



# The . American Fly Fisher

Volume 11 • Number 3 • SUMMER 1984



## The Beat Goes On



It's hard to believe; *The American Fly Fisher (TAFF)* has been in business now for a bit more than a decade. Volume 1, number 1 of *TAFF* was issued in the winter of 1974. We can't remember the exact month, but we think it was February or March. In its twenty-four pages of copy were articles by Theodore Gordon, Martin Keane, John Orrelle, and Joseph S. Beck. There was no color photography; Austin Hogan was editor and Anne Secor did the layouts. Austin did much of the artwork (illustrations and page decorations) and, during the early days, wrote a major portion of the copy. Since then we have grown in size,

added color, changed our typeface, and redesigned our layout. Nevertheless, through all of this one thing has remained relatively constant: a flow of consistently high-quality, significant manuscripts from our contributing authors. This has been the real key to our success. Witness, for example, this issue of *TAFF*, of which we are particularly proud. We introduce as first-time contributors Dorothy McNeilly, a Charles Lanman expert, and W. D. Wetherell—the latter being one of the few writers we know who can successfully capture fish as well as fishing. Richard Hoffmann returns; his contribution concerning Fernando Baturto is most important to the under-

standing of our European fly-fishing heritage. And, finally, there is Mary Kelly. Her dogged, painstaking perusal of early sporting periodicals, tackle catalogs, and even street directories has made her one of this country's leading experts on American fishing tackle and tackle manufacturers. Her article on Spalding and the Kosmic line of tackle is both informative and thought-provoking. We invite you to stay with us for at least another decade and welcome your comments, thoughts, and contributions.





# The American Fly Fisher

SUMMER 1984 Volume 11 Number 3

*on the cover:*  
 "Taking Salmon Spawn" from With Rod and Gun in  
 New England and the Maritime Provinces  
 by Edward A. Samuels (Boston: Samuels & Kimball, 1897)

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# Spalding and the Kosmic Connections

by Mary Kefover Kelly



Most of us who are now beginning to gray a bit around the ears and notice a gently receding hairline fondly remember A. G. Spalding & Bros. as a sporting goods firm that manufactured baseballs and baseball gloves. The latter, autographed by some prominent major-league player, was probably the most prized and cherished of birthday or Christmas gifts—second only to Lionel trains—by all of us would-be major leaguers. Few realize, however, that in its early days Spalding was a major manufacturer and purveyor (wholesale and retail) of fishing tackle. In the following article, Mary Kelly recounts for us the details of Spalding's involvement in the tackle trade and supplies us with important information relating to the relatively well-known Kosmic fly rod that Spalding introduced in 1889. Much painstaking research has gone into this piece, but the story is far from complete. It is Mary's hope that her article will serve to stimulate further research into A. G. Spalding & Bros. and the Kosmic connection.



I venture here to shed some fresh light on the cloudy history of the famous near-century-old Kosmic rods and reels and to give an abbreviated historical account of A. G. Spalding & Bros., the well-known tackle firm that introduced the Kosmic line of fishing tackle circa 1889. Alas, some of the puzzle's key pieces are missing, but those remaining, if not always revealing, are useful, at least.

The Kosmic roots are easily unearthed, having been planted in Chicago in 1876, America's centennial year. It was then

that two brothers native to southern Illinois, Albert Goodwill Spalding and James Walter Spalding, opened a retail sporting goods store, with \$800 in capital, at 108 Madison Street under the name of A. G. Spalding and Brother. Albert, 26, was then a pitcher and captain of the professional baseball team, the Boston Red Stockings. According to a lengthy obituary, which appeared in the October 1915 issue of the *Sporting Goods Dealer*, he retired from active participation on the baseball field at the close of the 1877 season in order to devote full time to the sporting-goods business. He never, however, completely lost contact with baseball. (A speculation: it might have been through baseball that Spalding met Loman Hawes, who is said to have been a baseball enthusiast and a semi-pro player as well.)

Ultimately to become world famous, A. G. Spalding and Brother appears immediately to have prospered, and by 1897 a third partner, William T. Brown, a brother-in-law, joined the firm. The name was changed at this time to A. G. Spalding & Bros.; wholesale distribution was begun, and with a few starts and stops, the manufacture of fishing tackle was initiated.

In April 1885, A. G. Spalding & Bros. opened a large, new store at 241 Broadway, New York City. After this opening, except for two years, 1889 and 1893 (when it may have been short of cash), Spalding was a steady advertiser in the national angling papers. This source provides much of what we know about the company. Although understandable, one thing not advertised was specifically the type of tackle manufacturer it was: *direct* or *via the trade*. If direct, then it owned the fixtures and machinery, met the weekly payroll, etc.; i.e., it directly controlled on a daily basis the manufacturing process. If a maker via the trade, it contracted with someone else's factory and ordered a certain quantity of an item to be built to its specifications. The finished product

was then marked with the A. G. Spalding & Bros. name and/or logo.

Although the Spalding firm did not advertise nationally as one that manufactured tackle, until 1885, an entry in the 1881 Chicago Directory raises questions about the period prior to 1885. In the 1881 directory, William H. Reed, rodmaker, is listed as working at Spalding's 108 Madison Street address. The Chicago directories for this period of time, according to the Chicago Historical Society, listed a person's name, occupation, and business address, but not by whom the individual was employed, or if self-employed. Therefore, it is uncertain if Reed was building rods for Spalding (directly) to sell in the Chicago store. Perhaps he was employed there to provide a customer service—rod repair, for example, or, conceivably, Spalding simply leased space to Reed wherein he conducted his own business. Nevertheless, Reed's name will be forever linked to Spalding's through his patented ferrules, which were used on rods marketed (and maybe directly built) by Spalding, even if the true relationship of one to the other is still not clear.

Reed, about whom almost nothing is known except that he seems to have been a bit of a genius and ahead of his time, remained a rodmaker at 108 Madison Street into 1883. He then relocated two blocks from Spalding's, at 112 Randolph Street, Room 6, where he continued rod building. On December 5, 1884, acting as his own attorney, he filed for and later received patent no. 322,750, dated July 21, 1885, and entitled "Joint Ferrule for Fishing Rods" (see illustration). This called for serrating the ferrule, while gently tapering the metal to a thinner wall at the serrated end—twin concepts that today's engineers claim is the optimum design for split-cane ferrules. Reed did not file an assignment, that is, a transfer of title, with his patent. Reed stayed at Randolph Street through 1886. The directories show his occupation changed in 1885 from "rod maker" (previous listing) to "fishing

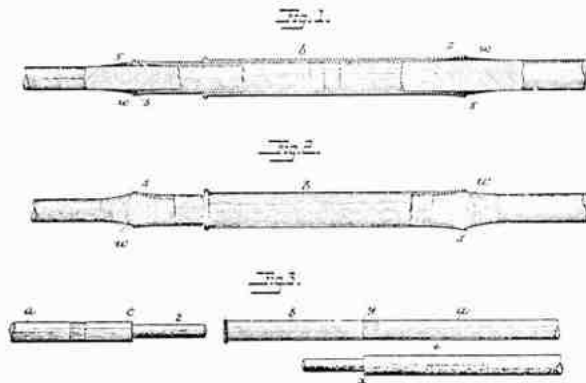
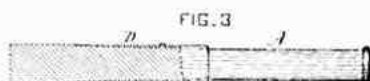
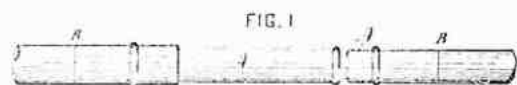


Illustration from "Billy" Edwards' patent  
for reinforced ferrules

William Reed's patented ferrule.  
Reed worked as a rodmaker at Spalding's  
108 Madison Street, Chicago, address as early as 1881.

rods," and in 1886 the occupational entry was simply "fishing tackle."

Shortly after Reed filed his patent application, Spalding (in the spring of 1885) ran a small advertisement in *Forest and Stream* in which, for the first time, it specified *tackle manufacturer*. This advertisement was followed by a larger one in the *American Angler*. Here the firm claimed to be making a "specialty of... fine, light, reliable tackle." It would be "trade-marked." The logo featured: a baseball with SPALDING printed across the center. In later advertisements the logo appeared on spoon baits that were being illustrated. The split-bamboo rods advertised were acclaimed as having been built with "Reed's Patent Serrated Ferrules." (Spalding anticipated that the patent would be granted as it specified *patent* rather than *patent applied for* in the advertisements prior to July 1885.)

