created during the cocktail reception.

Museum News

Global Aerial

Jim Schottenham

Above: An ariel view of the Monee Reservoir in the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

Right: One of two cases in the museum's specialized Illinois exhibit, featuring historical Orvis artifacts.

AMFF Exhibits in Illinois

AMFF recently partnered with the Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois, to provide a specialized exhibit focused on the 1893 Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. The proximity of the preserve to the Windy City made its Monee Reservoir Visitor Center the perfect place to display museum artifacts related to exhibitors at the World's Fair, including an A. G. Spalding & Bros. line of Kosmic branded fly-fishing tackle and the reels of Julius Vom Hofe and the Charles F. Orvis Company. The curated selection of artifacts also includes a few of the original bookplates used to produce Mary Orvis Marbury's seminal book *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*, an original 1874 patent Orvis fly reel, a trio of fly reels made by Julius Vom Hofe, and selected items from New York tackle retailer Abbey & Imbrie. The exhibit, titled *World's Finest: Fly Fishing Tackle from the 1893 Columbian Exposition*, is scheduled to run until the end of October 2023.

Recent Donations to the Collection

Mindy Green (Rowayton, Connecticut) donated a very special grouping of reels, rods, flies, and books formerly belonging to her grandfather, George M. L. La Branche. **Doris J. Dummer** (Earleville, Maryland) shared an impressive collection of Thomas & Thomas fly rods and reels. **Charles Carter Bond III** (Dover, Delaware) gave us an original P. A. Altmaier combination rod and reel, circa 1869.

Janet Post (Scottsdale, Arizona) sent us a copy of the 1772 illustrated Browne edition of *The Compleat Angler*. **Jim Heckman** (San Antonio, Texas) offered us a Hardy "On View," a popular-style fly wallet from the 1920s. And **Tom McGuane** (McLeod, Montana)—prolific author of books including *The Longest Silence: A Life in Fishing*—entrusted us with his fly-fishing vest.

AMFF Welcomes New Event and Program Manager

In July, Wendy Bordwell joined the staff at AMFF as event and program manager. Wendy brings years of experience overseeing events that ranged from small community workshops to regional affairs and fundraisers, most recently with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, New York, and the Georgi on the Battenkill Community Park and Museum in Shushan, New

York. She attended University of Connecticut, has a B.A. in liberal arts from Bennington College, and was mentored in museum practices by Ceil Esposito, director of the Plattsburgh Museum at SUNY. Wendy was raised in Middletown, Connecticut, and settled in Salem, New York, along the Battenkill, where she shares a home with her daughter, two dogs, and three cats. Occasionally, you may find her singing and playing guitar at local venues!

Baylee Bordwell

Wendy Bordwell

Sarah Foster

Summer break is a time in which children explore new things and learn new life skills. AMFF filled the month of July with opportunities for young anglers to explore fly tying, entomology, and gyotaku, and to get a general introduction to the art of fly casting. Huge thanks to the volunteers, parents, and participants of our Kids Clinics—see you in 2024!

Richard Lodge

The Old Reel Collectors Association's 2023 National Show and Convention featured a September 18 visit to the American Museum of Fly Fishing, where Curator Jim Schottenham treated fellow ORCA members to a private gallery tour.

CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Simpson

Born in England to an Irish mother and English father, **David Gray-Clough** is a lifelong fisherman. He has been a member of many fly-fishing clubs and has written about his experiences in award-winning stories. He has three books in print, the latest of which, *Yorkie Boys Go Fishing* (available on Amazon), tells of fishing adventures—some amusing, some reflective—from childhood to maturity. Gray-Clough has been both runner-up and finalist in the prestigious Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award and has awards in many short-story competitions in England and Ireland.

Author photo

R. W. (Rik) Hafer is a recently retired economist and a trout-fishing enthusiast. He has worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, was a distinguished research professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and most recently was the director of the Center for Economics at Lindenwood University. He currently is an adjunct professor at St. Louis University. In addition to his academic work, Rik has written several articles that have appeared in the *American Fly Fisher*. His most recent contribution was the three-part series "How Rainbow Trout Came to Missouri (and Your State Too)," for which he received the museum's 2021 Austin Hogan Award. He resides in St. Louis, Missouri.

