The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

SPRING 2025 VOLUME 51 NUMBER 2

Trains and Trout and Plains

The editor's father, William T. Achor (far right), and a group with Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter in Plains, Georgia, 1995.

By the time my dad met Jimmy Carter, I was already a fly fisher. I'd already married a fly fisher, caught my first trout on the Beaverkill (black stonefly nymph!), fished a lot in Pennsylvania and the Adirondacks. My husband and I had made career choices based on the sport and moved north, away from the nation's capital.

Dad had always been a big Carter supporter, and after he retired, he served a couple of stints with Habitat for Humanity. I don't know whether he met the Carters more than once, but I did find this snapshot, which (I confidently say after some online sleuthing) was taken in front of the Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia, where Carter taught a Sunday school class. That's obviously Rosalynn and Jimmy in the middle; my father is on the far right, but not politically.

President Carter and I had fly fishing in common, and my dad liked that. He knew we'd fished common water—Big Hunting Creek, Spruce Creek—although I'm betting Carter had access to better spots. Jimmy Carter, arguably our fly-fishing-est president, died in December at age 100. On page 19, in "Jimmy Carter: President, Fly Fisher, Environmentalist," our own Trustee Rob Oden offers an appreciation and remembrance.

Not long after my dad's above-mentioned Carter encounter, writer Christopher Lessick went to college and, like so many do, fell in love. "The Ditch: A Nirvana" (page 14) pays tribute to a place in time, chronicling Lessick's obsession with Pennsylvania's Big Spring Creek and its abundant but elusive trout.

R. W. Hafer had so much to tell us about railroad advertising and so many good images to show us that we split his article in two. Part I of "Railroad Advertising, Nature, and Sport Fishing in America" (Winter 2025) focused on timetables, advertising that sold the scenery, and maps. Part II turns to magazines, newspapers, travel pamphlets, brochures, and posters—media formats that "often raised the level of design and artistry." Women, fly rod in hand, were often featured (and we follow suit on our cover). Railroads, no longer competing just among themselves, were fighting the automobile's existential threat to trains and had to up their advertising game. Check out some of that upped game, beginning on page 2.

This issue highlights two intriguing items in our collection. First, in his Gallery piece, Curator Jim Schottenham tells us about a tackle rarity, "The Gilbert L. Bailey Locking Reel Seat" (page 13)—rare no doubt in part because of the unfortunate timing of its invention and patent. Second, in Tying Traditions, Scott Biron looks for concrete evidence that Atlantic Salmon Federation founder Percy Nobbs tied his own flies after one he allegedly tied was generously donated to the museum. You'll find "Percy Nobbs: Building a Case for the Architect's Fly" on page 20.

Bob Popovics was honored posthumously with the 2025 Izaak Walton Award at the Edison Fly Fishing Show (page 26). Stephen E. Wright has received the 2024 Austin Hogan Award (page 27). And we want to recognize many of you, our supporters and contributors, volunteers and ambassadors, authors and donors (page 22). It's thanks to you that we are a museum.

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.

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ON THE COVER: *The 1913 issue of* In the Maine Woods. *From the Bangor Public Library Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl.*

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Railroad Advertising, Nature, and Sport Fishing in America

Part II

by R. W. Hafer

Railroad advertising increased the public's awareness of nature, encouraged people to travel to places where they could engage in outdoor recreation, and, in doing so, nurtured the development of sport fishing in the United States. As rail and travel industries grew after the Civil War, competition for passengers intensified. Many railroad companies thus sought a much wider audience for their promotional campaigns. Part I of this article (Winter 2025) focused on the railroad industry's use of timetables, advertising that sold the scenery, and maps. In this sequel, I examine their use of magazines and newspapers, travel pamphlets and brochures, and posters.

The wider range of advertising formats often raised the level of design and artistry. Some companies commissioned nationally recognized artists to produce images encouraging ridership. It is impossible to determine just how much effect enhanced railroad advertising art had on increasing passenger miles. Various promotional efforts did, however, help to cement in the public's mind the importance of railroads in their travel plans and, even if unintentionally, instill in the public a greater mindfulness for nature and interest in outdoor recreational activities.

Magazines and Newspapers

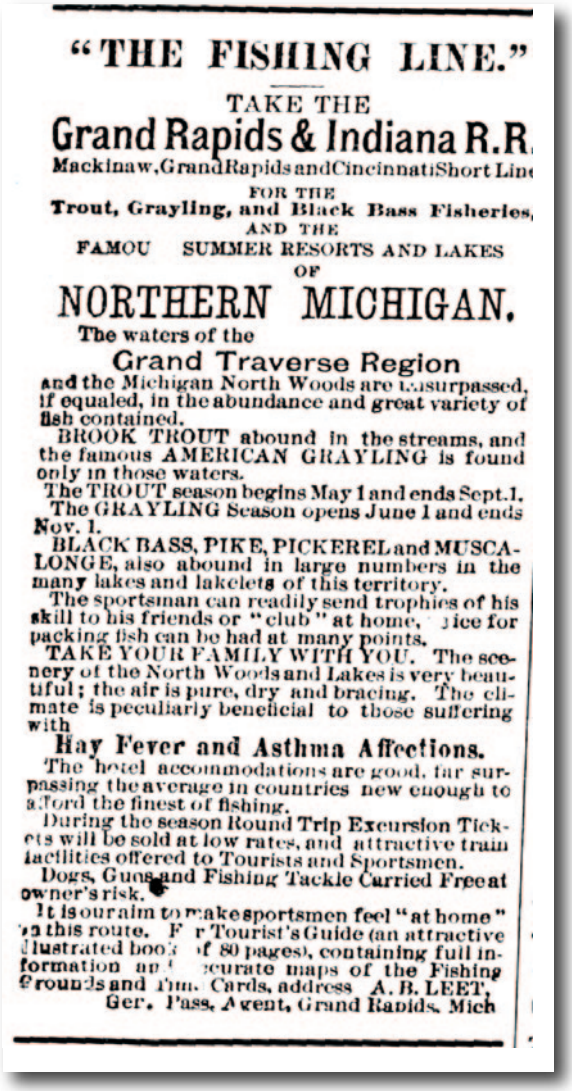
Railroads endorsed, often with great hyperbole, the destinations to which they traveled. This is clear in the advertisements that appeared in newspapers and magazines. Many of these ads no longer touted safety and comfort, nor did they always provide information about schedules or fares. The focus was on the allure of where the railroad could take you. With family incomes rising and urban life becoming more stressful in the final decades of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of people began to seek the outdoors as an escape. Travel for traveling's sake—especially among the growing middle class—emerged along with what has been called "romantic consumerism."[1]

Rising incomes gave rise to more leisure time, and with it more and more individuals began to pursue an increasing array of sporting experiences, such as cycling, camping, hunting, and fishing. For urban dwellers flocking to the country, the only sensible mode of transportation, especially for trips of any great distance, was by rail. After 1869, the transcontinental railroad lines to the West produced an immediate jump in tourist travel. Now a larger percentage of the public could and did visit the wonders of Yellowstone, Glacier, or the other national parks.[2] More and more accessed nature and the activities it offered by taking the train.

During the latter few decades of the 1800s, railroad advertising in national newspapers and magazines encouraged longer-distance travel.[3] These ads often embellished the truth to entice the curious. A Canadian Pacific Railway ad that ran on 15 June 1905 in the *New York Times* (page 15) offered to take "the sportsman who wants new places" to "easily reached haunts of fish and game, where [of course] excellent sport is assured." In this advertising copy, the Canadian Pacific made its point: whether you were a neophyte or seasoned sportsman (or sportswoman), it could convey you to the unspoiled grounds of easily caught fish and abundant game. If you were thinking about trying your hand at the increasingly popular pastime of sport fishing, you might also be curious what the railroad could offer.

Sometimes railroads focused their promotional dollars by placing ads in national sporting magazines like *Forest and Stream*.[4] Published in New York City under the editorship of noted author and conservationist Charles Hallock, every week the reader was informed of the latest in, as stated on its front page, "field and aquatic sports, practical natural history, fish culture, the protection of game, preservation of forests, and the inculcation in men and women of a healthy interest in outdoor recreation and study."[5] And it delivered. Each edition carried stories that might cover bird hunting in Georgia or salmon fishing in Maine, along with results from yacht races and shooting events across the country. The publication also provided opinion articles by leading figures in the areas of fish culture, hunting, and other sports.[6] Such a wide readership made it a perfect venue for railroads to promote their services.

Ads for the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad Company are illustrative of this sort. (Similar ads can be found in other comparable magazines of the day.) The



"THE FISHING LINE."

TAKE THE

Grand Rapids & Indiana R.R.

Mackinaw, Grand Rapids and Cincinnati Short Line

FOR THE

Trout, Grayling, and Black Bass Fisheries,

AND THE

FAMOU SUMMER RESORTS AND LAKES

OF

NORTHERN MICHIGAN.

The waters of the

Grand Traverse Region

and the Michigan North Woods are unsurpassed, if equaled, in the abundance and great variety of fish contained.

BROOK TROUT abound in the streams, and the famous AMERICAN GRAYLING is found only in those waters.

The TROUT season begins May 1 and ends Sept. 1.

The GRAYLING Season opens June 1 and ends Nov. 1.

BLACK BASS, PIKE, PICKEREL and MUSCALONGE, also abound in large numbers in the many lakes and lakelets of this territory.

The sportsman can readily send trophies of his skill to his friends or "club" at home, ice for packing fish can be had at many points.

TAKE YOUR FAMILY WITH YOU. The scenery of the North Woods and Lakes is very beautiful; the air is pure, dry and bracing. The climate is peculiarly beneficial to those suffering with

Hay Fever and Asthma Affections.

The hotel accommodations are good, far surpassing the average in countries new enough to afford the finest of fishing.

During the season Round Trip Excursion Tickets will be sold at low rates, and attractive train facilities offered to Tourists and Sportsmen.

Dogs, Guns and Fishing Tackle Carried Free at owner's risk.

It is our aim to make sportsmen feel "at home" on this route. For Tourist's Guide (an attractive illustrated book of 80 pages), containing full information and accurate maps of the Fishing Grounds and Time Cards, address A. B. LEET, Gen. Pass. Agent, Grand Rapids, Mich

Figure 1. Railroads often branded themselves to capture the attention of anglers. The Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad adopted the moniker "The Fishing Line" in its advertising. From Forest and Stream *(19 August 1880). Public domain.*

TO SPORTSMEN:

The Pennsylvania R. R. Co.,

Respectfully invite attention to the

SUPERIOR FACILITIES

afforded by their lines for reaching most of the TROUTING PARKS and RACE COURSES in the Middle States. These lines being CONTINUOUS FROM ALL IMPORTANT POINTS, avoid the difficulties and dangers of reshipment, while the excellent cars which run over the smooth steel tracks enable STOCK TO BE TRANSPORTED without failure or injury.

THE LINES OF

Pennsylvania Railroad Company

also reach the best localities for

GUNNING AND FISHING

in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. EXCURSION TICKETS are sold at the offices of the Company in all the principle cities to KANE, RENOVA, BEDFORD, CRESSON, RALSTON, MINNEQUA, and other well-known centers for

Trout Fishing, Wing Shooting, and Still Hunting.

Also, to

TUCKERTON, BEACH HAVEN, CAPE MAY, SQUAN, and points on the NEW JERSEY COAST renowned for SALT WATER SPORT AFTER FIN AND FEATHER.

L. P. FARMER, Gen'l Pass. Agent.

FRANK THOMSON, Gen'l Manager. feb17-tf

Figure 2. This ad for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company makes clear to whom it is aimed. Like other railroads, the Pennsylvania offered superior service and the best localities for hunting and fishing. From Forest and Stream *(19 August 1880). Public domain.*

Grand Rapids & Indiana—"The Fishing Line"—would get you to northern Michigan (the northern portion of the Lower Peninsula) where brook trout, bass, pike, and pickerel were said to abound (Figure 1). More enticingly, the ad reminds the reader that it serves the part of Michigan where "the famous AMERICAN GRAYLING is found only in those waters." Not everyone in the family an angler? That's okay. The ad suggests that you should simply "take your family with you" and enjoy the scenery.

If you were perusing the ads in that issue of *Forest and Stream*, you would not have missed the pitch by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (Figure 2). "TO SPORTSMEN" it shouts, before hyping its "superior facilities" that promise to convey all interested parties to trouting parks, race courses, and hunting areas—all of which are, of course, well known and well regarded.

Another ad that appears on the same page as these two is for the Pullman Car Company. Although not a railroad company per se—it produced the famous Pullman sleeper car (and its various styles) but did not operate a railroad—it actively promoted its product to those pursuing the outdoor life. The Pullman Company's ad alerted interested parties to the fact that it had for rent two of its sleeper cars specially fitted for hunting and fishing excursions. The Davy Crockett and the Izaak Walton came complete with a living room, sleeping quarters, a staff for cooking, space for fishing and hunting gear, and kennels for your dogs, if necessary.