Up to this point, it would seem logical to assume that Reed was in the shop on Randolph Street making the rods Spalding was advertising, either directly for them or as a trade maker. But a third party now enters the picture. The long-established and much-respected tackle house of Thomas J. Conroy greeted 1885 with illustrated advertisements in the early January issues of *Forest and Stream*, in which was featured a woodcut of Reed's ferrules. They were identified in the text as "Reed's, patent applied for" and as being used on "Conroy's Celebrated... Split Bamboo Rods." The Conroy firm, which was the first in America to build fishing tackle exclusively (early 1830s), was continuing to build fine rods and reels, and not just for the makers themselves. At this time it was undoubtedly

the largest tackle trade manufacturer in the country. Thus, questions arise as to who was actually building Spalding's rods with Reed's ferrules—Reed, Spalding, Conroy, or perhaps a combination of the three? Also, by what arrangement did Reed sell or license his patent, and to whom—Spalding, Conroy, or both? Eighteen eighty-five was the first year in which two competing tackle houses, each advertising as rod manufacturer, promoted rods with the same unique patented ferrules. If it confused the angler, or if it embarrassed or otherwise distressed either company, there is no known record of it today.

The people at Spalding did not refer to themselves in national advertisements as makers during 1886 or 1887. William H. Reed, after his vague occupational description in the 1886 Chicago Directory, was shown at a new job and business address in the 1887 directory: a salesman at 53 State Street, which was the location of the Jenney and Graham Gun Company. Reed disappeared from the Chicago area after 1887. Did he move to New York, possibly to work with Conroy as a rodmaker—eventually, perhaps, to have a Kosmic connection? Or, perhaps he died after the 1887 entry?

During 1886, Spalding and Conroy again both advertised rods with Reed's ferrules and both illustrated the advertisements with an oversized ferrule. Neither firm mentioned Reed's name, however, referring to the ferrules simply as "patent serrated" or "serrated," Conroy giving the patent date. Conroy ceased promoting them in 1887, but Spalding continued. In 1887, Spalding also advertised a sizeable list of retail dealers scat-

tered around the country who handled the Spalding line of fishing tackle and other sporting goods, indicating that by the young age of eleven, A. G. Spalding & Bros. was well on its way to becoming a giant of the industry.

While still acclaiming rods with the patented serrated ferrule, in 1888, the Spalding firm introduced a new, moderately priced bamboo rod. To quote from the advertisements, "The MAYELL split bamboo... It is mounted with the improved shouldered or swelled end German silver ferrule milled, German silver solid reel seat. The maker's name is on each rod." As advertised, the Mayell came in five lengths for fly-fishing: 9½, 10, 10½, 11, and 11½ feet, three piece with extra tip; and for bass rods in four lengths: 8¼, 8½, 10, and 11 feet, also three piece, but traditionally with two extra tips. Cost: \$15 for any type and length. Since Spalding was again claiming to be a manufacturing firm, we presume, not having seen one, that the name was on the Mayell. We also do not know if the model name, Mayell, is on the rod.

At this writing the author has been unable to locate any copies of the *American Angler* or sufficient numbers of *Forest and Stream* (complete with advertising pages) to determine if Spalding tackle was advertised in 1889 or not. If so, it was not on the company's usual scale, and it is difficult to explain—unless the partners were totally occupied with expanding their tackle division, their monies channeled accordingly, readying for the introduction of the Kosmic line of fishing tackle.

On February 1, 1890, Spalding filed for, and received on March 18, 1890, no.



THE LARGEST GENERAL SPORTING GOODS ESTABLISHMENT IN THE WORLD.

## A. G. SPALDING &amp; BROS.

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK,

MANUFACTURERS, IMPORTERS, AND WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALERS IN

## Sporting Goods

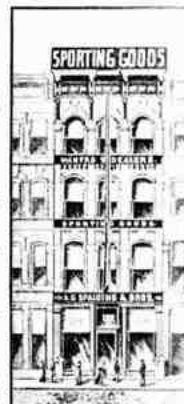
OF A HIGH GRADE.



BASE BALL  
SUPPLIES,  
GUNS,  
FISHING  
TACKLE,  
LAWN  
TENNIS,  
CROQUET.



BICYCLES,  
Ice and Roller  
SKATES,  
GYMNASIUM,  
BOATING  
and  
THEATRICAL  
SUPPLIES.



A Spalding advertisement from American Field, May 29, 1886, that depicts the factory at Hastings, Michigan. This is very interesting because, according to Mary Kelly, Spalding did not advertise as a manufacturer in Forest and Stream or the American Angler during 1886 and 1887. Note Spalding's logo on the top of the 241 Broadway (New York City) store and also in the ground-floor windows. Mary Kelly was unaware of the Hastings factory until just recently.

CHICAGO. A. G. SPALDING & BROS., 241 Broadway, NEW YORK.

enormous amounts of advertising space in the national angling periodicals, from small sizes in the off-season to full pages during spring and summer. They made certain that important, visible anglers had Kosmic rods. This resulted in free plugs from the contributors/correspondents in the national magazines and also in endorsements that were run as part of the Kosmic advertisements.

In 1893, as further promotion at Spalding's display at the Chicago World's Fair (also called the Columbian Exposition), among the thirty rods in its display case it featured extreme and extravagant models certain to capture attention. For example, a gold-mounted trunk or pocket rod in eight sections, including handle and two extra tips, carried a price tag of \$500, according to a report in *Forest and Stream*, May 11, 1893. It did not sell, but it brought for Spalding far more than \$500 in free advertising, as columnists repeatedly found it made good copy. Similar attention was given to its companion gold reel and to the ultralight Kosmic rods of 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 8 $\frac{1}{4}$  feet, weighing 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 2 $\frac{1}{4}$  ounces respectively!

But for some reason Spalding sold the Kosmic line in 1894. The first notice the angling public received that Spalding had sold Kosmic appeared in *Forest and Stream*, April 7, 1894. It was a short statement, appearing almost as an afterthought to the festive announcement that the people at U.S. Net & Twine were celebrating the grand opening of their store at 316 Broadway. It read: [U.S. Net & Twine] "now own the complete [Kosmic] plant and factory."

We take *plant* to mean such facilities as patents, machinery, and personnel; and

in fact, the article concluded by listing two of Spalding's key people who now would be with U.S. Net & Twine. To quote: "Mr. E. S. Osgood, formerly manager of the fishing tackle department of A. G. Spalding & Bros., is in charge of the retail department of this new store, and Mr. H. J. Frost, who for many years has represented the company on the road, has now been brought into the office and placed in charge of the wholesale sample rooms as house salesman."

The people who controlled U.S. Net & Twine, a company founded in 1887, were, according to Trow's Partnership Directory on file at the New York City Historical Society: Charles M. Pratt, president; Alfred C. Bedford, secretary; and William H. Wallace, treasurer through 1896, then George A. Vaughn until the end.

U.S. Net & Twine, proclaimed "sole proprietors" of Kosmic in many of the advertisements, abruptly went out of business early in 1899. H. H. Kiffe Company of New York City bought out the U.S. Net & Twine stock of split-bamboo rods and then in 1900 sold it off for "50¢ on the dollar." So far as national press coverage or advertising is concerned, this Kiffe advertisement was the last mention of U.S. Net & Twine. However, Kosmic was not quite finished.

The letterhead of H. A. Whittemore and Company, Boston, as it appeared in *Forest and Stream* as part of an Ashway Line and Twine endorsement advertisement in 1915, listed the firm as "sole agent" for Kosmic rods, reels, and lines, and also "Isaak Walton" rods and lines. The Walton was a little-known rod label, which like the Mayell was moderately priced. Spalding first marketed it in the summer

of 1891. It went to U.S. Net & Twine as part of the Kosmic sale, and the company then lengthened the label from Walton to The Isaak Walton.

H. A. Whittemore and Company, which started both as wholesaler and retailer in 1901, was still carrying Kosmic and Isaak Walton rods in its 1927 catalog. It is unknown when Whittemore first became sole agent, a term synonymous with exclusive distributor.

As to who manufactured these Whittemore rods, it is as much a speculation as who who built Spalding's initial Kosmic. For some insight into the logic behind a few theories, we need to retrace our steps. Two well-known rodmakers are immediately identified with Spalding's original Kosmic label; the dates of their patents occasionally appeared as part of the Kosmic logo. One, Loman Hawes, who on the patent application filed February 26, 1890, listed his address as Central Valley, New York, received patent no. 428,755 on May 27, 1890. He did not file an assignment with the patent, which basically provided for a means of placing a water-proof cap over the male end of the rod section. Hawes died in 1897.

The second rodsmith was Eustice William "Billy" Edwards, also a resident of Central Valley, New York. He filed on January 27, 1890, and received patent no. 427,162 on May 6, 1890; no assignment was filed. Edward's patent called for flaring and thickening the ends of the ferrules where they fit over the rod and for building up the rod at the point of contact with the ferrule, with an elastic material (see illustration).