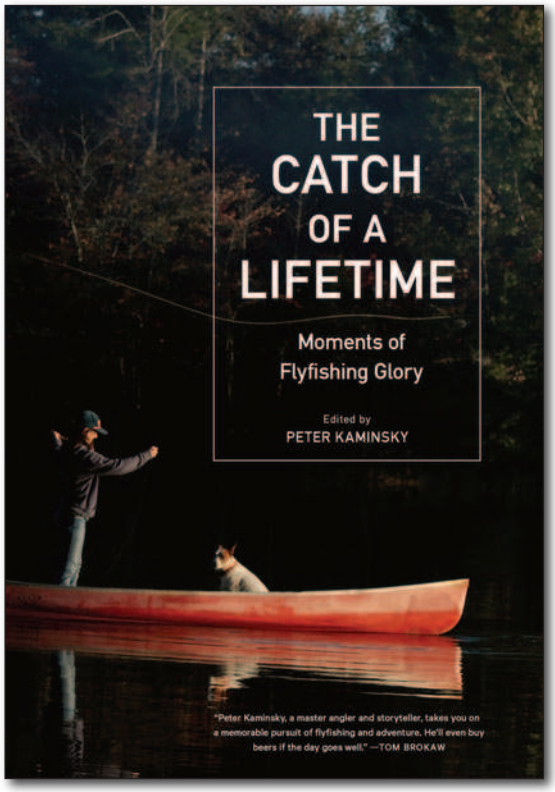
Bryan Eaton

Richard K. Lodge worked as a reporter, photographer, and daily newspaper editor during a career spanning four decades before retiring at the end of 2021. In 2014 he was named to the New England Academy of Journalists. Since 2005 he has worked as editor of the *Reel News*, the magazine of the nonprofit Old Reel Collectors Association (www.orcaonline.org). He is also writing a biography of Catskill fly tier Reuben "Rube" Cross. Lodge grew up fishing the farm ponds of southern Indiana for bluegill, bass, and catfish. These days he fly fishes for trout in the Catskills, New England, and elsewhere, and for stripers along the coast of Newburyport, Massachusetts, where he lives.

Short and Simple

What happened next was one of those moments when time almost slows to a stop, when your eyes instinctively open wide and you're aware that something is happening before it actually happens and the body reacts with a quick inhale reflex, an attempt to inject extra oxygen into the bloodstream. It was a moment of surprise, shock, and a little fear.

—Val Kropiwnicki, "Rain Blind,"
The Catch of a Lifetime



A NARRATIVE ESSAY—so simple, yet so satisfying. No deep understanding of character needed, no subplot, just the pivotal point. *The Catch of a Lifetime: Moments of Flyfishing Glory* (Artisan, 2023), edited by journalist Peter Kaminsky, is a collection of fishing essays that keeps popping up in conversations, e-mails, and social media posts. With the help of a few friends, Kaminsky takes us around the globe as anglers of all types pursue their catch of a lifetime.

I've carried this book with me everywhere for the past couple of weeks—peewee football games, physical therapy as I rehab my new ACL, the occasional quiet lunch—and I have soaked up every word, only to want more. I've replayed some of the stories in my head as if I were the one on the adventure. The book brings together multiple voices and writing styles, but all have an undertone born from a passion for—no, *an obsession with*—fly fishing.

I'm thankful to have trekked alongside some of our most respected raconteurs through these pages of boundless inspiration. Two other excerpts that lingered a little longer with me:

> Our emotions color our reality. When you are the angler, good fish always become great fish because that's the way it felt; that's the way you saw it. Accurate weights and measures are not always the stuff of great angling tales.
>
> —Peter Kaminsky, p. 41

> To be open to failing with grace is to be open to the possibility of encountering parts of you that have been submerged, like the trout, in realms unknown.
>
> —Marcelo Gleiser, p. 139

This fervor for the sport encapsulates how we approach things here at the museum. Whether it's a recently donated piece of tackle or a discovery within our own extraordinary collection, we experience a similar excitement regularly. Behind every piece of history there is a story. Like Kaminsky, we love to share these stories in as many different and engaging ways as we can, including within the pages of this journal. If you're a new reader to the *American Fly Fisher*, I hope you enjoy its rich, deep, and diverse content on a quarterly basis.

And be sure to get your hands on a copy of *The Catch of a Lifetime*—it may well lead you to yours.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Harry Desmond

Sarah Foster cradles her catch, a Housatonic River brown trout.

TAMARACK Preserve Ltd.

Upland Shooting • Angling • Sporting Clays

"A private club that endeavors to provide a relaxed and responsive atmosphere in which members may pursue fish, game, and fine dining."

www.TamarackPreserve.net

(845) 373-7084