Over time, the graphics of an ad became more prominent as the railroads competed for the tourist trade. The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad magazine ad from 1922 was all about taking you

deep into the Maine woods where "speckled beauties"—Eastern brook trout—would test your angling skills (Figure 3). From the graphic, should we assume that only the accomplished fly fisher need inquire?[7] Note also that there is no mention of rates or schedules: the ad sought to create demand for the destination and the experience. The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad was the company that would get you there.

The Great Northern Railway ad from the 4 April 1925 issue of the *Literary Digest* (Figure 4) is interesting for several reasons. First, the publication in which it appears was a popular general readership weekly with a circulation of about 1,400,000. Each issue covered topics ranging from foreign policy and national politics to religion, science, and the arts. In one issue it claimed to be the magazine for the "alert" woman, who was "found in every stratum of every community . . . doing their own work . . . [and] doing their own share of the community work—much more, it may be said, than their men are doing" in areas such as charity, politics, and the arts at all levels of society.[8] If the *Literary Digest* aimed to reach such a wide readership profile, the Great Northern's female-focused ad reinforces the idea that railroads sought to entice more interest by women.

Second, railroad ads in the *Literary Digest* were not common, by this time being far outnumbered by ads for automobiles and complementary goods.[9] This should not be surprising: automobile ownership increased to about twenty million cars in 1927 compared to slightly more than nine million just six years earlier. With the rise in auto ownership and use for travel, railroads' passenger revenue dipped 20 percent.[10]

Third, and more to the point, the ad announces that the Great Northern alone provides convenient access to Glacier National Park and other equally exotic destinations in the Northwest, such as Mount Rainier and Crater Lake National Parks. The copy's hook is that visiting Glacier affords a variety of experiences: hiking, horseback riding or, for the less adventuresome, a relaxing stay in the parks' hotels and chalets. The visual hook is the young woman (an "alert" one?) trying her hand at fishing. Clearly a neophyte—she is not clad in the standard uniform of the fly fisher as in the Bangor & Aroostook ad—she appears to be enjoying her effort at catching the "eager, gamey fish" that are promised to abound. Success for anyone is almost assured, says the text, noting that you will be rewarded with "a beautiful catch nearly any time of day you make the try." With a fish on

Figure 3. Railroad ads, like this Bangor & Aroostook Railroad newspaper ad from 4 January 1922, often added fishing images to the narrative to promote both its service and where it could take you. Public domain.

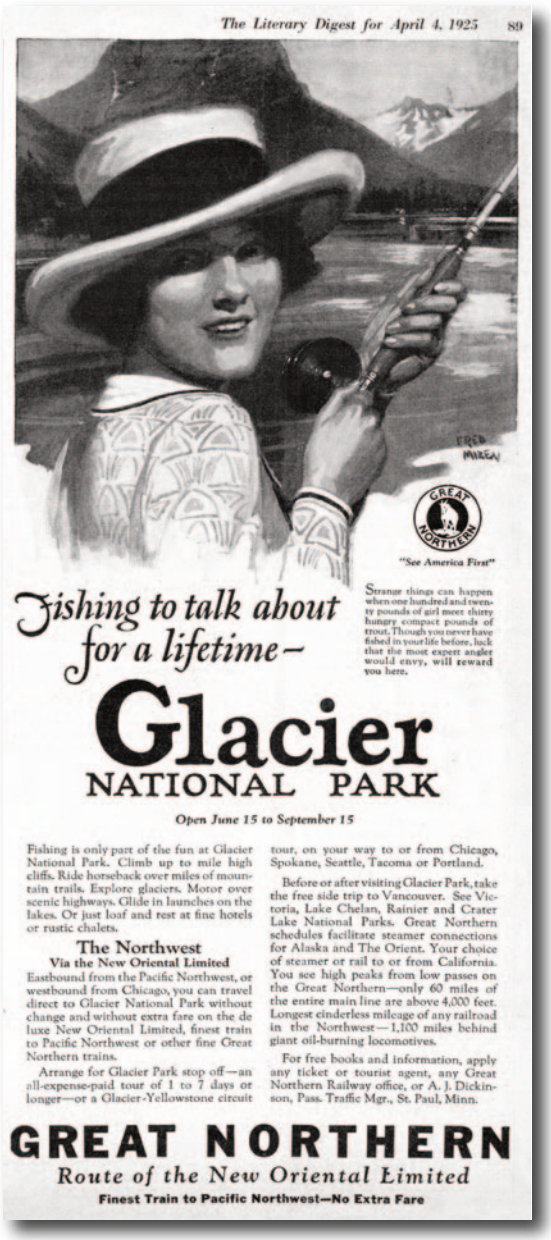
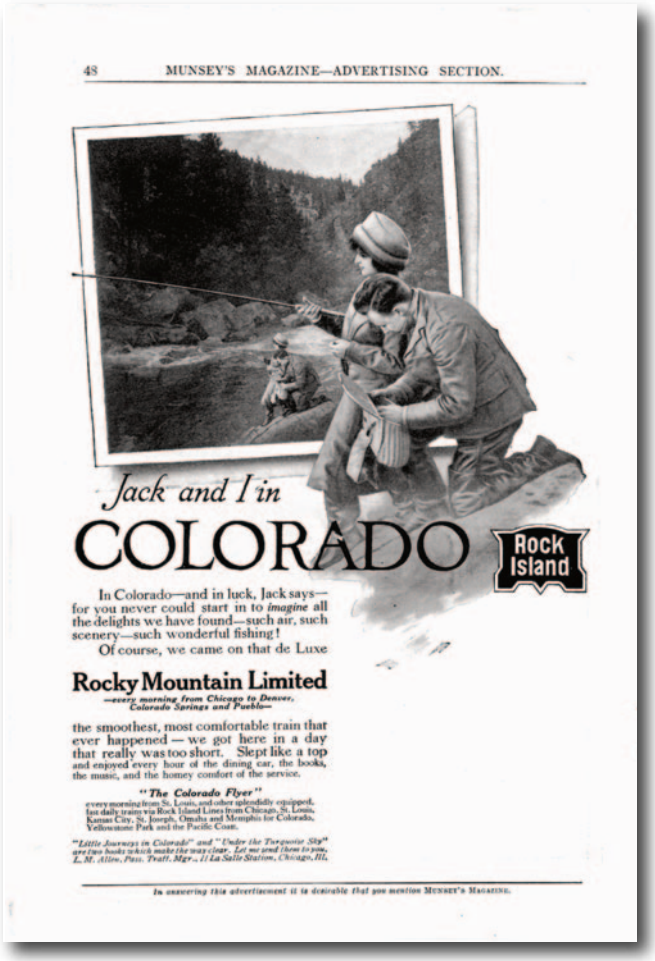


Figure 4. Railroads not only promoted their service but also the locations they served. Note here the use of a female angler in the Great Northern's ad for its service to Glacier National Park. From the Literary Digest *(4 April 1925). Author's collection.*


48 MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE—ADVERTISING SECTION.

Jack and I in

COLORADO

Rock Island

In Colorado—and in luck, Jack says—for you never could start in to *imagine* all the delights we have found—such air, such scenery—such wonderful fishing!

Of course, we came on that de Luxe

Rocky Mountain Limited

—every morning from Chicago to Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo—

the smoothest, most comfortable train that ever happened—we got here in a day that really was too short. Slept like a top and enjoyed every hour of the dining car, the books, the music, and the homey comfort of the service.

"The Colorado Flyer"

every morning from St. Louis, and other splendidly equipped, fast daily trains via Rock Island Lines from Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, St. Joseph, Omaha and Memphis for Colorado, Yellowstone Park and the Pacific Coast.

"Little Journeys in Colorado" and "Under the Turquoise Sky" are two books which make the way clear. Let us send them to you.

L. M. Allen, Pass. Traff. Mgr., 11 La Salle Station, Chicago, Ill.

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE.

Figure 5. Rock Island's Rocky Mountain Limited ad from Munsey's Magazine *informed the reader that it served Colorado. More important is the revelation that men and women could enjoy the wonderful fishing that it offers. Dan Cupper Collection. Used with permission.*

Figure 6. A common theme in railroad ads is to depict what one could expect to find at the destination. This Northern Pacific magazine ad from 1904 for Yellowstone focuses on the fishing, not the natural wonders. Dan Cupper Collection. Used with permission.

nearly every cast, why wouldn't you look into making the trip? Perhaps even as a single woman traveling alone?

This again illustrates a recurring marketing ploy used by the railroads: women appearing in ads that endorse taking the train to experience some outdoor activity, like fishing. We see it again in a Rock Island ad that ran in *Munsey's Magazine* (Figure 5).[11] The image is appealing: a young couple fishing somewhere in the invigorating mountains of Colorado. She is taking her turn while he creels his catch. The image is suggestive enough, but the text is really the hook. Reading like a letter home from the woman to, likely, a female friend, she extols the sights and delights of Colorado. The not-so-subtle hint to the letter's recipient is that they must visit Colorado (of course via the Rocky Mountain Limited) to experience (that word again) not only natural landscapes and scenery, but also the fishing.

Sometimes all that was used in an ad to attract the tourist/angler was to identify the destination and illustrate the delights that await. The Northern Pacific Railway ad from 1904 does just that (Figure 6). The destination is Yellowstone National Park, where apparently abundant trout are eager to take your fly. The copy informs us that six species are there to catch, that fishing is open to the public, and that "The Park is the Angler's Delight." If the ad has stirred your interest, simply submit a request and a few cents to Mr. Charles Fee at the company's home office in St. Paul to receive additional information about this dream destination.

Travel Pamphlets and Brochures

You've probably noticed that in most of the advertising, interested parties are asked to "contact our agent for a handsome booklet." This is because most of the print ads did not include any detailed information that a potential traveler might need, such as hotel accommodations and eateries, or even schedules and fares. The requested travel pamphlet would furnish information about hotels, campgrounds, fishing spots, guides for hire, and other bits of useful information for the tourist/angler. Although one may quibble whether this constituted advertising or not, railroads competed for passengers with the types of travel pamphlets and brochures they provided.

If you wrote in and acquired one these brochures, you were treated to images of what to expect should you visit the resorts or other stops on the railroad's line.[12] The cover of the 1884 Chicago & North Western Railway brochure suggests a tranquil

time if you chose to visit any one of the Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota resorts it serviced (Figure 7). The brochure included the perfunctory list of hotels, camps, and guides, but the cover makes clear that summer holidays are for everyone.

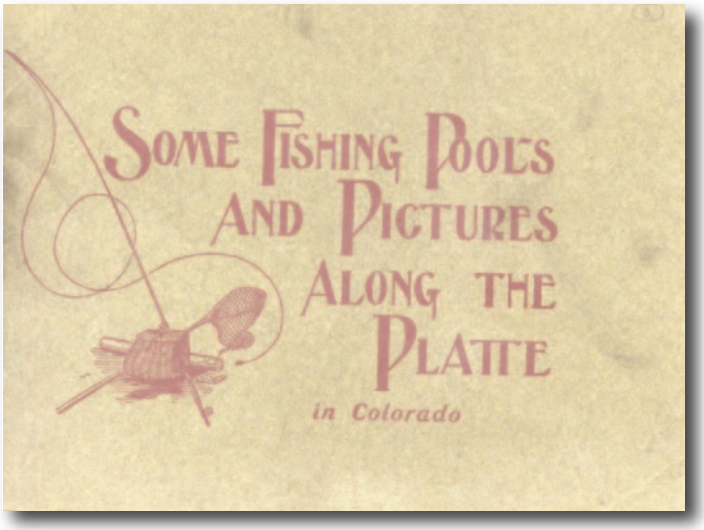
Another Chicago & North Western guidebook was aimed at "Sportsmen, Anglers, Health and Pleasure Seekers." It adorned its cover with images of one person waterfowling and another fishing. The interior title page leaves little to the imagination as to what one will find within:

A Book Descriptive of the Best Resorts in America for Deer, Bear, Goose, Duck, Grouse, and Snipe Shooting. Mascalonge, Pickerel, Pike, Bass, and Lake Trout and Brook Trout Fishing.

Some railroads cast a wide net when it came to attracting ridership. The cover of the Milwaukee Lake Shore & Western Railway pamphlet reveals a potpourri of possibilities along its routes (Figure 8). Inside one finds material pertaining to "industries, resources and attractions." And in keeping with my theme, the images focus on those recreational activities—fishing and hunting—that you could try in the "new North."

Another example of how a railroad combined promotion of its service with fishing is shown in the 1906 pamphlet produced by the Colorado & Southern Railway (Figure 9). This twenty-five-page pamphlet, available for 2 cents, includes descriptions and photographs of numerous well-known fishing spots on the Platte River. One picture shows a fly fisher landing a trout near Dome Rock, with a caption that reads "Where the big fellows are." The point is clear: the Colorado & Southern was the railroad to take if you wanted to fish for trout in any of these locations on the Platte River in Colorado.

From this limited sample of travel pamphlets and brochures, it should be apparent that railroads actively promoted not only their service but the recreational activities that the interested tourist could experience simply by taking their



Clockwise from above: Figure 7. Many railroad travel brochures, like this 1884 cover for a Chicago & North Western Railway brochure, targeted women. Like the two properly attired women on this cover, enjoyable outdoor activities were available to all. Public domain.