I have not been able to trace Edwards between 1891 and 1898, through directo-





EXCLUSIVELY SPORTING GOODS OF A HIGH CLASS  
FACTORY  
HASTINGS, MICH.  
**A. G. SPALDING & BROS.**  
MANUFACTURERS, IMPORTERS, AND DEALERS IN  
CHICAGO

**FINE FISHING TACKLE,**

Artificial Lure, Lawn Tennis, Croquet, Base Ball Supplies, Bicycles, Hammocks, Gymnasium and General Out-Door Sport

Spalding's Hand-Made Bass-Rod.



THE MOST CELEBRATED BASS-ROD PROMOTED BY PRIZE-FISHERIES FOR BASS-FISHING



**PRICES AND DESCRIPTION OF SPALDING'S HAND-MADE RODS.**

Most of our rods are made of the finest quality materials and are built with a light and durable frame. They are made in various lengths and are adapted for all kinds of fishing. The rods are made in the following lengths: 10 feet, 11 feet, 12 feet, 13 feet, 14 feet, 15 feet, 16 feet, 17 feet, 18 feet, 19 feet, 20 feet, 21 feet, 22 feet, 23 feet, 24 feet, 25 feet, 26 feet, 27 feet, 28 feet, 29 feet, 30 feet, 31 feet, 32 feet, 33 feet, 34 feet, 35 feet, 36 feet, 37 feet, 38 feet, 39 feet, 40 feet, 41 feet, 42 feet, 43 feet, 44 feet, 45 feet, 46 feet, 47 feet, 48 feet, 49 feet, 50 feet, 51 feet, 52 feet, 53 feet, 54 feet, 55 feet, 56 feet, 57 feet, 58 feet, 59 feet, 60 feet, 61 feet, 62 feet, 63 feet, 64 feet, 65 feet, 66 feet, 67 feet, 68 feet, 69 feet, 70 feet, 71 feet, 72 feet, 73 feet, 74 feet, 75 feet, 76 feet, 77 feet, 78 feet, 79 feet, 80 feet, 81 feet, 82 feet, 83 feet, 84 feet, 85 feet, 86 feet, 87 feet, 88 feet, 89 feet, 90 feet, 91 feet, 92 feet, 93 feet, 94 feet, 95 feet, 96 feet, 97 feet, 98 feet, 99 feet, 100 feet.



Spalding's Fine  
Flush Crank Click  
Reel.

**Special Notice to Amateur Fishermen.**

We would especially call the attention of all fishermen to the fact that our rods are made of the finest quality materials and are built with a light and durable frame. They are made in various lengths and are adapted for all kinds of fishing. The rods are made in the following lengths: 10 feet, 11 feet, 12 feet, 13 feet, 14 feet, 15 feet, 16 feet, 17 feet, 18 feet, 19 feet, 20 feet, 21 feet, 22 feet, 23 feet, 24 feet, 25 feet, 26 feet, 27 feet, 28 feet, 29 feet, 30 feet, 31 feet, 32 feet, 33 feet, 34 feet, 35 feet, 36 feet, 37 feet, 38 feet, 39 feet, 40 feet, 41 feet, 42 feet, 43 feet, 44 feet, 45 feet, 46 feet, 47 feet, 48 feet, 49 feet, 50 feet, 51 feet, 52 feet, 53 feet, 54 feet, 55 feet, 56 feet, 57 feet, 58 feet, 59 feet, 60 feet, 61 feet, 62 feet, 63 feet, 64 feet, 65 feet, 66 feet, 67 feet, 68 feet, 69 feet, 70 feet, 71 feet, 72 feet, 73 feet, 74 feet, 75 feet, 76 feet, 77 feet, 78 feet, 79 feet, 80 feet, 81 feet, 82 feet, 83 feet, 84 feet, 85 feet, 86 feet, 87 feet, 88 feet, 89 feet, 90 feet, 91 feet, 92 feet, 93 feet, 94 feet, 95 feet, 96 feet, 97 feet, 98 feet, 99 feet, 100 feet.

A. G. SPALDING & BROS., 118 Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

**Spalding's Fine  
plying Reel.**



**Editor's  
Note**

To locate all of Spalding's early tackle advertisements in a myriad of periodicals is close to impossible. Complete collections of nineteenth-century sporting periodicals are few and far between, and often those periodicals that are bound do not include the advertisements—which in many cases appeared on the cover or in a separate section at the end. In preparing the illustrations for Mary Kelly's preceding piece we came upon the following advertisement, which appeared on the front cover of the July 17, 1880, issue of the *Chicago Field*. It clearly establishes Spalding as a manufacturer of fishing tackle prior to 1885, and it also locates (as of that date) the salesroom and mailing address at 118 Randolph Street, Chicago. The next, most recent, Spalding tackle advertisement that we have been able to find is in the *American Angler* of

Chicago *Field* front cover, July 17, 1880

May 13, 1882; it gives the more familiar 108 Madison Street location as Spalding's mailing address. Since Mary has unambiguously established that William H. Reed was making rods at 108 Madison Street in 1881, we suggest that both this location and the Hastings, Michigan, factory (see advertisement) were used for manufacturing tackle and other sporting goods and that Spalding's salesroom was relocated to Madison Street between the summer of 1880 and the spring of 1882. The Hastings factory, which was previously unknown to Mary, might also have been used for the manufacture of the Kosmic line of tackle.

Kosmic and Isaak Walton rods marked with the U.S. Net & Twine name are dated from 1894 to 1899; those marked with Whittemore are dated after 1901.

Eventually, the serial numbers appearing on Kosmic rods may lead to fixing their dates even more precisely than with just the name stamps. Before this can happen, however, a few questions need answers. For example, was there a separate numbering system for each type of rod, or did the numbers run consecutively, regardless of whether the rod was a fly rod, a bass rod, a Henshall, a salmon rod, etc.? Did the numbers begin with the first rods Spalding built?

Based on current knowledge, it appears that the numbers run consecutively. For example, in the collection of The American Museum of Fly Fishing are two Kosmic rods, photographed and described in *The American Fly Fisher*, vol. 6, no. 4. One is a Spalding, 8-foot-4-inch, early bait-casting rod, or as known in the late 1800s, a Henshall rod. It is numbered

1744. The second Kosmic, identified as a pack rod, is U.S. Net & Twine 2608, which is the highest U.S. Net & Twine number I have recorded. A Whittemore 9½-foot, three-piece Kosmic fly rod in the author's collection carries the number 2719. The lowest Kosmic U.S. Net & Twine number of which I have knowledge is 2490, which is a 10-foot, three-piece bass rod. Applying the serial numbers and assuming they run consecutively, the Museum's pack rod dates to roughly 1897 or 1898, since at least by the number 2719, Kosmic rods bear the Whittemore markings. There is not enough known yet to locate the serial number break between Spalding and U.S. Net & Twine.

Also in the Museum's collection are two Isaak Walton salmon rods made by U.S. Net & Twine, one of which is pictured with the two rods mentioned above. They carry serial numbers 403 and 404. To date, these are the only two Walton or Isaak Walton rods I have heard of that

bear serial numbers. Since they are also the only two Walton or Isaak Walton salmon rods that I have cataloged, it is impossible to draw any conclusions at this time.

Truly, there is much serious research yet to be done—not just with Kosmic and Walton serial numbers, but also with all the people having a Kosmic connection. §

*Mary Kelly is no stranger to the pages of The American Fly Fisher. An expert on nineteenth-century American fishing tackle, Mary's previous contributions provided diligent studies on Hiram Leonard (vol. 6, no. 1, p. 12) and Thomas Chubb (vol. 7, no. 4, p. 12). She makes her home in Tryon, North Carolina, and is one of the few people we know that has read the complete run of the original Spirit of the Times (1831 to 1856).*

# *El Tratadico de la Pesca*

## The Little Treatise on Fishing

by Fernando Basurto

from his *Dialogo* (Zaragoza: 1539) fols. *cu recto* - *cix recto*

translated by Thomas V. Cohen and Richard C. Hoffmann



We take great pleasure in being able to print for our readers a translated portion of a sixteenth-century Spanish work on fishing. It contains instruction for fly-fishing as well as fly-tying and heretofore, apparently, was unknown to angling scholars and bibliophiles. Written by Fernando Basurto (circa 1460 to 1540), "El Tratadico de la Pesca" is the practical part of the much larger work, the *Dialogo que agora se hazia: dirigido al muy illustre senor don Pedro Martinez de Luna conde de Morata; senor de la casa de Illuece: con un Vivate lo do: por discante: El qual ha visto Vasurto* (*Dialogo, for short*), which was printed in Zaragoza, Spain, in 1539. French Hispanicist Pierre Geneste appears to have been the first to recognize that the *Dialogo* contained the oldest-known Spanish treatment of angling ("Bulletin Hispanique," 1978). However, Geneste was not an angling historian; he commented solely on the *Dialogo's* literary context. The existence of the *Tratadico* within the *Dialogo* was recently brought to the attention of Richard Hoffmann, and its significance as an angling work of extraordinary importance was immediately recognized by him. He and his colleague, Thomas V. Cohen, are responsible for the translation that follows. As Richard comments, "the *Dialogo* (independent of other known an-

gling literatures) can document mentalities and practices in an early angling tradition hitherto virtually unknown!" In other words, here is something that apparently does not stem from the legendary Dame Juliana Berners and our so-called British angling heritage. A scholarly, analytical treatment of the *Dialogo* (and its relation to Berners's *Treatyse*), by Richard Hoffmann, will appear in the next issue of *The American Fly Fisher*.

The PREFACE concerns the patience which the fisherman has to go fishing:<sup>1</sup>

Noble *senor*, the favor you did me yesterday in the great exchange of words we had made such an impression on me that I have not had the opportunity to serve you as I might in this or in greater matters. With this desire uppermost in me, as soon as you left me I went to my poor house with the catch from your purse, and with the very great pleasure, glory, and enjoyment of the doubloon I applied myself as whole-heartedly as my service shows to write the little treatise on fishing where extensively and with full clarity you will find all the baits<sup>2</sup> with which one can fish in the eastern ocean and in the western rivers and at what times and in what months and in what places one finds the baits and how to keep them and how<sup>3</sup> to mount them on the hooks to fish with them. And remembering that fisher-

men must be counseled patience to understand so enjoyable a pleasure, I have wished to give it by precept so that you always use it when fishing [and] the fishes do not give satisfaction. For if at certain times people are not patient, no one can wait out the delay that fish sometimes make in biting and those who are impatient will throw their rods in the river or break them. And as this exercise is always accompanied by much waiting, no one should be quick to be bored, for if at one time the fish are not gluttons, at another they are so greedy that for much eating infinite numbers lose their lives. And since that condition is known to all and the same even happens many times to men and not seldom to women, [namely] that too much eating brings them to perdition, it is sensible not to be without hope that sooner or later the fish will eat. To tell the truth, if you are not confident, you should examine the breeze and the current weather, for if it is chancy, with too much wind or much water, there is no use expecting that it will be good. For when there is a storm or the fish feel that [such] an event is coming, they do not stay at the banks of the rivers but rather go to the deeps to free themselves of travail, as happens with many animals which, to save themselves from the dangers that occur in storms, seek places of safety. Thus does the badger<sup>4</sup> who, as soon as he senses its coming, places



underground his estate with the victuals he needs to sustain his life. It is a salutary lesson for people what the animals and the fish do; that is to say that when the storm of sins comes, they should flee to places of safety so that their souls do not die at the hands of foreign dangers and, fleeing, they should provide themselves with provisions like the badger, that they might sustain life with works of correction; for if they do not and wait at the shore, they will not avoid losing themselves, as would the fish if they awaited the battle of the waves. So fishermen should not look for them in such weather but on cheerful mornings and serene evenings and pleasant times when they in fishing and the fish in eating enjoy delectation, for the other way is "to cry in the wilderness" and to give one's self pain with the doing and to lose patience and to dislike the suffering. And as all this is necessary so that men become masters and enjoy so great a pleasure, it is best that they rule themselves by the memory of this treatise, which is taken from the experience of many and great fishermen and from my own,<sup>5</sup> since I have for some years practiced it in the sea and on land to escape some vices which are the burial of man and a perpetual prison of the soul, which excuses this exercise by the noble effects with which it is clad. Yet, in truth, it is not unreasonable to advise those who work that they should not go fishing at

all good fishing times, because of the misfortunes that will happen in their households; nor should clerics go every day, at least not before finishing with what they owe God in saying their mass and praying their prayers; nor should men of learning<sup>6</sup> for the harm they will do to those who have lawsuits. For as this exercise [i.e., angling] is so demanding, it is not in the hands of men to abandon it when chance comes along. And relying more on your wise knowledge than on my elegant way of speaking and more on your nobility than on my daring way of speaking, I end by giving a beginning to the little treatise which commences thus:

**FIRST CHAPTER:** which declares the names of the baits with which one fishes with a rod in the sea.

First: squid. Small sardines. Livers of big fish. The body of the crab, with the feet off. Little fish of fresh rivers. A mass made of cheese very salted and of flour twice sifted. The pickled sardine,<sup>7</sup> rancid, stripped, and wrapped with the livers of big fish. Made a big pellet covered with sand, it is good for baiting and drawing the fish to the shore, and better if it includes grated and salted cheese. With these baits they take in the eastern sea *lobos sardos*, *mabras*, *barates*,<sup>8</sup> and *doradas*<sup>9</sup> and other small fishes, fishing from the shore with a long rod and long line.

The hooks should be large and well tempered and especially for the *lobos* are allowed bigger hooks and more threads for the line, which you do not need with the other fish which are smaller and not so hard to bring in.

**SECOND CHAPTER:** which declares how one must fish with these baits.

First: an earthworm collected two or three days earlier that is still stretchable is good to fish at the bottom in dark turbid water with some lamb intestines for trout and barbel and eels.<sup>10</sup> With thin and prime ones fish with a float<sup>11</sup> in the months of March, April, and May at times when the water comes good for *bermejuelas*<sup>12</sup> or *samarugos*.<sup>13</sup>

The big black worms are good for catching barbel and eel in turbid water with a line.

Worms are good for fishing in dammed pools for tench with the bait on the bottom and with small hooks because they have little mouths. And even for the eels it is good they be not big.

In clear water worms are worth little except for fishing for *bermejuelas* and *samarugos* with two threads and very light hooks and a very small worm and a very small float and very little lead. One has to put it on the hook by the head.

The nymph<sup>14</sup> or waterbug<sup>15</sup> is one of the right baits for *bogas*<sup>16</sup> and *madril-*

las.<sup>17</sup> Fish *al andar*<sup>18</sup> with float and lead in clear water with light tackle, the line no longer than the rod and made of no more than two or three threads. One has to put them on the hook by the neck and one can fish with them in all seasons of the year.

The nymph often attracts to itself trout and small barbel and know that with it one must fish in water that is moving, not standing still.

The little worms called *casquillos*<sup>19</sup> taken from *palicos*<sup>20</sup> one fishes with as with the nymph and they, too, are very good bait, though not so sure as the nymph. It, too, one must attach by the neck.

The black cricket one finds in stubble is for fishing for barbel in June, July, August, [and] September. It works in clear and in slightly dark water with lead and float in the currents. And if in the cast or the river there is suspicion of big barbel, use a line of many threads, and if not, let the line be of four threads. Put the hook in at the neck and fish *al andar* where the water purls along and try several times *a la tendida*.<sup>21</sup>

The wood-louse<sup>22</sup> of many feet that grows in cellars and garbage heaps is good for catching barbel in all the months aforesaid and one fishes with them *a la tendida* in turbid water and it is better in cloudy water. It is necessary to fish with a good line and a reasonable hook if you believe that where you are fishing has very good barbel.

The abomasum<sup>23</sup> of the calf or kid is a very excellent bait to fish for barbel from the beginning of April to the end of July. In water clear or a little dark you fish with it *a la tendida*, throwing into not very strongly running waters using a small weight or much lead to keep the bait still. And if you want to know what of the abomasum is good, I say the pieces you find in it, which you will cut with a knife to the size of a filbert nut and use to cover the hook and throw to the fish and the pieces that are too small to be useful you will [use to] bait the stretch of stream, throwing them upstream from where you fish so the flow of the current will bring them down to you, for the barbel come at the odor of the abomasum.

The small tripe of the lamb, which among the large tripe appears very white and light,<sup>24</sup> is very good bait to fool barbel from the feast of the Resurrection to

that of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> You fish with them as with the abomasum and in the same water, *a la tendida*, with the same small weight or much lead. You must put it to the hook with many knots<sup>26</sup> until the hook does not appear and you let the end stick out some half-finger's length, because otherwise it won't hold, and likewise you bait the stream as with the abomasum.

THIRD CHAPTER: which speaks of the little white butterfly with four little horns which at night comes to the rivers to feed the barbel.

First, speaking of this little flying creature that God created for the service of man, note that so far no one knows where it is begotten or grows up, nor from whence it comes to the rivers, and they so like one another that where one goes, so go they all, and their arrival in these parts of Spain is in the months of June, July, and August, and never are they seen by day until the coming of night. With darkness they arrive at the large and greater rivers and on the wide and deep flat sections<sup>27</sup> where there is much fishing. Such a multitude then commences to fly next to the water that their noise seems like that of the bees when in the hive. And the barbel, when they hear it, jump at them and eat them, so that if even a thousand come, none escapes [being] either drowned or eaten by the fish, because if they did not all die, some would be found alive in the mornings or one would find them in the fields and in their dwelling places, but one finds them only on the banks of the rivers all dead. And their arrival at the rivers is just at dusk and of life they have but two or three hours, because if one goes for them at eleven they are all dead or drowned, and if there is a good moon lighting up the river, it is not worth looking for them, for they hold it enemy as they do the light, as we have seen demonstrated in the foregoing chapter.