Figure 8. This Milwaukee Lake Shore & Western pamphlet (circa 1888) makes clear that it serves a wide variety of interests, from fishing to hunting to logging to manufacturing. Public domain.

Figure 9. Some railroads produced pamphlets that focused on what was found along its tracks. This 1906 brochure from the Colorado & Southern, complete with descriptions and photographs, was one such fishing guide. Courtesy of Colorado Railroad Museum.

Figure 10. A relatively original form of railroad advertising was the magazine In the Maine Woods. *Produced by the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad, it featured articles about many possible outdoor activities in Maine; of course, the railroad's service to the area is mentioned. Source: Bangor Public Library Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. Public domain.*

Figure 11. This iconic Union Pacific poster from 1869 boasts all the advertising features of the day: eye-catching images and type, bright color, and information. Public domain.

train. One railroad took the idea of the informational brochure a step further. Beginning in 1901, the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad began publishing a magazine called *In the Maine Woods*. This annual publication, which ran about 200 pages, included perfunctory railroad maps and schedules, but also ads for everything outdoor related: guides, hotels, taxidermists, suppliers of guns, fishing equipment, and camping equipment. A large portion of each publication was devoted to articles on fishing, hunting, camping, and canoeing in Maine. Because the locales for the various sporting activities were reached by taking a Bangor & Aroostook train, readers would naturally link the railroad to Maine's outdoor attractions.

It was not uncommon for the cover of *In the Maine Woods* to feature a woman engaged in some outdoor activity, as shown by the 1913 issue (Figure 10). The fisherwoman—again note that she is a fly fisher—has caught her trout and obviously needs no assistance landing it. This cover clearly implies that the female angler can enjoy her time on the water, perhaps even alone. And she can do this by riding the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad to a Maine retreat.

Another feature of the magazine was that some of the articles were written by women and about women's involvement in the outdoors.[13] This in part reflects the influence of the work of Cornelia "Fly Rod" Crosby. As I noted in Part I, she was a Maine guide who gained fame and notoriety from her newspaper and magazine articles that encouraged everyone, men and women, to sample the many outdoor activities Maine offered. As an employee of the Maine Central Railroad, a competitor to the Bangor & Aroostook, her work created interest in getting to the outdoors. The point is that railroads often pitched their marketing directly to women in an attempt to get them to take the train and perhaps take up the sport of fishing.

Posters

Many railroads included posters in their portfolio of advertising media to spark interest in train travel. And to be clear, by *poster* I do not always mean something large, like the 2-by-3-foot movie posters you might be familiar with. The iconic 1869 Union Pacific poster (Figure 11) measured only 8½ by 20⅞ inches. Although small, this example of an early railroad poster was similar to contemporary circus posters: brightly colored, replete with fonts of different types and sizes, and full of information. With such

advertisements posted on walls around town and in depots, the idea was to attract attention and, with that task accomplished, to answer as many questions as the poster's creator thought a customer might have.

Note that there actually is a train in Figure 11, but it is dwarfed by the elk. Why have an elk dominate a railroad poster? Perhaps it was meant to suggest that something unusual awaits the curious traveler in the newly opened but still wild West.[14] The poster also has about a dozen different headlines describing the route and the availability of luxurious riding cars and hotels. There is even a suggestion to miners looking for gold or silver ("Now is the time to seek your Fortunes"). What's missing is any information regarding schedules and fares. If the poster captured your attention, all of that mundane stuff could be acquired from one of the company's ticket agents.

As railroads sought to attract riders, some advertisements displayed large panoramic vistas of western landscapes to rouse the public's interest in these remote destinations. Famous artists of the day were commissioned to produce such images, and they were often displayed on the walls of ticket agents and train depots. Their purpose was to "sell" the landscapes through which, and the destinations to which, that specific railroad could take you. It was all accessible, if only you took the train. As I argued in Part I of this article, these ads also helped the public associate rail travel with nature.

Some railroads had posters that were not unlike the covers of their travel brochures. One Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway's travel poster (Figure 12) shows a variety of folks—some hunting, others fishing—heading out to unspecified settings that are "The Best Shooting and Fishing Grounds." Others are off to "The Most Attractive Summer Resorts." Both, of course, are accessible by taking this railroad. Notice that the poster shows travelers both heading out on their adventure and heading back. Don't they all look excited by the prospects awaiting them? Don't those returning, some with their harvest, seem delighted with their forays into the countryside? After all, at minimum they saw "The Finest Scenery in the World." The poster, like much railroad advertising, was there to pique the public's curiosity about taking the train to get there.

By the end of the 1800s, some railroads recognized that simple yet sophisticated imagery could not only increase passenger demand but also differentiate their service from others. One such example of this was the art poster. Art posters in the United States adopted stylistic forms that were already prevalent in London and Paris. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, for example, engaged critically acclaimed graphic artists to interpret its motto, "First Class in Every Respect." In one designed by William W. Denslow, one half of the poster, done in bright red and yellow, shows a stylishly dressed young woman calmly making her way through a depot. The other half of the poster, done in monotone gray, shows a tangled crowd of travelers apparently waiting to claim

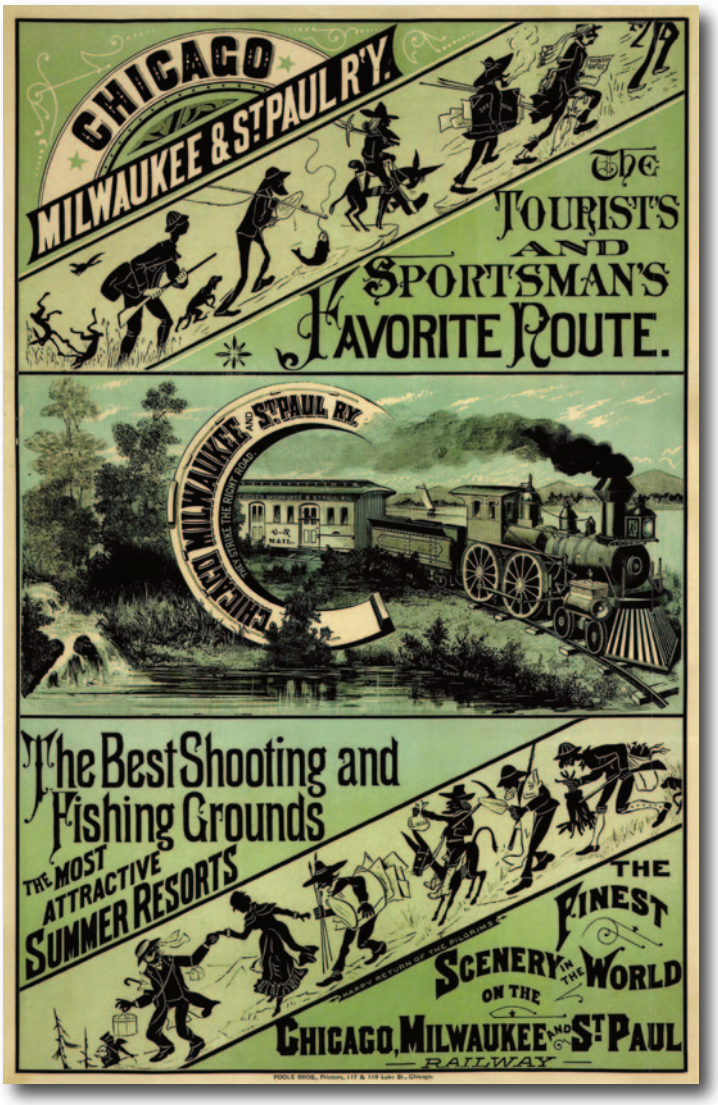


Figure 12. Like other such travel posters, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway poster boasts that it can transport you to the best, most attractive, and finest of whatever you seek. The images indicate that it serves riders with a wide variety of pursuits. Author collection.

Figure 13. Some railroads adopted the art nouveau style to promote their business. This 1896 Ethel Reed poster for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company was used to illustrate its motto, "First Class in Every Respect." Public domain.

Figure 14. Some travel posters adopted more color, simple designs, and travel-compelling themes. This 1903 poster for the Rock Island System accomplished those goals while enticing anglers and families to visit Colorado. Public domain.

their luggage from a pile of baggage. The only way you know it is an ad for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway—obviously the railroad she took—is that the company's name appears on her handbag in fairly small print.

The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway also commissioned graphic artist Ethel Reed to design some of its art posters. In a poster from 1896 (Figure 13), a young woman is dressed in a style reminiscent of a Toulouse-Lautrec painting. This is the only image, hovering over the name of the railroad. Like the previously described poster, it captures the company's desired image of class and exclusivity. If you want to be known by the company you keep, perhaps this is the railroad for you.

As the world rolled into the twentieth century, railroad advertising developed a more realistic, more pragmatic, and more travel-compelling approach. This is represented by the colorful yet simple lines of the Rock Island System's 1903 poster marketing its service to Colorado (Figure 14). The large-format poster shows a man who has hooked a large trout on some unspecified river somewhere in beautiful Colorado, much to the delight of (one presumes) his wife and child. What should one take away from this *railroad* poster? The fishing in Colorado is fabulous, the setting gorgeous, and the entire family can enjoy camping in the mountains of Colorado. The poster sells it all: service, destination, and refreshing activity.

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, railroads faced two major threats. One was an increasingly difficult business environment that caused some railroads to curtail or even cancel their national advertising campaigns.[15] The other was the automobile. Cars became more affordable to an increasing number of households, and more and more roads were being built. Railroads weren't just competing amongst themselves for passengers; now a new transportation technology posed an existential threat. Given the public's emerging love affair with the automobile, railroads tried to ameliorate the impact on lost passenger revenues by advertising on billboards along the growing web of roadways across the nation. These ads

often employed a simple, straightforward approach, using colorful images with limited text to catch the speeding motorist's eye. A 1912 billboard for the Santa Fe Railroad showed a family riding in spacious comfort in one of its cars heading to California. Especially for long-distance travel, the train still offered a faster and more comfortable trip than one could ever expect traveling by car. Indeed, such attempts to lure back those planning long trips by car lasted well into the mid-twentieth century.[16]

By the 1920s and 1930s, the newer railroad posters often reflected commercial artist Maurice Logan's dictum that they "should give broad impressions rather than details, and yet the picture should depict the scene unmistakably."[17] This style is illustrated in many of Logan's easily recognized posters for the Southern Pacific Railroad. An example is the 1923 poster that promotes Lake Tahoe (Figure 15), one of the western destinations served by the Southern Pacific. The images are abstract but clearly understandable: whether fishing or boating, everyone (note again the use of women in the poster) will enjoy their time at Lake Tahoe. Not much else is needed to sow the idea that Lake Tahoe is a tranquil destination. Aside from the railroad company's name across the bottom, there is no contact information. Again, if the poster did its job, you'll figure out how to contact the Southern Pacific.

The economic woes of the Great Depression were devastating to the tourism industry in general and railroads in particular. Passenger miles plunged from 31,718 million in 1828 to 16,369 in 1933.[18] The public's increased reliance on the automobile continued to encroach on railroads' once-dominant position in the travel industry. To compete, railroads continued to emphasize their ability to transport passengers long distances faster than ever. Every railroad seemed to have a train named the Streamliner or Flyer or Zephyr or something equally expressive of speed. Indeed, many railroads' promotional campaigns used only an image of the train itself—and usually a fast-moving locomotive—as the focal point. Even though the posters might include a destination—"Summer in New England" for the 1938 New Haven Railroad poster, for example—it was the sleek, modernistic style of the new trains and their speed that was used to attract riders.[19]

Speed and style were one thing, but the lure of the destination and what it offered remained an important point in many posters. One of the more stylized versions is exemplified by the 1930s poster for the British railway company London and North Eastern Railway, or LNER (Figure 16).[20] With the teaser "Try a Fly," the poster's salmonids implore the viewer to contact the LNER for a list of the trout and salmon rivers it served.

Figure 15. This 1923 Maurice Logan poster was part of a series depicting representative Western scenes that became synonymous with the Southern Pacific. Public domain.

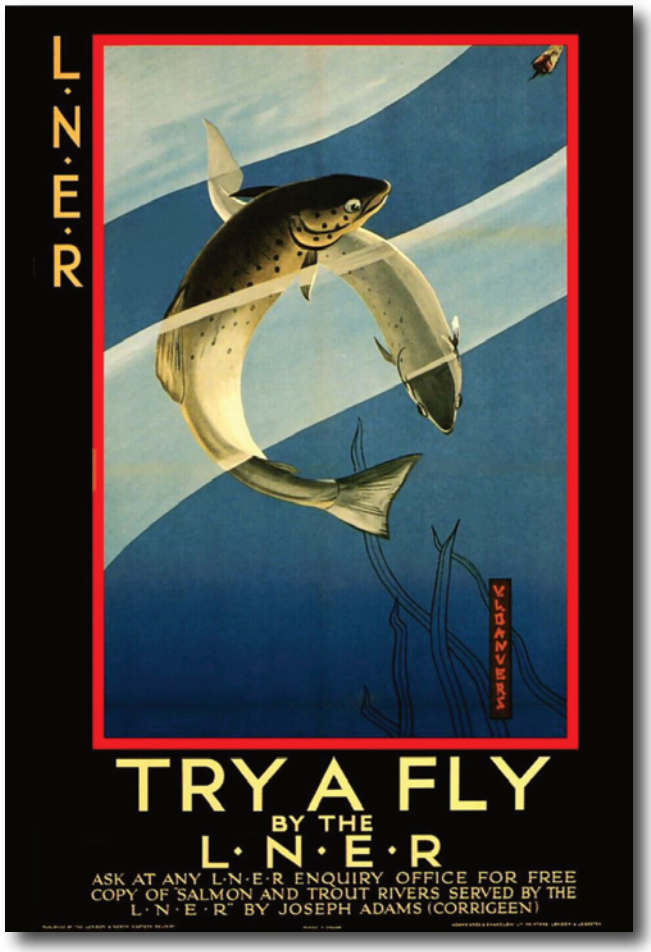


Figure 16. The evocative yet striking artistry of the 1930s travel poster is illustrated with this example from the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The wording and subject of the poster are sublime. Source: Library of Congress.