FOURTH CHAPTER: where one describes how to take the little butterfly and fish with it.

Such good bait is this little fly for catching the barbel that kill them, that it was necessary to find a way to catch them in order to pay them back for the excess

they committed in gulping them down. And since the bugs were enemies of light, one took the same light for remedy in this way: just at dusk, when darkness reigned, one<sup>28</sup> went to the river at the time that they and the barbel gave battle and taking a light and a candle, one lit it and put it above a black cape stretched next to the water and, hiding in the darkness, one saw how the insects left the river and came helpless to the lamp and put themselves fearlessly in it so that with their wings burnt or joined with one another at the four horns they have, they fell in heaps onto the black cape so that in less than a half-hour it was covered with them and white like snow. And so great was the pleasure of the inventor in catching these flies, it was no less than that later fishing with them, for it was so sure that I doubt there is another better [bait] for fooling barbel and, sometimes and some days, trout. And after having given thanks to Our Lord for having treated such pretty insects for the use and pleasure of man, fishing with them and hunting for them, he went to fish as follows: first taking light gear he fished *al andar* in the current in the shallows with float and lead and fixed two of these flies on the hook by the necks. And so great was the catch that he took there that he was certainly astonished that the bait was so excellent.

In rivers where there are trout the little butterfly is very sure to catch them in running water on cloudy days with clear or slightly murky water. One must fish with them *al andar* without lead or float because the bait should go on the top of the water because the trout catch them flying. And their fishing is in the mornings when they go downstream dead.

The bodies alone of the little flies, which are yellow, without the wings or horns, are very excellent to take *bogas* and *madrillas* and small barbel, fishing *al andar* with lead and float.

The floating green algae<sup>29</sup> is a very good bait for tricking barbel. You will fish with it in the months of April, May, June, July, August, and September, and it is better when the weather is hotter because, since it is a green and fresh food, the barbel eat it to refresh themselves as we [eat] lettuce, and note that there is no food in the world that the barbel will eat before smelling it except the algae, which they eat without smelling it. For that reason one fishes with it with float and lead

Elia as en el mundo, o incluya casa de Luna. Pues tus

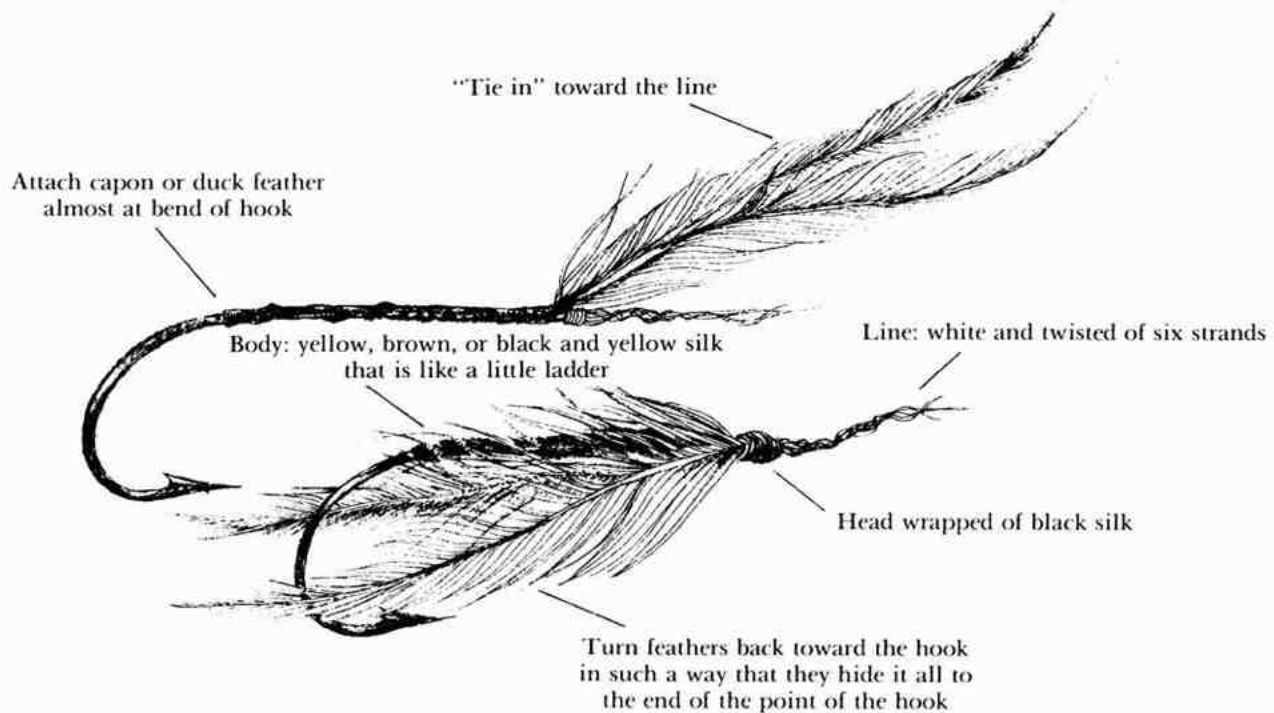
enemigos: cō señaladas victorias: como tu insignia. Puesta en tal caso lo declaró.



claros varones: cō toda fidelidad y esfuerzo. Dede tu principio hasta hoy han ten

ido a sus Reyes: de donde los feos peñanicos a sus

**D**ialogo que agora se hazia: dirigido al muy illu  
stre señor don Pedro Adartinez de Luna cōde de  
Adorata: Señor dela casa de Illueca: con vn Vi  
uo te lo do: por discante: El qual ha visto Gasurto,



### *Basurto's Method for Tying Flies*

*Feathers from capon, duck, or a bird called a bunal were employed in the manufacture of these flies. Unfortunately, the Tradadico is not explicit in locating the feather on the bird. For his illustration, Allan Hassall has chosen capon hackle feathers, which impart an almost streamerlike form to the fly. Naturally, feathers chosen from other areas of the capon's anatomy (or from a duck or bunal) would give the fly a completely different appearance.*

*Regardless of the feather used, it seems clear from the Hoffmann-Cohen translation that Basurto's flies did not have the classical, upright wing that is normally associated with the flies described by Berners [?] in The Treatyse. We note in passing that the upright style of the Berners' flies has not been rigorously documented. (See John McDonald, The Origins of Angling, p. 114.)*

and large tackle and large rod, to be able to reach the deep currents when rivers are in flood, and in others, use equipment in conformity with their size. Note, too, that one or two days before fishing [you should] bait the stream upstream with pieces of algae and, if certain of big barbel, fish with a line of many strands and with a *seguidera*,<sup>30</sup> too, because<sup>31</sup> there is a danger of losing the tackle or breaking the rod. Put the algae between one thread and another, covering the hook, and let it hang down about a finger's length. Fished *al andar* in the middle of the water in water clear or a little murky, it is very sure.

The *limo*, that is explained above, what it is and where it is found,<sup>32</sup> is good

bait for barbel in those months when the algae is useful, fished in the same manner in clear or slightly murky water.

A little paste made of yeast is good for barbel in April, May, and June, fished *a la tendida* in clear water or better in slightly murky and in not too swift a current. But note that you must bait the stream with the same paste and that it should be floured with white flour twice sifted.

Another paste to take *bogas* and *madrillas* during Lent and summer is made thus: take a mouthful of very white bread and chew it well, and then take it between the fingers to make a mass and with it bait the hook with some very tiny balls and fish *al andar* in clear water where the

water is held back. Note that this bit of paste is not what takes it but what puts the bait in the mouth, because being well chewed it is so soft that when the *boga* or *madrilla* comes to it, it falls at once from the hook and so baits him. Thus the real paste that kills and takes is from bread middling chewed because, being a bit harder, it stays on the hook and so, because it doesn't fall off the first time, the fish comes back and takes it. And note with this bait you take big *bogas* and *madrillas* when they begin to bite. It is a very clean bait and very quick, and he who fishes [with it] need not think about offending his neighbor nor need he think about feeding himself; if on feeling a bite the fisherman does not pull, he is tricked

and the *boga* or *madrilla* gets what it wants.

The *bermejuela* that in some places they call *samarugo*<sup>33</sup> is very good bait for catching trout in April and May, fishing *al andar* in clear water with lead and float. But note that the hook must be big if there are big trout in the river because a big trout has a big mouth and the bait is not small, so the hook must be big. It has to be put on the hook by the neck and going down to the bottom. This kind of fishing is called *al pez*.<sup>34</sup>

The feather of the capon or duck or of another bird called a *bunal* is a very excellent bait for trout in the months of April, May, June, July, and August in clear water and swift streams. But note that the feather by itself is worth nothing if<sup>35</sup> it is not tied to the body of some flies made of the same color of silk, at times yellow, at times brown, and at other times black, because these are the colors of the same flies that the trout eat in the streams evening and morning. And you should know that in different months there run different flies in the streams. And to find out in those rivers where there are trout, you must put yourself by the stream and look at the color of the fly that flies there and take it alive. If you do it right, you will be able to take all the trout in the stream.