In keeping with this type of imagery, the Pullman Company hired Chicago artist William P. Welsh in the 1930s to produce a series of posters promoting their Pullman cars. Even though Pullman did not operate its own trains, they were an integral part of the railroad business and railroad tourism. Unlike contemporary posters featuring masculine engines and sleek trains hurtling across the countryside, Welsh's Pullman posters featured stylish young women, always unaccompanied, in a variety of outdoor settings: skiing, sailing or, as in the poster shown here, fishing (Figure 17). The imagery sells the service: by taking a Pullman car to Colorado, you too could enjoy fishing in some beautiful mountain stream where the trout are abundant. "Vacation lands are calling," so why not go? And if you rode in a Pullman car, you'd get there in "safety & comfort." These were the Depression years, and not everyone could afford the luxury of riding in a Pullman car. The poster not only advertises the tranquility of fishing in Colorado, but also the exclusivity of getting there.

A Final Note

During their heyday, railroads employed enticing and beautiful promotional materials to attract riders. Because producing such heavily illustrated advertising was costly, these campaigns probably were not sensible from a profit-maximizing perspective.[21] Even though passenger traffic accounted for a minor portion of railroads' revenues, competition for the recreational traveler remained fierce.

The limited sample of advertising media used here shows that in their attempt to increase ridership, railroads certainly influenced the public's awareness of the outdoors and its associated recreational activities. Without the railroads, many (and here the focus was on those living in the larger metropolitan areas of the country) likely would not have ventured very far—if at all—into the countryside. Railroads exploited their near-monopoly on long-distance travel. Before the rise of the personal automobile, access to wilderness areas in Maine or Michigan or Colorado was accomplished only by rail. Yes, there was transportation at the local level (carriages and wagons), but you had to take the train to get there. And so the railroads that could promoted their ability to get the interested angler (or hunter or tourist) to these enviable destinations.

These advertising examples indicate that it was not uncommon for railroads to feature young women in promotional campaigns. Women often were shown riding in the comfort and safety of a passenger car. Sometimes they were shown to be engaged in relaxing pastimes, such as canoeing or fishing. And if fishing, more often than not, they were fly fishing for trout, that most regal of all game fish (or so went the hype of the day). These promotional images encouraged women to ride the train, even if unaccompanied, and challenged whatever Victorian barriers of "proper" behavior remained. In part because railroads validated such activity through their advertising, fishing would become an "acceptable" pastime for young ladies.

Figure 17. The Pullman Company commissioned William P. Welsh to produce posters that featured its patrons instead of its reputation of safety and comfort. This poster is one of several featuring stylish young women in a variety of outdoor settings. Fred Ash Collection. Used with permission.

Endnotes

1. For a discussion of romantic consumerism, see Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015), 114–16. Let's not be naïve about this: because the bulk of leisure travel was done by those in middle- to higher-income brackets, the majority of whom were white, most of the ads are aimed at them. This seems an easy criticism, until one considers modern advertising, in which it seems that most ads depict higher-income individuals or families, the majority of whom are white and young.

2. Among others, see Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Railroads and the Legacy of Our National Parks,* 5th ed. (Lanham, Md.: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2011).

3. It has been suggested that the popularity of national magazines arose partly because railroads brought about long-distance travel. It became possible for someone living in St. Louis who saw an ad for a store in Chicago to actually travel there to shop. Railroads reduced travel times immensely and thus helped nationalize brands. See James D. Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865–1920* (New York: Greenwood Press), 18–19.

4. About the same time that *Forest and Stream* first appeared—it debuted on 14 August 1873—so did the *American Angler*. Later, popular magazines such as *Sports Afield* and *Outdoor Life* would be published.

5. *Forest and Stream*, 14 August 1873, 1.

6. Contributors to *Forest and Stream* reads like a who's who of conservation and outdoor sports of the day. Besides Hallock, contributors included George Bird Grinnell, Henry William Herbert (Frank Forester), Livingstone Stone, Spencer Fullerton Baird, George Pinchot, Seth Green, and Theodore Roosevelt, to name a few.

7. I am sure novices and anglers using bait were just as welcome, so the use of a fly fisher here and in other similar ads is interesting, especially because they must have been a small minority of the fishing public.

8. "Alert Women of 1926," *The Literary Digest* (10 July 1926, vol. 90, no. 2), 80.

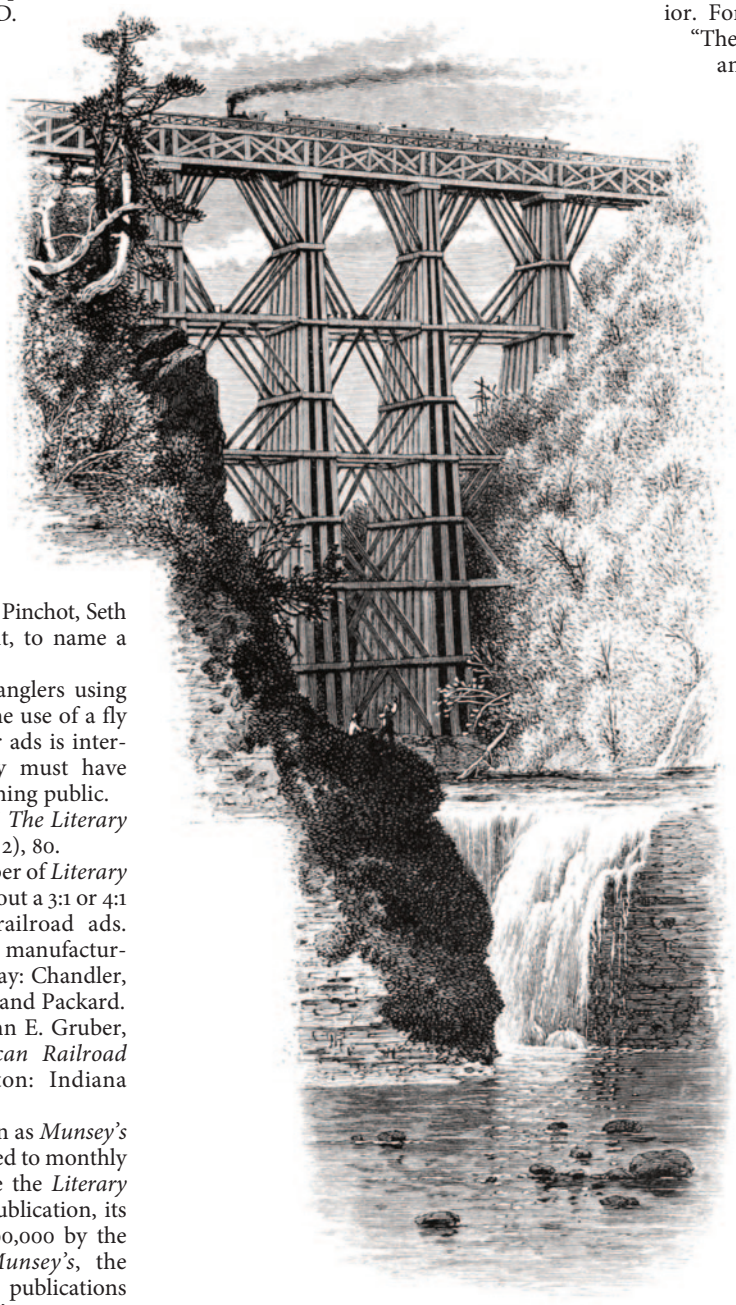
9. Looking through a number of *Literary Digest* issues in 1926 suggests about a 3:1 or 4:1 ratio of automobile ads to railroad ads. Advertisers included companies manufacturing higher-end models of the day: Chandler, Hudson, Franklin, Hupmobile, and Packard.

10. Michael E. Zega and John E. Gruber, *Travel by Train: The American Railroad Poster, 1870–1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 50.

11. *Munsey's Magazine* began as *Munsey's Weekly* in 1889; in 1891, it switched to monthly publication. The magazine, like the *Literary Digest*, was a general-interest publication, its circulation hovering around 700,000 by the late 1890s. Advertising in *Munsey's*, the *Literary Digest*, and other such publications was indicative of the railroads' attempt to reach a wide audience, one that included urban and rural readers of both sexes.

12. Railroads were well aware that many who requested their pamphlets and brochures probably would not take the train. The pamphlets were so attractive that many used them as what we'd call coffee-table art. Even so, the idea was to keep the name of the railroad in the public's mind.

13. One such article, which appeared in the 1904 edition, was written by a Mrs. James A. Cruikshank. Titled "The Woman's Standpoint," it states, "As a rule, modern women are supposed to prefer ease rather than exercise, conventionality rather than originality and luxury rather than pioneer simplicity. Yet the woman who has camped in Maine, or who has made one of its many wonderful canoe tours, living the simple woods life, wearing old clothes, sleeping on balsam boughs with the sky for roof, photographing wild creatures, fishing for salmon or trout, or hunting big game, comes home and tells her story with all the enthusiasm of the school girl." Mrs. James A. Cruikshank, "The Woman's Standpoint," *In the Maine Woods* (1904), 124.



From William Cullen Bryant, Picturesque America, *Vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1872), 353.*

14. *Wild* is an apt term. Much of the territory through which the transcontinental lines traveled was unsettled. For those who tried to establish homes, nature's harsh reality was a constant threat to survival.

15. Railroads also came under heavy regulatory pressure at this time. The Hepburn Act of 1906, named after Iowa Congressman William Hepburn, was a major blow to the railroad industry's noncompetitive behavior. For more, see George M. Smerk, "The Elkins Act, the Hepburn Act, and the Mann-Elkins Act," in William D. Middleton, George M. Smerk, and Roberta L. Diehl, eds., *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 924–27.

16. See, for example, R. W. Hafer, "Railroad Advertising, Nature, and Sport Fishing in America, Part I," *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 2025, vol. 51, no. 1), 10–19. Figure 10 on page 15 illustrates the Santa Fe "Big Dome" lounge cars in 1958.

17. Maurice Logan, cited in Zega and Gruber, *Travel by Train* (61). Logan's designs were so popular and successful in connecting the Southern Pacific Railroad to California destinations that his work appeared well into the 1930s.

18. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office: 1960), 430. It should be noted that passenger miles traveled did not return to 1928 levels until 1941.

19. Fans of the television series *Agatha Christie's Poirot* will recall that the opening sequence uses an art deco image of a stylish, speeding locomotive, evocative of flair, elegance, and, perhaps, some danger.

20. The company was created by the Railways Act of 1921 and operated from 1923 until the British rail system was nationalized in 1948. The LNER served the areas north and east of London.

21. One contemporary critic wrote, "I don't think the present railway advertising of the United States is worthy of the gentlemen who originated it, or worth the money spent on it." If this naysayer were just some pundit, it would be one thing. But the author of this quote was W. L. Agnew, the advertising agent for the Great Northern Railway in the late 1890s. Moreover, his critique appeared in *Printers' Ink*, a leading professional publication for those in the advertising business. W. L. Agnew, "On Railway Advertising," *Printers' Ink* (5 April 1899), 3–4.

The Gilbert L. Bailey Locking Reel Seat

In the early days of American fishing tackle, rod and reel manufacturers were not always on the same page. Early imported tackle had relied on metal clamps or an iron spike through the wooden rod handle to hold the reel in position. American rod makers, however, typically provided rudimentary "reel seats" that consisted of either sliding bands to fit over a reel foot or a mortised area designed to securely nestle the reel in place. This created challenges for nineteenth-century anglers, who struggled to attach various reels to new rods from leading tackle companies because the reel-seat and reel-foot sizes often didn't match. As a result, collectors of rods and reels often find themselves disappointed by the damaged attempts of earlier anglers to make the pieces fit together.

Gilbert L. Bailey, a resident of Portland, Maine, came up with a solution to more securely attach the reel to the rod without needing to modify either piece of equipment. On 20 October 1883, Bailey filed for a U.S. patent for his "Reel-Fastening for Fishing-Rods" invention.[1] He designed a cammed lever that allowed a metal sliding band to lock into place, effectively securing the reel seat to the rod. The patent, numbered 294429, was granted on 4 March 1884. But the timing of Bailey's invention wasn't ideal, which may have contributed to the rarity of these locking cam bands today. Between the time Bailey submitted his patent and when it was granted, the National Rod and Reel Association announced that major manufacturers had standardized reel plates and seats,[2] making inventions like Bailey's unnecessary.

The small size and discreet placement of Bailey's invention on the rod made it easy to overlook, as it was often hidden when used to secure the reel. By sharing this image, we can ensure that these unique and obscure devices are no longer forgotten. I'm sure Mr. Bailey would appreciate that.

Jim Schottenham
Curator

Photos by Jim Schottenham

Thos. Conroy rod with Bailey's patented reel seat, 1885. Gift of Paul Schwindt. 1980.043.001.

ENDNOTES

1. Gilbert L. Bailey. Reel-Fastening for Fishing-Rods. U.S. Patent 294429, filed 20 October 1883 and issued 4 March 1884. https://patents.google.com/patent/US294429A/en?oq=US294429. Accessed 7 March 2025.
2. News of this arrangement was published in the *Paterson (N.J.) Weekly Press* on 20 December 1883 on page 4, top of column 5, in the Piscatorial section of the "Local Matters" column. https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=MZHHodlIDtoC&dat=18831220&printsec=frontpage&hl=en. Accessed 7 March 2025.

The Ditch: A Nirvana

by Christopher Lessick

The author with a fish on in one of the first turns above the parking lot at Big Spring Creek. Photo courtesy of the author.

The term *catch and release* often confuses people who are unfamiliar with fishing. Their confusion likely compares to fishing folk who are amazed that such people exist. But when I think about it—conservation and sustainability aside, of course—I realize it *is* absurd. Often submerged to our waists, we spend hours gingerly navigating unseen, slick rocks in moving water; casting, twitching, pulling, reeling; standing dead still, for fear of spooking a fish; and tying flies (some of us) for hours beforehand. Then we leave with nothing more than what we brought—often less, in fact, as flies vanish from vest patches while we're hiking through brush, branches snatch flies out of midair despite meticulously tied knots, and invisible crags or sticks below the water's surface become magnetic vise grips that clamp down on our hooks. To many, catch and release probably seems—understandably so—downright silly. After all that labor, how could you not want something to show for it?

Consider the investment of time and effort that ultimately results in . . . nothing. All you get is older. Maybe a bit smarter. Still, there you stand, looming over a fish in a clear pool next to a boulder, trying to cajole it into chomping down on the fly you've drifted past it what, twenty times now? Thirty? You've been there so long you've practically named the fish, had conversations with it. You become the picky fish's personal chef, tying on different bugs, changing the menu every few minutes, but it's *still* not hungry enough. You think back to biology class and compare brains, unsure that size matters after all. Your most realistic patterns and convincingly natural casts can't persuade even a pea-sized brain. Finally, maybe, you hook it, fight it, revel (if you remember to) in the moment that never lasts, and then let the fish go, watch it flit away downstream. Once more, you leave with nothing.

But the stories come home with us. They become etched in memory, and some even rise to the height of legend—at least in our own minds. For me, a particular stream is engraved in this way, preserved in time, not just because of the fish I eventually caught there, but for its own perfection. For me, it was nirvana.

Big Spring Creek

Tucked in among trees, hills, farms, and not much else in the southcentral Pennsylvania countryside, Big Spring Creek sidles lazily northward until it empties into Conodoguinet Creek. At one time it offered perhaps the most humbling of fly-fishing experiences. In the small gravel parking lot, license plates on vehicles often represented several states; folks drove from all over to get frustrated. My own three years fishing there during my time as a student at Shippensburg University

forced me to grow up as a fly fisher. Between classes—sometimes with only three hours to spare—I sped out of town on the two-lane Ritner Highway, Route 11. In just less than twelve minutes, I'd be casting, mentally wrestling 18-inch native brook trout (or big rainbows and browns, long-ago escapees from the old hatchery built at the top of the spring) and trying at once to both conjure them and coax or charm them into taking my fly. All modesty aside, my knot-tying came to rival that of modern-day machinery in those years, as the one thing I did most often was change flies.

The stream, a limestone spring, features a silky gray bottom and water that's clearer than my wife's memory. Almost anywhere you look, the trout are so visible you can practically count their scales, even perceive their mood. At some Pennsylvania limestone streams—particularly Falling Spring Branch and Letort Spring Run—if you casually saunter to the bank for a peek, the trout dart away quicker than you can say, "There's one." The typical protocol at some of these streams is fishing on your knees about 10 or 15 feet back from the water's edge.

But here at the top of Big Spring, these trout didn't seem to care if you carried a fishing pole or galloped along the stream dressed in a bear suit. Passersby had little effect on most of them, especially the bigger ones. The clumsiest angler could slap a spooled tangle of blaze-orange fly line right onto the surface above those trout, and most would hardly flinch. Whether it came from the knowledge they'd never end up as dinner or the simple fact that surviving that long means not falling for counterfeit food (feathers and fur spun around metal hooks), these trout had attitude. This was their house.

The top section, not even a couple tenths of a mile long, was called "The Ditch," a moniker whose origin I don't know. Despite the uninviting name, this stretch afforded anyone interested in catching fish a wonderful opportunity for frustration. Downstream, special regulations applied for another mile and a half, but fishing the Ditch practically required a special permit from the governor himself.

"Heritage angling" was the name of the game, and it entailed strict rules: fly fishing only; single fly; limited length of monofilament line; barbless hooks; and, of course, strictly catch and release. Let's be clear: the deck is hugely stacked in the trout's favor. Apply these regulations, and the only advantage our large brain affords us is the ability to spot them. But when you walked along the stream and saw them, you understood. These fish seemed mellow enough that any nimble hiker not afraid of getting wet could reach down and net one right out of the water.

The rules were enforced, though. Officers of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission would walk right up beside you at any moment, as if they'd materialized out of the morning mist. I remember numerous times being asked to retrieve my line from the water to show my fly to a fish warden. I have great respect for these officers who have sworn to protect our waterways and lands. Even fishing by myself on a frigid morning on the second day of January—snow on the ground, air as cold as needles—a warden pulled in to the parking lot, got out of what I'm sure was a warm, cozy truck, and crunched through the few inches of snowpack to check my license, inspect my hook, ask if I'd had any luck so far. And I was the only person fishing.

The anglers of yesteryear apparently had it best. A fellow fisherman once told me about journals kept long ago by grandfathers who described the surface of Big Spring Creek as "dimpled as far as the eye could see" by native brook trout feeding on the surface. Those legends faded into local folklore long before my days on the stream, but I can attest that when I fished there in the late 1990s, the water teemed with trout: rainbows, browns, and brooks, from fingerlings to 20-plus inches. To call it enticing would be a great understatement. In one 10-foot stretch of water, six or seven or twelve fish might be hanging out. In another similarly sized stretch, maybe fifteen.

In 1972, a generation before my time, the fish commission constructed a hatchery above the spring. I viewed the hatchery as a bonus because it provided variety: browns and rainbows often escaped into the spring. However, the hatchery's presence—its waste, actually—effectively dealt a slow death sentence to Big Spring Creek, or at least to the Ditch, and in particular, to the famous native brook population. In conversations later on, I learned that anglers and scientists conducted various studies after the hatchery opened, and in 2001, just a year after I moved away, the state shut it down.

Although idyllic back when I was fishing it, the Ditch may have been too quaint for some. Forget expensive, fancy waders and boots. No one ever entered the water but instead fished from the bank, walked and stood on grass that somebody mowed periodically (oddly, despite logging hundreds of hours there, I never witnessed a mowing). Memory paints a picture of at least 50 feet between the stream's edge and the barely traveled country road that got you there. Plenty of room for casting, without the obstruction of trees behind you, and—unless you really winged one too far—no trees in play on the other side either. I imagine if accessible satellite imaging had been around then, you could have zoomed in on Google Earth and counted the fish, maybe even identified specific species. Clear, slow water, few obstacles, and hardly any rocks on the bottom to snag except for along the banks—it was precisely where we who fly fish hope to find ourselves after we die.

On the opposite side of the stream—the distance across ranging from 15 to maybe 30 feet at most—Big Spring Creek packs enough fallen log structure at the water's edge for a hooked trout to dart beneath and give you the slip. One second he's on the end of your leader, peeling out line with a whizz that summons the adrenaline. A moment later, he's vanished, having deftly exchanged himself for a sycamore log. You realize your bent rod is not moving; rather, your fly is now wedged in an unseen slice of bark below the surface. The wisdom of old trout in a stream seems unrivaled among fish.

Christopher Lessick

A summer view of the stream just above the wall at the parking lot.

In this pastoral setting, the creek is nestled at the bottom of what I recall as a mountain, although realistically, it's more of a hill; some may just call it a rise. Still, the landscape embraces the spring and frames it with forest and hillside, as far as I could tell then. To be honest though, I always drove directly there, fished, and sped straight back to Shippensburg, often late for class. For all I knew, perhaps a sprawling subdivision lay hidden beyond that bluff behind the stream.

The surrounding farms insulated Big Spring from the sound of any real traffic. Few noises punctuated the serene background silence: the chatter of birds, a random truck that ambled past, and the whish and snap of a fly line. During an afternoon session, you could expect to hear—at least once along the country road—the rhythmic clip-clopping of a horse drawing an Amish buggy.

Making Acquaintance

My discovery of this utopia came during my second year at Shippensburg, via a friend who lived down the hall in my dorm. An outdoorsy guy, Eric liked hiking but didn't fish. My dad suggested that I take my fly rod back with me spring semester and look up some creeks in the area, saying, "There are some pretty famous streams out that way." So I did, and in March, I called up Yellow Breeches Outfitters, a fly shop near Carlisle, and talked to a guy who told me to come on out. A gentleman gave me a map of the stream and even took the time to draw fish in specific spots to check out.

I set out one morning in March with Eric, and while he hiked, I fished Yellow Breeches Creek a few hours and caught none. On the ride home, however, he said he knew of another place where people fished. We turned down a road to find this "place where people fished," and there, at Big Spring, my fate became sealed for a long time—all the semesters I had left, in fact.

Eric and I got out of the car, and as I prepped to gear up, he said I wouldn't need waders. He led the way past a concrete wall. (I'd later spend hours on that wall, fishing and observing what I would learn were box-elder bugs, waiting for one to fall to see if trout fed on them so I might tie an imitation.) Streamside, I scanned the water—astonished—and concluded this place must have somehow fallen right out of heaven. The age-old question had been answered: God was indeed a fly fisher.

I can list my reactions in order: amazed, astounded, annoyed, aggravated, embarrassed, frustrated, baffled, and, finally, humbled. That first visit put me in my place. Mark Twain was right: humans are *not* at the top of the evolutionary chain. Looking back, Big Spring Creek could have easily turned me off fly fishing forever. Instead, it inspired me to study, to learn, and to try and master (if only this one) tiny stretch of water. After that first stop, and despite my amazing lack of success, rarely did three days pass without my sneaking out to the Ditch. I even finished a second bachelor's degree in part to fish it longer. Now, almost thirty years later, I'm not sure if I'm any better at fly fishing because of time spent there or if I just have a creel full of stories about a very specific little curve of creek that held me spellbound, captive for my remaining undergraduate years.

On that first day, the fly boxes in my vest pockets were lined with rows upon rows of nymphs, streamers, wet flies, dry flies, and terrestrials, most of which I'd tied myself years earlier. Tippet material, extra leaders, split shot, hemostats, clippers, even a net—I was a walking fly-fishing catalog (sans waders and boots) ready for business. If anyone cared to notice, I definitely looked like someone bound to catch fish.

Over a rock ledge, five rainbows were suspended a foot off the bottom, just staring upstream. The bands on their sides were such a bold crimson, each looked as if it had been painted on a canvas—happy fish that might have lived in a cold mountain lake in a Bob Ross painting. I was transfixed. Looking upstream, I saw another five or six fish, right there. Downstream past the ledge, there was a brookie beneath the shadow of a tree on the upper side of that concrete wall, its cover betrayed by the white edges on its fins. In that very moment in my young life, I like to think an understanding of nirvana was planted.

I don't remember the first fly I chose—maybe a March Brown nymph. I stripped some line and cast. Eight feet above those rainbows. The fly started to sink and move downstream toward the fish. I watched it graze the bottom and tumble through the water, just like (I imagined) one sees in the very best underwater demonstration videos. The split-shot weight was precise, allowed the fly to look natural, just a little mayfly nymph that got dislodged, now lolling downstream.

A slight bounce in the current. The nymph closed in. Three feet ahead of them. Headed straight for the biggest rainbow. Adrenaline and excitement. Three of them might fight over it, it'll be so close. Two feet away. One foot. Here we go—lunchtime!

None of them moved.

The nymph slid right past every one of them, apparently unnoticed.

Okay. I cast again.

Once more, a perfect drift, good pace, right below its mouth—and then—right past. Nothing. None of them blinked. Not a stir, no swat of a tail. No reaction at all. Were they blind?

I could see their mouths open now and then. They *were* eating—something. I adjusted the weight, sunk the nymph to move slower. Same result. Took off the tiny split shot, let it ride higher and faster. Again, nothing. In this clarity of water, they obviously had seen the fly, so I deduced that March Brown was not on today's menu and switched flies. I hadn't inspected the underside of any rocks in the water or done any other research, so maybe March Brown had been a poor choice.