The feather goes on the hook this way. With the line on the hook, white and twisted of only six strands, and the hook of half a turn well tempered, take some few of the feathers and from the fastening place<sup>36</sup> of the hook put them so that the feathers go toward the line and attach them beginning from almost the bend of the hook as far as the spade end.<sup>37</sup> And when the attachment gets that far, turn the feathers back toward the hook in such a way that they hide it all the way to the end of the point. Then make the head of the fly of black silk at the head of the feather next to the spade. And then make the body of black silk. And put on the top yellow silk which is like a little ladder<sup>38</sup> because the body should show under the feather.

A feather dark in color is good for very clear water in the mornings.

A feather very white in color is good for somewhat murky water in the evenings and for the mornings, too. With the feather one must fish, as I said, in swift streams without lead and without float but with the feather alone, throwing down the stream and going up the stream with reasonable speed so that the feather goes along the top of the water to the upper part of the stream, for in such a manner the trout eat real flies and so we fool them with artificial ones.

The black, honeyed fig is very good bait for barbel in the months of September and October, fishing with it *a la tendida* with a small weight of lead or stone and in the deeps or wells where

there are sure to be barbel. And it is better to bait these streams or wells two days earlier with the same figs in the mornings and evenings. And you put the fig on the hook as follows: cutting the nipple and crown of the fig, make the body four pieces cut in big turns<sup>39</sup> and each of these will be a bait put on as follows: you will put the hook through the middle of the bite and put a knot with the line on the head of the fig so that it will not fall off and<sup>40</sup> the hook hidden with the fig and [be] not without a *seguidera*, for there is no bait that takes greater barbel than the fig, and for this reason one must bring strong apparatus. It is better when the water is turbid or a little murky, and if the water is clear, it should be [used] in the deeps.

The very ripe black grape is good for barbel from the end of August through the whole month of October. One fishes *a la tendida*, first baiting the river with the grapes.

Fresh cheese a little salted is good for barbel in slightly murky water and at times in clear. Fish *a la tendida* as with the grape.

The flying ants,<sup>41</sup> also called *ahudas* are very good for barbel. Fish with them in clear or slightly murky waters during August, September, and October, which are the months when the barbel eat them. One needs to fish with them *al andar* with lead and float and fastened to the hook by the neck. They must have the wings on because that is what makes the barbel like them a lot.

Shrimp are for the *bogas* and *madrillas* in clear water; one fishes *al andar* with lead and float as with the nymph.

Another bait is very appropriate for fishing for barbel and *madrillas*, but it is very nauseating. It is much favored in lands where there are no nymphs in the rivers and it is prepared in the following way. Take a piece of cow's or goat's liver and salt it and put it under the ground wrapped in a damp rag and leave it nine days and you will find it full of white worms with little black heads and with these you fish as with the nymph and with lighter hooks and line. And putting the liver back into the ground, you will find the worms each time you do it. But where there are nymphs they don't take the trouble to use this bait.

There are some other baits they are accustomed to use in fishing rivers, but as the main and better ones are contained in this treatise, of the others we will make no account, not wanting to explain them. So, noble *señor*, I beg you to receive my service with that will that your person obliges and my wholesome desire merits, which has been only to leave you contented doing your command, without putting it out of my hands since the hour and the moment that I left you. And then my churning through of books has been

great and the explications not small and my writing has not been laggard in complementing my word and I beg you to take it all into account without thought of thanking me. For simply knowing that I pleased you, I will count myself satisfied and well ventured. §

<sup>1</sup> This translation is intended to be as literal a rendering of Basurto's language as is compatible with comprehension in English. The translators thank Kenneth J. Golby, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, York University, for valuable assistance.

<sup>2</sup> *cervicos y golosinas*

<sup>3</sup> Fol. c v verso

<sup>4</sup> *tassugo*

<sup>5</sup> Fol. c vi recto

<sup>6</sup> *letrados*, meaning 'lawyers'

<sup>7</sup> *avencada*, literally 'herringed' sardine

<sup>8</sup> *Lobos sardos* are literally 'Sardinian wolves,' but none of these three varieties of salt-water fishes are to be identified.

<sup>9</sup> In modern Spanish, *dorada* is commonly *Chryssophrys aurata*.

<sup>10</sup> Fol. c vi verso

<sup>11</sup> *a la vela*

<sup>12</sup> A Spanish roach, *Rutilus rubilio arcasii*

<sup>13</sup> *Valencia hispanica*, a small member of family Cyprinodontidae native to the Mediterranean littoral of Spain, or perhaps a synonym for Basurto's *bermejuelas* (see p. 9)

<sup>14</sup> *draga*

<sup>15</sup> *gusarapa*

<sup>16</sup> *Chondrostoma polylepis*, a species of nosefish indigenous to the central and western Iberian peninsula

<sup>17</sup> *Chondrostoma toxostoma*, a species of nosefish indigenous to southwestern France and parts of the northern and central Iberian peninsula

<sup>18</sup> Literally, 'on the stroll'

<sup>19</sup> Caddis larvae?

<sup>20</sup> Literally, 'little sticks'

<sup>21</sup> Literally, 'at the stretch'

<sup>22</sup> *porqueta*

<sup>23</sup> *quajo*. The abomasum is the fourth digestive stomach of a ruminant.

<sup>24</sup> Fol. c vii recto

<sup>25</sup> I.e., from Easter to Pentecost, at the extreme, from late March through early June

<sup>26</sup> *Audos*, a term in northern-Spanish dialects, including Aragonese. The sense seems to be to push the hook repeatedly through the tripe so it forms loops.

<sup>27</sup> *tablas*

<sup>28</sup> Fol. c vii verso

<sup>29</sup> *ova*

<sup>30</sup> Literally, 'follower'

<sup>31</sup> Fol. c viii recto

<sup>32</sup> Basurto errs: he has previously said nothing about the *limo*. *Limo* is a kind of mud or manure mixed with organic materials.

<sup>33</sup> See note <sup>13</sup> above.

<sup>34</sup> Literally, 'at the fish' or 'with the fish'

<sup>35</sup> Fol. c viii verso

<sup>36</sup> *enxeridura*

<sup>37</sup> *paleta*, literally 'little shovel'

<sup>38</sup> *escalericia*

<sup>39</sup> *grones*

<sup>40</sup> Fol. c ix recto

<sup>41</sup> *alacans*, an Aragonism



*The Angler, Charles Lanman*  
oil on canvas by William J. Hubbard





*The Birthplace of Charles Lanman  
Monroe, Michigan  
oil on paper by Charles Lanman*

# Charles Lanman

by Dorothy McNeilly



For some time now we have had an interest in Charles Lanman (1819–1895). A prolific writer, Lanman wrote thirty-two books and numerous magazine articles—many of which describe his fly-fishing exploits in the north-eastern and north central United States and eastern Canada prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. These are relatively early accounts of fly-fishing in North America

and are thus important to those interested in angling history. (In the next issue of *The American Fly Fisher*, we plan to publish a checklist of Lanman's books and magazine pieces.) Other than the material found in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and in an introduction to a reprint edition of one of Lanman's books (*A Summer in the Wilderness*, 1847, reprinted by Black Letter Press in 1978), there is little biographical information

available on Lanman. Herein we hope to partly rectify this unfortunate situation. We are delighted to be able to reprint a biography of Charles Lanman that was abstracted from a talk given by Lanman's grandniece, Dorothy McNeilly, before the Florham Park (New Jersey) Historical Society in 1983. Fortunately, while trying to obtain information from the Smithsonian on a Lanman oil painting, we chanced to make Dorothy's acquaintance.

*She has devoted many years to carefully researching her Lanman lineage; she is undoubtedly one of the few experts on the subject.*

Alfred Frankenstein, distinguished art critic and former music critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, once wrote of Charles Lanman:

The versatility of the Renaissance man is supposed to have died out with such late eighteenth century characters as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Willson [sic] Peale, but some men of the nineteenth century, Charles Edwards Lester [journalist, author, and lecturer], Henry Tuckerman [noted art critic and literary figure], and, above all, Charles Lanman—rivalled, if they did not surpass their many sidedness.<sup>1</sup>

Lanman was indeed a Renaissance man. During his life he wore many different hats: that of clerk, business executive, newspaper editor, foreign correspondent, art critic, explorer, government official, historian, author, artist, bibliophile, and art collector. One of his special passions was angling—especially with the artificial fly.