Christopher Lessick

A brook trout in crystal-clear water at the end of the author's line.

Christopher Lessick

A Big Spring rainbow trout caught by the author. Bands of tape on the rod at 15, 20, 22, and 25 inches were a way to measure the fish as he quickly snapped a photo after landing it.

Yet fly after fly twirled and drifted downstream. My presentation seemed perfect, to me at least. Each bug zeroed in on a trout's nose. The more audacious the pattern—and hence, the more visible—the more the trout sidled right out of each fly's path in the most relaxed manner. I watched them bend their tail one time, as if in slow motion, slide over no more than 4 inches, pause a split second to allow the fly (apparently some abomination) to drift past, and then merge right back to their place in the water column.

None of the flies spooked them or caused any semblance of a panicked reaction; rather, the trout glided left for a moment just to let the fly pass, as if they were graciously changing lanes to let someone in on the highway on a Sunday afternoon. If I could have listened underwater, I believe I would have heard a most courteous, "Thank you, no," as the trout moseyed aside and then back.

Humbling. Although I'd never call the flies I tied perfect or even very good, many *had* caught trout in other streams. But over and over, I switched from nymphs to wets to streamers to dries, swapped heavy split shots for miniscule ones or none. Up and down I walked the Ditch and fished with both fervor and disappointment, excitement and frustration.

Hours of Devotion

Two months passed in this manner. Not a single bite; not a chase; not even a gracious, half-hearted look. Sometimes, when a fish at least turns to take that second glance, it confirms the fly pattern is at least "close" to something edible in the water. On the other hand, it could also mean, "What was that? Does that person up there think I just fell off the stocking truck?" Still, despite stalking dozens and dozens of trout several times a week, I never got a second look. I felt like we were playing a game, and not one of them ever let me know I was getting warmer.

But here the story begins its happy, if somewhat slow, conclusion. On a Saturday afternoon in May—probably the day before heading home for summer—I stood fishing the bend below where the culvert pipe discharges water from the hatchery, and I started talking to a guy. He lived in Ireland (the country). He was here, fly fishing at Big Spring Creek—*this* stream, at best a skinny, skedaddling blue line on some road map. Not that the Ditch was his only destination this side of the pond, but it was on the list. That said something. I didn't need more convincing; I'd already logged more than fifty hours casting flies into this water over the last two months. I knew it was special. But for it to show up on somebody's radar who lived in the same country that gave the world Baileys and Jameson and Guinness?

He gave me a fly whose name (if it even had a name) I don't recall or didn't understand because of his accent. It appeared to be just greenish synthetic dubbing on a small shrimp hook, possibly a size 16. Just some subsurface fly-nymph-larva . . . something. I tied it on, hopeful. And who doesn't believe in the luck of the Irish? Of course I caught a fish, barely five minutes later. A beautiful brown, although maybe only 12 inches. My already unhealthy addiction escalated to obsession. The spell had been broken. I was finally on the board.

Over the summer, I talked with the owners of a fly shop in my hometown of Greensburg, a couple hours west of Shippensburg. They showed me a pattern to tie, essentially just some plucked-out and pinched-apart red marabou feathers dubbed onto a size 18 or 20 hook. The epitome of I-don't-know-what. But I tied a bunch, fished it precisely where they instructed me—at the outflow culvert near the top of the spring—and that fall, my study and eventual novice-mastery of the Ditch began in earnest. For the next three years, I progressed as a student of the stream. I would never again fish there without catching at least three (sometimes as many as ten) fish.

Did I catch any of the big ones? I certainly did, and I have photographic proof. My modus operandi became landing the fish, quickly setting it next to my rod, snapping a picture with the point-and-shoot film camera that I kept hung around my neck, and then gently releasing it. In all of my hubris, I even taped markings on my rod at 15, 20, 22, and 25 inches so I'd have an approximate measurement. This wasn't to be cocky, but simply to prove a few fish stories to my naysayer friends; other than times my parents visited and Dad came along, I always went there alone (none of my trout-fishing friends fly fished).

I started to feel at home there and got to know some of the other regulars, folks I felt a kinship with because it seemed they were, like me, uncontrollably drawn to the place. One fellow, probably in his thirties, often talked to me while we fished near each other. He usually arrived in the early evening and fished until the sky blued over into black. Browns were his main target, he said, because they become especially "voracious right around dusk," which was why he showed up with only an hour or two of light.

He usually caught fish and sometimes hooked into one of those big brownies, but one night in particular replays in my mind: he caught a bat. He'd been casting the whole way across a certain stretch, presenting this obnoxious woolly bugger just at the edge of some logs; the larger browns often hid just underneath the cover along the bank. With a large fly, he had to back-cast long, wait that split second for the streamer to catch up, and then pitch forward again. Once. Pause. Twice. Pause. On the third back cast, a hitch—something caught. A bat. It had either echolocated the fly or simply flown across the wrong space at the wrong time, and it got lassoed in the fly line. Sensing it as a sign, the angler untangled the mess, the bat flew off, and he called it a night.

Another gentleman, probably in or near his seventies, approached fishing at Big Spring Creek in an even quainter style: he sat on a 5-gallon bucket. You could lift him right out of the scene and plop him down on a pier or on the edge of a lake. The white bucket and his slumped posture painted a picture of an old-timer fishing for catfish on some backwoods canal. He'd toss in a cress bug with a split shot that weighed as much as a Navy anchor. *Kerplunk*. It displaced as much water

as a cannonball. Close enough to watch, I saw all the trout scatter every which way each time.

Any kid who's ever gone fishing with his father has been told, "Be quiet or you'll scare the fish," which most kids take to heart—for about a minute and a half. But in fly fishing especially, one of the obvious mantras is subtlety, the idea of blending in, presenting flies naturally. The whole thing is about being undetected.

After observing this fellow over the course of a few months, I finally worked up the courage to ask him about his technique. He pointed to his fly on the bottom of the streambed—easy to spot, of course, on the gray silt bottom—and said, "I just wait 'em out." Sure, he'd scare the hell out of them, but they'd eventually return to their spots. And at some point, maybe ten or twenty minutes later—as if they'd been so focused on what was drifting in the water—they'd happen to look down and notice a cress bug, and so it goes. He hauled in some huge trout, often a few that jumped and, matching his cast, kerplunked back into the water.

A particularly interesting person I met and talked with often, a woman probably in her fifties, did not fish at all, but showed up and walked the stream almost every day. She meandered with a walking stick, dragged it through the thickets and clumps of weeds along the bank. Just below the handhold and also near the bottom point of the staff (a thick, twisted old branch) hung plumes of colored feathers tied with leather string. The woman's facial features painted her as Native American—long brown hair, chiseled jawline, and high cheekbones—though certainly, the feathers added to the aura. Time after time, I watched her walk, exchanged smiles, but never quite knew what she was doing. Perhaps this spring had provided water to her ancestors. Maybe her husband used to fish here and had recently passed away.

When I finally spoke to her, she showed me her walking stick, and the magnet tied in with the feathers at the bottom. With it, she plucked flies that anglers had lost at the stream. So, besides exercise and the serenity and the fresh air of the place, her objective could be compared to a beachcomber with a metal detector, her version just more basic. A kind of artisan, she explained that she took the flies home and hooked them on pieces of driftwood displayed in her living room. She was a pleasant woman and always showed off her haul, offered me patterns—sometimes reuniting me with my own lost flies.

In fact, that woman knew of some flies I hadn't heard of or ever seen, and so I picked up expertise from her, too. One of the best specimens for the stream, the cress bug—a small, disc-shaped aquatic insect—lives in watercress beds. I learned how to tie and trim them to make them flat, and I still carry a container filled with them in my vest. You don't know just how many different shades of green there are until you fish a stream year-round and notice how even the bugs that live in the vegetation change color with the seasons.

I designed some originals after catching a glimpse of what someone else was using or by examining a fly that the woman had uprooted. On a size 16 curved-back hook, I tied a shrimp: white hackle feathers beneath three twisted strands of pink honey bug yarn (a local material from back home) pulled up over top of the hackles. This fetched many rainbows, but never a brook or brown. A pattern I called a scud (but later learned was not the correct name) was simply a miniature woolly bugger: white marabou tail and white rabbit fur dubbing on a size 20 or 22 hook. That caught browns, rainbows, and even a few brooks—often big ones. Sculpins tended to attract brooks but rarely browns and never rainbows. A San Juan worm could fool a rainbow, but never a brown and never a brookie. In my experiences there, I learned that each species had a distinct diet, their own tastes.

Fishing Big Spring was a passion, and when I call it an ongoing study over a few years, I do not lie. I progressed into a highly competent fisherman at the Ditch, but it came through hundreds of hours of study, determination, and resolve. Did my time there make me a better fly fisherman? I'm not sure. A more accurate assessment presents me—for only three years—as a "master of hardly two tenths of a mile," an epithet whose meager strength fades quickly, considering the thousands of miles of trout waters.

I didn't know it then, but I'd caught the tail end of the glory of Big Spring Creek. To me, the place was heaven, but I couldn't begin to understand its history and the level of renown it held for the generations before me. Still, by the time I drove away for the last time that summer day in 2000, armed with only my own experiences, Big Spring Creek had become mythical. I will always remember my days on the Ditch as nirvana.

The author with one of the first large rainbows he caught at Big Spring. Photo courtesy of the author.

Jimmy Carter: President, Fly Fisher, Environmentalist

by Rob Oden

President Jimmy Carter fly fishing Georgia's Crane Creek, 1978. Photo by Karl Schumacher, courtesy of the White House. 1979.056.001.

American flags flew at half-mast throughout January 2025 to remind us of the passing of an American president. Not just any U.S. president, but President Jimmy Carter, an uncommonly decent, thoughtful, and generous man. And more: Jimmy Carter was a fly fisherman. Many other presidents, before and after Carter, have been fly fishermen: John Quincy Adams, Grover Cleveland, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, George H. W. Bush, Barack Obama, and my favorite, Theodore Roosevelt (though TR is more widely known for his hunting on the great plains of America and the green hills of Africa).

But there are a couple of differences with Jimmy Carter as a fly fisherman, differences from both his predecessors and those who followed him. First, he was an expert, knowledgeable fly fisher, far more so than other presidents. He tied flies at his White House desk, and those who tie flies tend to know more about the mayflies, caddis flies, and stone flies on which trout feed. He fished Hunting Creek, near Camp David; Spruce Creek, in Pennsylvania, spirited away there by presidential helicopter; in and around Yellowstone Park; and farther afield, including Mongolia for taimen. Often he fished with his beloved wife Rosalynn, also an accomplished angler.

There is a second reason Jimmy Carter stands out among U.S. presidential fly fishermen, a reason more significant for members of the American Museum of Fly Fishing and for all who love cold, clear, flowing water. Jimmy Carter was a staunch environmentalist. He began to act on his awareness of the fragility of global woods and waters even before he entered the White House. As governor of Georgia, he stopped a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' plan to dam the Flint River and thus damn the river forever. As president, his 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act protected more than 150 million acres from wanton exploitation. And in a speech that many think may have cost Carter a second term, he warned of the great dangers of the world's addiction to fossil fuels and suggested further study of solar and alternative energies.

In 2019, the American Museum of Fly Fishing presented Jimmy Carter with its Heritage Award, in company with President George H. W. Bush. President Carter reacted with his predictable and winning humility. This is noteworthy given that fly fishermen are better known for their pretentiousness than for their modesty. Not the instinctively humble Jimmy Carter.

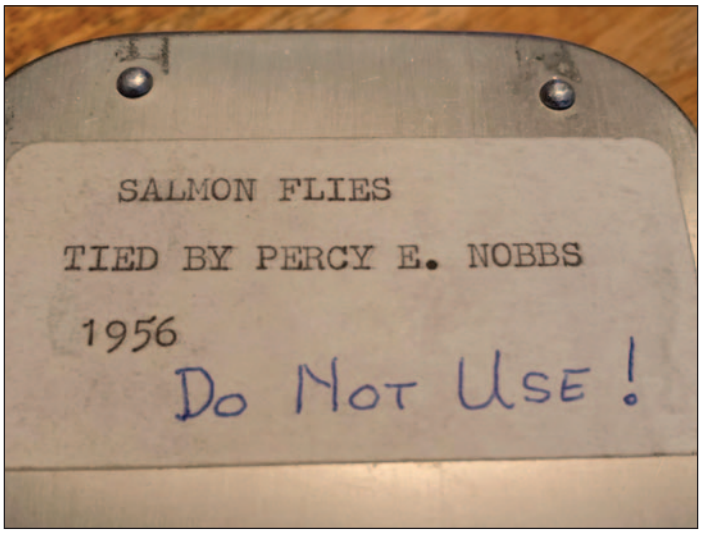
Jimmy Carter has often been praised—indeed, celebrated—for his signal humanitarian acts during his long post-presidential life and career. Such praise, while entirely appropriate, risks diminishing what he accomplished as president. He was, in fact, a highly successful president. And a heck of a fly fisherman.

AMFF Trustee Rob Oden was a professor at Dartmouth College for fourteen years before eventually becoming the president of Kenyon College and then Carleton College. During his academic career, he taught hundreds of students about knots and bugs and fly casting. In retirement, he and his wife, Teresa, are fortunate enough to live in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Percy Nobbs: Building a Case for the Architect's Fly

by Scott Biron

Ed Pritchard



The fly box given by Percy Nobbs to Nathaniel Reed, now owned by Ed Pritchard.

Sometime last year AMFF Curator Jim Schottenham showed me a salmon fly, presumably tied by Percy E. Nobbs, that had recently become part of the museum's collection. It is an interesting pattern, and I started to further research Nobbs and his fly tying.

Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875–1964) is known first as one of Canada's foremost architects and a champion of the Arts and Crafts Movement.[1] He trained at University of Edinburgh, but spent most of his career in Montreal as an architect, a professor at McGill University, and director of the McGill School of Architecture. He designed many buildings on the McGill campus.[2] Nobbs had an interest in what today would be considered low-income housing construction.[3]

He was also a lifelong angler. His book *Salmon Tactics* was published in 1934.[4] At the time, the information he provided about Atlantic salmon was considered cutting edge. Nobbs focused on conservation measures early on. In 1948, he founded the Atlantic Salmon Association and became the first editor of its journal, which began publication in 1952. The Atlantic Salmon Association eventually became the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), which has taken on many of the conservation efforts for which Nobbs laid the foundation.

Reading through *Salmon Tactics*, I came to several conclusions. Nobbs was a very straightforward, do-what-works type of person. He took a practical and simple approach to fishing. He suggests fly patterns that would be effective in specific water conditions, pointing out ones that worked for him, such as the Silver and Grey, Thunder and Lightning, Bumbee, and Greenwell's Glory.[5]

Did Nobbs tie his own flies? Nowhere in his book could I find anything to indicate that he did, and the pattern we have is not listed in his book. He discussed experimenting with fly patterns and removing materials to change the look of a pattern.[6] He also mentions swapping flies with other anglers, which adds to the mystery as to whether he tied this one.[7]

Did Nobbs really tie the salmon fly in our collection? Things get murky as we try to put pieces together, answer questions, and draw conclusions. The fly we have was one from a fly box full of salmon flies that Nobbs gave to Nathaniel Reed, a longtime director of ASF who served as assistant secretary of the interior for Fish, Wildlife and National Parks under President Richard M. Nixon. The box, currently owned by Ed Pritchard, is labeled "Salmon Flies Tied by Percy E. Nobbs 1956 Do Not Use!" Apart from this label, we have no specific documentation that Nobbs tied the fly.

Then I discovered a documentary about Percy Nobbs by the Greenwood Centre for Living History in Hudson, Quebec. It features his only grandchild, the late Peter Nobbs. Peter shares that he had a very close relationship with his grandfather, who taught him how to fly cast. More importantly, Peter states that Percy Nobbs tied all his own flies.[8]

These two declarations—the fly-box label and Peter Nobbs's statement—allow us to consider the possibility that Nobbs tied this fly. If you look closely in the fly box, you will see

two flies very similar to the one we believed he tied. Nobbs's early flies had gut-looped eyes.[9] This one is tied on an up-eye salmon hook with a traditional loop eye, possibly a Mustad or Partridge hook, which would have been available later in his life.

On inspection of the fly, it is in great shape. It may have been fished once, but there is a good chance it has not been fished at all. If it had been fished a lot, the peacock herl used for the horns, which are not very strong, would have been damaged; the herl is in great condition. All materials used to tie the fly would have been available to Nobbs. The floss is a bit faded, but that shade of green was both popular and available.

Could Nobbs have tied this fly? Based on what I know, I think he could have. The question came up a number of times at the ASF annual meeting in New York City in November 2024. Jim Schottenham and I had been invited to display objects from the AMFF collection. Among them were selections from the Dean Sage Collection and Percy Nobbs items, including this fly, which I was asked to replicate for the event.

Our hope was that we might meet someone who knew Nobbs. We didn't, but maybe this article will jog someone's memory who could help us discover more about the fly and figure out whether Nobbs tied it.

Percy Nobbs lit the torch for Atlantic salmon conservation, one that is still burning. He is among many who have worked to protect this special fish. I will be chasing down more information on his flies and fly tying. Stay tuned.

Ed Pritchard

Two flies similar to the one Nobbs possibly tied are visible in the upper left section of the fly box.

Scott Biron is an AMFF ambassador, a master artist in the New Hampshire Heritage & Traditional Arts Program, and a national and international fly-tying instructor. He is on the ambassador pro teams of HMH Vises and Partridge of Redditch. Ewing has a signature series line of feathers that bear Scott's name. On April 10, he and Jim Schottenham hosted a webinar about the Percy Nobbs Fly pattern. To watch Scott tie it, go to www.amff.org/streamer-fly-tying-episode-5/.

ENDNOTES

1. Much of the biographical information in this article comes from Susan Wagg, "Percy Erskine Nobbs," The Canadian Encyclopedia, *Historica Canada* (published 20 May 2008, last edited 4 March 2015), www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/percy-erskine-nobbs; and from Government of Canada, "Nobbs, Percy Erskine," https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12006. Both accessed 17 January 2025.

2. McGill University Archival Collections Catalog, Subfonds 1, "Architectural drawings and other papers of Percy Nobbs and his associates," https://archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/architectural-drawings. Accessed 27 January 2025.

3. Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill—Queen's University Press, 1982), 3. Available on Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/percy-erskine-nobbs-architect-artist-craftsman-planner-1982-wegg. Accessed 27 January 2025.

4. Percy E. Nobbs, *Salmon Tactics* (London: Phillip Allan, 1934). Nobbs, who won a silver medal in fencing representing Canada in the 1908 Winter Olympic Games, later wrote a book called *Fencing Tactics* (London: Philip Allan, 1936). The Rare Books and Special Collections at McGill Libraries sent me a listing of his publications, and there are many.

5. Nobbs, *Salmon Tactics*, 11–15.

6. Ibid., 19.

7. Ibid.

8. *Remembering Percy Nobbs* (Greenwood Centre for Living History and the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, 2010), film, posted by "QUAHN1," 13 September 2010, in two parts. Nobbs's fly fishing is discussed in Part 2 (https://youtu.be/I-u-YH21sTg?si=essjtykWWZCE9T2L), in which Peter Nobbs states, at 5:25: "He used to tie all his own flies." Peter Nobbs and Heritage Conservation Architect Susan Bronson, who are featured in the film, are introduced in Part 1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2eUoMyuftc). The total running time is approximately twenty minutes. Accessed 17 January 2025.

9. Nobbs, *Salmon Tactics*, 19.

Jim Schottenham

The likely Percy Nobbs Fly. Gift of Ed Pritchard. 2023.063.001.

Percy Nobbs Fly

Tag: Three to four turns of flat silver tinsel
Tail: Golden pheasant crest curving upward
Butt: Yellow floss/silk built up thick and shorter than the tag
Body: Light green floss (similar to the Cosseboom)
Rib: Medium oval silver tinsel, six turns
Wing: Four strips of florican past tail with a red duck or goose roof (half the width of the florican)
Throat: Red under yellow rooster hackle to hook point
Cheeks: Short jungle cock
Topping: Golden pheasant crest curving over the wing and slightly longer than the tail
Horns: Peacock herl
Head: Black

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From The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes, *Vol. XI (London: William Heinemann, 1900), 459. Photo by Charles F. Inston.*

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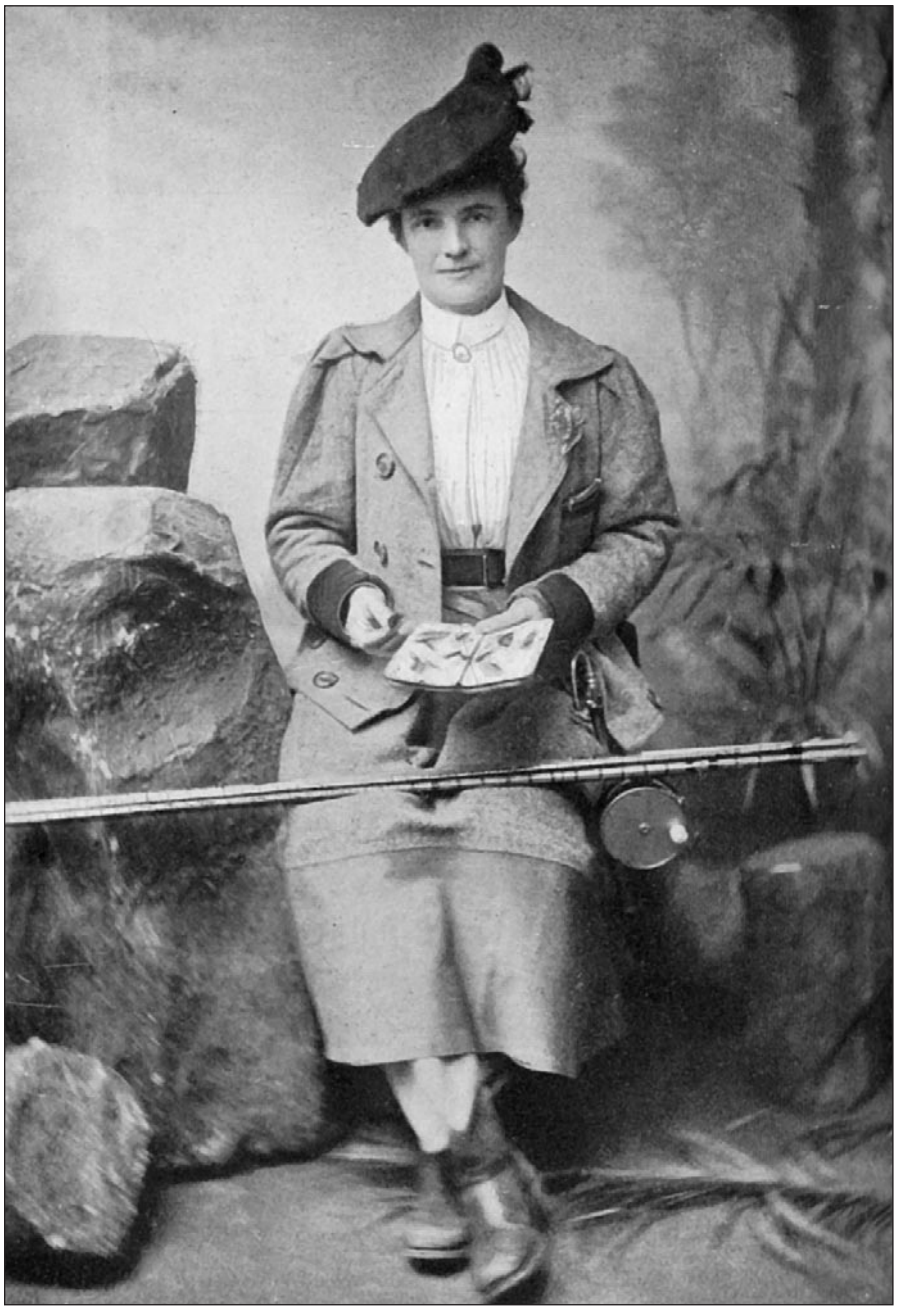


From The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes, *Vol. XIV (London: William Heinemann, 1902), 600. Photo by F. C. Burnham.*

Bob Popovics Honored with the 2025 Izaak Walton Award

Photos by Sage Yazzie

An emotional moment as board member Fred Polhemus presents the Izaak Walton Award posthumously to Bob. The honor was accepted with heartfelt grace by his best friend, Lance Erwin.

A view from behind panel participants addressing a full room. Hearts full, voices ready, and the weight of the moment settling in, they reflect on the ways in which Bob Popovics impacted the lives of so many.

Amidst the amity of the Edison Fly Fishing Show, a full house gathered in the Strike Room at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center on January 25 as the American Museum of Fly Fishing honored Bob Popovics (17 November 1948–1 November 2024) with the 2025 Izaak Walton Award. Bob had been informed in June that he'd be receiving this award. It was with great sadness that the gathering shifted to a memorial to pay tribute to this extraordinarily innovative fly tier.

AMFF Trustee Fred Polhemus introduced a moving tribute video. Angling and podcast legend Andy Mill then hosted a panel of some of Bob's closest friends: Tom Lynch, Captain Paul Dixon, Jason Taylor, Chuck Furimsky, Joe Carey, Lance Erwin, and Ed Jaworowski.

Wonderful tales were told about Bob and the Tuesday nights in his attic that evolved into the Atlantic Saltwater Flyrodders. Ed remarked that Bob had "saltwater running through his veins." Everyone agreed that it was never about the fishing with Bob—it was about camaraderie and paying it forward to the next generation. The evening ended with Andy reading a note sent by Flip Pallot: "(Bob) embraced the old ways of friendship and loyalty. He owned the beaches of the northeast and the mid-Atlantic and welcomed us all to stand in his sandy footsteps."