Charles Lanman was born in Frenchtown (now Monroe), Territory of Michigan, on June 4, 1819 (“in the shadow of a primeval forest,”<sup>2</sup> as he once wrote)—the first child of Charles James Lanman and his wife, the former Marie Guie, who subsequently had seven daughters and another son. Scribner’s *Dictionary of American Biography* states that Lanman’s mother, a French-Canadian, had Indian blood in her veins, though family records dating to the early eighteenth century indicate her antecedents were all French.<sup>3</sup>

Charles came from a background rich in prominence and education. His grandfather, James Lanman (a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale), was United States senator from Connecticut from 1819 to 1825. He was the last man in Congress to wear knee breeches and powdered hair. The senator, a member of many important committees, voted with the South on the Missouri Compromise question, as he said, “to support the rights of the whole United States and not those alone of the State which had elected me a Senator.”<sup>4</sup> His vote dismayed Connecticut residents, who burned him in effigy in Hartford; but it wasn’t long before “public opinion was entirely reversed in his favor.”<sup>5</sup>

Charles’s father, Charles James Lanman, graduated with honors from Yale. After completing his law studies (with his father) in 1817, he emigrated from his home in Norwich, Connecticut, to the Territory of Michigan at the invitation of

his friend, General Lewis Cass, who was then civil governor of the territory. There, Charles senior served as attorney for the territory, judge of probate, and “Receiver of Moneys,” a post to which he was appointed by President Monroe and reappointed by President John Quincy Adams. (John Quincy Adams and C. J. Lanman were third cousins, as both were great, great grandsons of Dr. Thomas Boylston, the first physician and surgeon of Muddy River—now Brookline—Massachusetts.) The post of receiver was important, for only specie; i.e., gold or silver coin, was used for all business transactions in the sparsely settled wilderness. It was unsafe to have a large accumulation of funds at any one place. It was the receiver’s responsibility to make collections and to transport the specie, via packhorse with saddle box, to the Bank of Michigan in Detroit, which had a population then of less than two thousand. Apparently, not too many trips had to be made to Detroit, for in 1821 he wrote that there was “such a scarcity of money, a dollar is almost a phenomenon,” and in 1836 he wrote: “the times are horrible—there is neither business confidence, credit or currency and wood six dollars a cord—I don’t know what people will do this winter.”<sup>6</sup>

As for young Charles, his Michigan boyhood instilled in him a lifelong love and appreciation of nature, a love clearly evident in his paintings and in his writing. His vast woodland lore was learned from an old Indian who taught him the arts of fishing and hunting. The two often walked through forests, stalked game, or explored creeks and rivers of the unspoiled wilderness via canoe.

When he was ten, his grandfather in Norwich, skeptical of the quality of education available in the territory, sent for him to come East to attend classes at an academy in that town. He remembered with fondness that “under my grandfather’s library protection it was my lot as a boy, to live for two or three years.”<sup>7</sup> James Lanman’s library was a superb one, and there Charles most likely acquired his knowledge and love of the best in literature.<sup>8</sup> But the young man’s formal education was over when he was fifteen, and it is puzzling why he did not go to Yale, as his father did. One reason may be that his father’s extensive real-estate investments in Michigan and elsewhere were not proving profitable, and thus money for tuition was not readily available. In any event, he began working as a clerk for an East India house, Suydam, Jackson & Company, on Pearl Street in New York, where he remained ten years—“wasted years” he called them. But they were not really wasted years. In his decade with Suydam, Jackson & Company, he not only became an executive with the firm, he also published *Letters about the Hud-*

*son River* (1835), *Essays for Summer Hours* (1841), and *Letters from a Landscape Painter* (1845). The latter included the essay “Cole’s Imaginative Paintings,” often referred to by art historians when discussing the Hudson River School of Painting and its progenitor. In addition he studied painting with Asher Durand. Convenient to the Pearl Street office was the Mercantile Library (founded in 1820 and still active today), which no doubt satisfied his reading needs. The library was patronized at that time by Washington Irving, Horace Greeley, and John Jacob Astor, to name just a few.

In 1845 Lanman left New York and returned to Monroe, Michigan, to edit the *Monroe Gazette*, which he left the following year to become associate editor of the *Cincinnati Chronicle*. He took leave of his editorial duties during the warm months of 1846 to embark on a canoe trip up the Mississippi River and Lake Superior. He recounted his experiences in the book *Summer in the Wilderness*, published in 1847. That same year, he left Cincinnati and returned to New York to become a reporter and assistant in the editorial office of the *Express*. It was here that he inaugurated a style of art criticism that “won him much reputation,” according to his publisher, James Brooks. Early the following year, Brooks sent him on assignment to Washington, which he had never before visited. Brooks advised him that “public affairs are taking an interesting turn down there, and you must send us some good letters, but one thing remember—don’t believe anything you hear and not more than one-half that you see.” The young newspaperman was so captivated by Washington that after dispatching a few reports to the *Express*, he resigned to join the *National Intelligencer*. Peter Lanman of Norwich, Connecticut, who had recently returned from England and the Continent, congratulated his grandnephew on being with the *Intelligencer*; he commented, “no American newspaper ranks higher in London and Paris, and no editors stand on higher ground at home and abroad than Messrs. Gales and Seaton.”<sup>9</sup> Peter deemed it a very high honor for such a young man to have their confidence.

Charles continued to contribute articles to the paper after his appointment in 1849 as librarian for the War Department. In May of 1850, he became librarian of the Department of State’s copyrights, but resigned in July to become confidential secretary for Daniel Webster, who was the secretary of state under President Millard Fillmore. I have not been able to discover why Webster chose Charles to be his secretary; however, his talents were no doubt easily recognized by the secretary of state.

It was Webster who suggested to President Fillmore that the duty of establishing a library for the White House should



*Mrs. Charles Lanman (Adeline Dodge)*  
*a charcoal and chalk drawing by Eastman Johnson*  
*courtesy of Frick Art Reference Library*

be assigned to Lanman. Lanman fulfilled this assignment in addition to performing his secretarial responsibilities for Webster. The Fillmores had discovered (to their amazement) after they had moved into the executive mansion that there was not a book in the place, not even a Bible; and "when the President holds a Cabinet Council, there is not even a volume of laws to which reference can be had and the members are obliged to

run around to their offices to obtain the books they must be obliged to resort to."<sup>10</sup> A Congressional appropriation was sought and quickly granted; and Lanman, to quote him:

made extensive purchases, according to my own judgment, in New York and Boston. The list I submitted to the President was sanctioned without an exception, but his

Excellency, however, found fault with one of the purchases... a copy of the 'Federalist' without an index, and I was told that any work of that character with such a deficiency was a sham and well nigh useless. I saw the point but took refuge in the fact I could not purchase what was not on the market, and that half a loaf was better than no bread at all. Since that time, the work in ques-



*Moosehead Lake, Maine, 1883*  
oil on paper by Charles Lanman

tion has been published with an admirable index.<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between Webster and Lanman, despite the difference in ages—thirty-seven years—appears to have been a very compatible one. In fact, as Lanman wrote, “when enjoying his companionship alone, our relative positions seemed mutually to be forgotten.” The two took advantage of every opportunity to fish together, whether at Webster’s home in Marshfield, Massachusetts, or in Washington, where they went almost daily to the Great Falls of the Potomac to try their luck. “Mr. Webster would throw off his cares and personal pecuniary troubles to cast his line with boyish glee and to exult loudly when he succeeded in hooking a fish,” according to *Atlantic Monthly* in 1879. Lanman made this note about a

morning’s fishing expedition with Webster: “He gave me as a reason winding up the sport at nine o’clock, that he was President Fillmore’s clerk and was obliged to be at the Department before noon.”<sup>12</sup>

After Webster’s death on October 24, 1852, Lanman held various positions with government agencies, including librarian for the Interior Department (1855 to 1857 and 1865) and the House of Representatives (1861). He had hoped his intimate friend Abraham Lincoln would appoint him librarian for the Library of Congress, but political pressures forced the president to place someone else in that post. He vowed he would never again enter that library. He never did, so it is ironic that many of his papers are there.<sup>13,14</sup>

On June 19, 1849, Charles acquired a permanent traveling companion when

he married Adeline Dodge, daughter of Francis Dodge of Georgetown (a prosperous merchant and West Indies trader and a former New Englander). Also married that day with them at the Dodge home was Adeline’s sister, Virginia, who became the wife of Ben Perley Poore. Poore was a well-known correspondent of *Harper’s Magazine*, the *Crayon*, and other publications, and was one of the most popular persons in Washington. The ceremony took place at the ungodly hour of 4:30 a.m., in order to give the couples (said to have honeymooned together) time to go from Georgetown to the Washington railroad station, where they caught the 6:00 a.m. train for New York City.<sup>15</sup> For a wedding present, Mr. Dodge gave Adeline and Charles twin brick houses built in 1810, on P Street—one for them to live in, the other to rent.