Bob Popovics, hailed by Lefty Kreh as the greatest fly tier of all time, was an extraordinary innovator of saltwater flies whose designs inspired generations. Beyond his legacy as the creator of flies such as the Bucktail Deceiver, Surf Candy, and Beast Fleye, he was known to have a heart of gold and would share his knowledge and time with anyone who expressed an interest. His greatest joy, besides his family, was to foster a supportive sense of community among fly tiers.

AMFF's traveling exhibit *On Fly in Salt: Saltwater Fishing from the Surf to the Flats*, which debuted in 2018, featured Bob and his Bucktail Deceiver in its tier display:

> Through the 1970s, Bob Popovics's innovative techniques blazed through the tying world. His use of silicone and epoxy resulted in new patterns that were widely copied. Favorites include the epoxy-cloaked Surf Candy, which survives sharp-toothed predators, and the Bucktail Deceiver, which uses natural materials while tying in all the fibers at once and distributing them with your fingers. The fly is usually tied on a long-shank hook with the longest hairs at the bend. Fibers become shorter as they progress along the shank. Each bucktail pinch is distributed around the shank, giving the fly a more three-dimensional look. The fly is extremely durable and light. The pattern led to the development of an even lighter baitfish imitator tied with bucktail in reverse style: the Hollow Fly.

In 1970, as a marine just back from Vietnam, Bob became a pupil of the newly founded Salt Water Fly Rodders of America. At a chapter meeting in the Outer Banks, he met Lefty Kreh, who would become a lifelong friend and mentor. More than a decade later, it was under the auspices of the SWFROA that Bob began organizing those weekly meetings at which dozens of anglers gathered to exchange ideas and try out new techniques, with Bob available to encourage them and lend his expert advice.

He was the author of two books that are considered must-reads for any saltwater fly tier: *Pop Fleyes: Bob Popovics's Approach to Saltwater Fly Design* (2000) and *Fleye Design: Techniques, Insights, Patterns* (2016). *Pop Fleyes*, which he wrote with Ed Jaworowski, highlights the effective family of fly patterns Bob developed over three decades. *Fleye Design*, which he wrote with Jay Nichols, includes a section of the Fleye's evolution from a new generation: Jonny King, David Nelson, Dave Skok, Steve Farrar, and Blane Chocklett. This support of younger tiers is emblematic of Bob's generous and welcoming spirit.

Museum News

Author photo

Stephen E. Wright

Stephen E. Wright Named 2024 Austin Hogan Award Recipient

Stephen E. Wright has been named the recipient of the museum's 2024 Austin Hogan Award. The award, which recognizes exemplary contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*, was established in 1985 to honor the memory of Austin Hogan, who founded the museum's journal in 1974.

Wright received the award for "The Soft-Hackle Dry Fly: The Phantom among Us," which ran in the Winter issue. He had designed his own fly pattern, the Gray Raptor, thinking he was onto something new, but soon discovered that his creation wasn't new at all. In looking for instances of what he now calls the soft-hackle dry fly, he defined his terms, looked for its origin, collected examples of flies he'd not known existed, and presented his results.

Wright holds a PhD in agricultural and extension education from the University of Maryland. Before retirement, he had most recently been the associate dean and associate director of University of Maryland Extension. Before that, he served as the regional director and associate department chair for Ohio State University Extension at the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. He lives in Maryland.

AMFF at Winter Shows

The AMFF team had a busy presence at this year's Fly Fishing Shows, with booths at Edison, New Jersey (January 24–26), and Denver, Colorado (February 21–23). Executive Director Sarah Foster was joined by Brendan Truscott, director of membership; Jim Schottenham, curator; Fred Polhemus, trustee; and Dan Zazworsky, marketing consultant, at two of the largest fly-fishing industry events of the year.

Engaging with industry experts, fellow collectors, and exhibitors opens doors to significant opportunities and forges valuable connections that can lead directly to collection acquisitions. We are thrilled to have acquired several things for the museum's collection, including a signed Major John P. Traherne document from 1880; numerous items from the Charles Brooks estate, including his original tying vise and original photos from his book *Fishing Yellowstone Waters*; and a limited-edition casting of a Byzantine plate by Jeffery Hatton. We are grateful for

Upcoming Events

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

May 1
Heritage Award honoring Oliver White
New York Yacht Club
New York City

May 29
Reel Talk with Jim Schottenham
via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

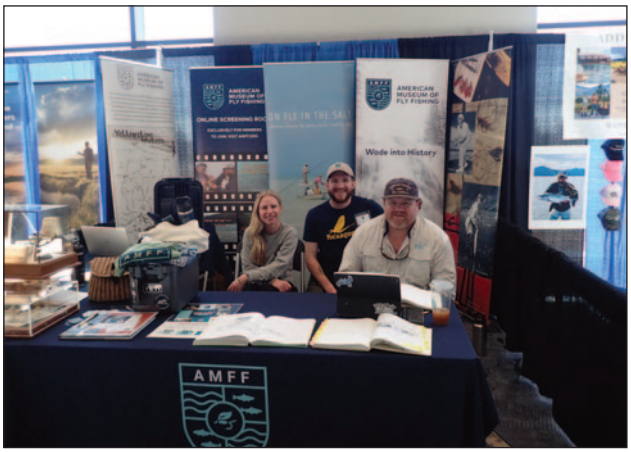
July 10, 17, 24, and **31**
Kids' Clinics

August 8
Manchester Dinner

August 9
18th Annual Fly-Fishing Festival

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

Jim Schottenham



AMFF Executive Director Sarah Foster, marketing consultant Dan Zazworsky, and artist Paul Puckett at the Fly Fishing Show in Denver.

those who understand the importance of preserving history and taking action, and we look forward to sharing more about these exciting additions and the stories behind them.

The Edison show included a special tribute to the late Bob Popovics, who was posthumously honored with the museum's 2025 Izaak Walton Award on January 25 (see story on page 26). At the Denver show, a live edition of Tackle Talk featured rod historian Jeff Hatton, and we welcomed angling artist Paul Puckett to our booth, where he showcased his incredible talent.

Recent Donations to the Collection

Alexis Popovics (Seaside Park, New Jersey) donated her husband's Renzetti Master True Rotary vise, a "Beast Fleye" tied by Popovics, and his acrylic drying rack with flies from his fly-tying desk.

Lynn and Leslie Whitehouse (West Linn, Oregon) sent us a J. Bernard & Son bamboo salmon fly rod. **John T. Pratt III** (Essex, Connecticut) donated John T. Pratt Jr.'s leather tackle box and contents used for fishing the Two Brooks Lodge on the Upsalquitch River from the 1920s through the 1960s. **Richard H. Miller** (Tucson, Arizona) gave us a collection of angling-related pins. **Paul Cote** (Woodstock, Maine) shared several 1925 issues of *Hunting & Fishing* and *National Sportsman*.

Joan Wulff (Lew Beach, New York) continues to contribute objects she comes across at home, most recently her first fly-fishing vest, a Richardson fly chest, and photographs.

Glenn Raiche (Deerfield, New Hampshire) donated a full set of carded streamer flies tied by Jim Warner with accompanying photographs of the fly tier. **Scott Biron** (New London, New Hampshire) supplemented Raiche's donation with a collection of Warner's fly-tying recipes and notes.

Joe Jackson (Martinsville, Indiana) gave us a decorative fly—tied by Jackson—in the form of a hummingbird. He also passed along a pair of fly-tying capes. **Joe Howell** (Idleyld Park, Oregon) donated the twenty-seven flies tied for his 2024 book, *Fly Fishing Guide to the North Umpqua* (Stackpole).

Last, for our library, **John T. Elder** (Rancho Santa Fe, California) contributed a copy of John Bechtold's *Arthur Kovalovsky & Sons: A 100-year History of Design Innovation and Excellence* (Deepfins Publishing, 2024).

CONTRIBUTORS

Jarrod Ruggles

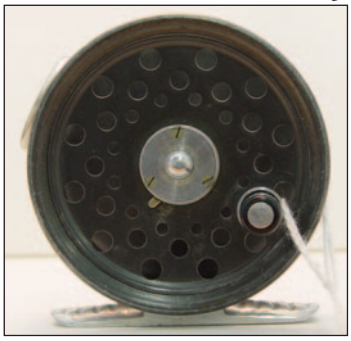
R. W. Hafer—shown here with his catch on Arkansas's White River—is an economist, author, and fly-fishing enthusiast. During his career he has worked as a research economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, was a distinguished research professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and most recently served as director of the Center for Economics at Lindenwood University. In addition to his academic work, his articles on fly fishing, the introduction of trout, and the role of railroads have appeared in the *American Fly Fisher* and *Railroad History*.

Logan Hennessy

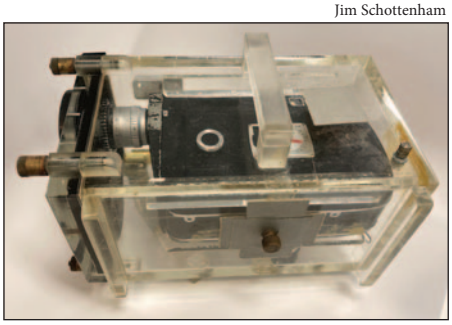
Christopher Lessick is a writer and educator living with his wife and two children in Chesapeake, Virginia, where he teaches at Great Bridge High School and Tidewater Community College. He earned bachelor's degrees in English and psychology at Shippensburg University (Pennsylvania), and later a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from Murray State University (Kentucky). He has creative work published in the *Evansville Review*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, and *Teach. Write.*, and a fishing story forthcoming in *Kelp Journal*. A lifelong trout fisher—and a fly fisher since he first took tying classes at age twelve and ruined his mother's blender by mixing his own dubbing color combinations—Christopher tries to get on the water whenever he can, sometimes with friends, sometimes with his father; but his biggest goal is to instill the love of fishing in his own children.

A Steady Stream

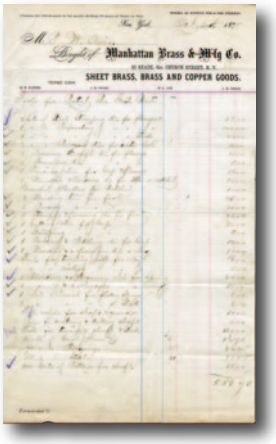
Nathan George



Jim Schottenham



Jim Schottenham



Clockwise from top left: Dwight Eisenhower's Hardy St. George Reel (1969.009.002), an underwater camera case used by Lee Wulff (2021.034.001), a Manhattan Brass & Mfg. Co. invoice to Orvis (1982.103.004), and an L. L. Dickerson rod owned by Art Flick (2022.053.001).

Museums constantly evaluate how they are engaging with the people they serve, and AMFF is committed to growing our impact. Our goal is to offer a window into the world of fly-fishing history, and since 1968 we have been sharing that history predominately through our physical locations and through this award-winning journal, the *American Fly Fisher*.

As we continue to look for new ways to strengthen the social fabric of the fly-fishing community, we are excited to team up with MidCurrent (an online fly-fishing media outlet) to count down the fifty most interesting objects in the museum's permanent collection. In March, we started with objects numbered 50 through 36, and each month we will continue to count down to what we believe is our most historically significant item. Here are a few highlights from the first set that will surely spark your curiosity. For the complete list, head on over to https://midcurrent.com/gear/american-museum-of-fly-fishings-top-50-objects-part-1/.

#49 Dwight Eisenhower's Hardy St. George reel, c. 1950. Dwight Eisenhower, the thirty-fourth president of the United States (1953–1961), was known as an avid sportsman with a particular interest in fly fishing. His time at the famed Camp David was often spent fishing for the stocked trout he requested to be placed in the stream that flowed through the property. The Hardy St. George reel in the museum's collection, a circa-1950s example, features a pressure-sensitive label with "D.E." on the tail plate.

#46 Manhattan Brass & Mfg. Co. invoice to Orvis, 30 October 1875. The historically important patent issued to Charles F. Orvis in 1874 for his fly reel has been shrouded in mystery for decades, with many noted fishing tackle historians seeking answers to just who made the reels. With the discovery of this invoice from the Manhattan Brass Mfg. Co., dated 30 October 1875, we now have solid evidence these reels were produced for Orvis by the New York City–based company.

#42 L. L. Dickerson Model 810510 D bamboo fly rod used by Art Flick, ca. 1959. Lyle Dickerson was a self-taught rod maker who designed his own rod-milling and -planing equipment. He was known for using only one or two strips from a culm, a time-consuming and expensive way to build rods that likely led to relatively low production. Dickerson rods number fewer than 1,000. This example, an 8-foot model 810510 D, is made even more special having been owned and used by the famed angler and author Art Flick, with an inked date of 1959 on one of the flats.

#37 Underwater camera case used in the production of Lee Wulff films, ca. 1958. This camera case was originally made to explore the wreckage of the *Andrea Doria*, a ship that sank in 1956 off the coast of Nantucket, Massachusetts. It was later obtained by friend Ted Rogowski for Lee Wulff's use. The waterproof housing allowed for underwater filming, a feature that would give Wulff's films an extra-special look in productions such as *Three Trout to Dream About*.

I hope the museum helps you connect with and appreciate the history, journey, and perspectives of others. Remember, inspiration comes in many forms and through many outlets, and we're committed to keeping a steady stream of content flowing.

Sarah Foster
Executive Director

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The Pull of the Current.

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