The couple resided there for their entire married life.<sup>16</sup>

Lanman's diplomatic career began in 1871 when he was appointed American secretary for the first Japanese legation in Washington, a position that he held for eleven years. After leaving the legation, Lanman devoted most of his time to writing and painting. He was assistant assessor of the District of Columbia in 1885, and in 1888 became librarian of the Washington City Library.

During his lifetime, Lanman traveled extensively in this country (east of the Rockies) and in Canada. The journal he kept while exploring the mountains from Georgia to Virginia became *Letters from the Allegheny Mountains*, published in 1849. It was one of his best sellers, and it is referred to in the current guide for the Appalachian Trail, which, incidentally, follows much the same route. An equally popular book was *Tour to the River Saguenay* (1848), a "record of adventures in the valleys of the Hudson, St. Lawrence and St. Johns and some of the rivers of New England," researched when he, in his words, "relinquished my editorial labors for a while in the summer of 1847 to spend a portion of the time to indulge in my passion for angling." At Tadousac, at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers, he was guest and fishing companion of William Price, the proprietor of a large lumber business.

Five years later, Charles, his wife, Adeline, and the Reverend and Mrs. Louis Noble followed the same route. Adeline wrote a delightful account of the second tour. In it she relates the details of a dinner the two couples had as guests of the Governor General, Lord Elgin, of Quebec:

"On arriving we were ushered into a little room where we deposited our shawls, then on to the drawing room, led by liveried servants," where she "had the accidental pleasure of seeing *Tour to the Saguenay* lying on a table." She was escorted in to dinner (served on gold plate) by Lord Elgin and sat on his right. Art and literature, the Elgin marbles, as well as government affairs, were dinner topics, and "the want of discipline in the American course of education was touched upon." The following day the Lanmans and the Nobles set sail for Tadousac, surviving a vicious storm in which many boats were lost, and on reaching that destination they were guests of William Price. On their way home from Canada, they visited Daniel Webster at Marshfield, there they found Great Britain's Minister Plenipotentiary, John Crampton. Webster, always the perfect host, saw to it that he and the other expert Isaak Waltons, Lanman and Crampton, would spend some time trying their luck in nearby waters. On one occasion the host

and all the guests had dinner at Plymouth, where "there was a very pleasant assemblage of pilgrim descendants," Adeline reported. Plymouth, more than fifteen miles from Marshfield, was quite a distance to travel by carriage in those days to eat out!

Lanman was an extremely prolific writer. He published thirty-two books during his lifetime, some of which have already been mentioned. A very popular one was *Haphazard Personalities* (1886), a collection of vignettes of notable people he had known. Also in demand was *The Private Life of Daniel Webster* (1852). There were always plenty of readers for the books of his travels in both this country and Canada. *The Dictionary of Congress*, first published in 1859 (there were several later editions), was a biographical record of each person who had ever been in Congress.<sup>17</sup> He also contributed articles to a number of periodicals, among them *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* (first in 1840), *Athenaeum*, and the *Illustrated London News*, which paid him one guinea for each article or sketch from his paint brush. His vast knowledge of the denizens of the sea, lakes, and rivers found its way into reports for the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries (1872), one of which dealt with "The Salmonidae of Eastern Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."

As a painter, Lanman was most prolific; his paintings are believed to number over one thousand. The whereabouts of few are known today, however. The National Academy of Design in New York accepted his first picture for exhibit in 1840 and then included his work in fifteen subsequent exhibits. He was admitted to the National Academy's membership in 1842 as an associate, an unusual honor for so young an artist. Twice he exhibited at the American Art Union, also in New York.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most engaging chapters in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lanman—who had no children of their own—began in 1872, when they became foster parents of a Japanese girl, only seven years old. Her name was Umeka Tsuda, but she was always called Ume. She and two other young ladies, sent to the United States by the emperor of Japan, were the first Japanese girls to be educated in this country. An outstanding scholar in private school in Washington and at Bryn Mawr College, Ume returned to her native land and later founded the Tsuda School for Girls. The school became Tsuda College in 1900, and today is a university.

Charles Lanman died on Monday, March 4, 1895, in his house on P Street. He was seventy-six years old. According to Katharine M. Knox in her *Surprise Personalities in Georgetown, D.C.* (1958),

the cause of death was heart disease. After a funeral service on March 7, he was buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery, Georgetown, Washington, District of Columbia. His wife, Adeline, who outlived Charles by some nineteen years, is buried at his side. §

<sup>1</sup> A. Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (New York: H. N. Abrams Inc., 1975) p. 106. Mount, a nineteenth-century genre painter, was a longtime friend of Charles Lanman.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lanman, "A Family Monologue," unpublished manuscript

<sup>3</sup> A perusal of a collection of Lanman ancestral papers at the Detroit Public Library reveals no evidence of Marie Guie's "Indian blood."

<sup>4</sup> Lanman Papers, Department of Special Collections, Research Library at the University of California at Los Angeles

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Charles Lanman's library, including books from his grandfather's and his father's fine collections, was auctioned in 1973 by Samuel T. Freeman & Company in Philadelphia.

<sup>9</sup> Lanman Papers, see note 4 above.

<sup>10</sup> Francis de S. Ryan, *Centennial of the White House Library*, 1950

<sup>11</sup> Lanman Papers, see note 4 above.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Lanman, *Recollections of Curious Characters and Pleasant Places*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1881) p. 224

<sup>13</sup> Mary C. Watkins, "Charles Lanman, June 14, 1819-1895," Senior Thesis, George Washington University, 1968

<sup>14</sup> The largest collection of Charles Lanman's papers is at the University of California at Los Angeles.

<sup>15</sup> Mary C. Watkins, see note 13 above.

<sup>16</sup> According to some sources, Charles Dickens and Washington Irving were entertained at Lanman's 3035 P Street residence.

<sup>17</sup> It was assembled from questionnaires Lanman had distributed. All the questionnaire replies were sold at an auction a few years ago; the highest price paid for one, \$16,000, was for Abraham Lincoln's, on which he had written in the space for education, "Deficient." For a time, Lanman owned the copyright for the dictionary that was printed by Congress. This caused Horace Greeley to comment to him, "I do not see any book that Congress patronizes can be good for anything since it cannot afford to tell unpleasant truths."

<sup>18</sup> A major exhibit of Charles Lanman's paintings and sketches has recently been assembled. More than sixty of his works are on display. It is by far the most extensive exhibit of Lanman's art to date. The exhibit may be viewed at the Monroe County Historical Museum, Monroe, Michigan (until September 30, 1984), and at the Woodmere Art Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (October 27, 1984 to January 5, 1985). A handsome catalog of the exhibit may be obtained by writing to Harry F. Orchard, Curator, Morris Museum of Arts and Sciences, P. O. Box 125, Convent, NJ 07961 (price, including postage, is \$ 6.00).

# Take a Writer Fishing

by W. D. Wetherell



W. D. Wetherell has furnished us with a poignant essay on writers and fishing. It is a chapter from his forthcoming book, *Vermont River*, which is scheduled for publication in the fall of 1984 by Nick Lyons Books.

I dreamt last night that I was fishing with Joseph Conrad. We were on the open stretch of the river above the first bridge. I was casting a dry fly toward a shallow spot that couldn't possibly have held a trout; Conrad was shaking his head in disapproval, muttering something in Polish that I couldn't understand. He was fishing with a handline, hauling it in over his shoulder as if it were an anchor rope, really straining—his fine beard was drenched in sweat. I would have liked to help him, but was too shy. More than anything, I wanted him to approve of the river and love it as much as I did.

Too soon, he faded into Roger Maris. But so vivid was his image that when I woke up this morning, I went to the library to determine whether there's any record of his having fished. Had I put him on that trout stream by myself, or was there some half-remembered reference to the sport buried away in *Nostromo*?

I suppose I'm to blame. None of the novels or stories contain fishing scenes, and there's no mention of any interest in his autobiographical writings. In the course of his maritime career, he must have known men who fished hard for their living, and fishing for fun must have smacked, to him, of affectation.

Searching through Conrad, remembering the dream, I began trying to list all the great writers who are known to have been dedicated fishermen. It's a remarkably short list, and I'm not sure why. Is it because great writers are too intellectual to take any interest in something so

earthy as fishing? I don't think so—fly-fishing has always attracted a brainy sort, and among its practitioners are a great number of scientists, engineers, artists, and teachers. Is it because writers bear too complicated a burden of worry and concern to enjoy fishing's basic premise? This might be closer to it. Like any other human activity, fishing has its share of ironies, and perhaps the act of trying to fool a trout into thinking that a piece of feather and steel is a mayfly is fundamentally too absurd for a great mind to endure. Perhaps, also, writers with their torments know too well what it's like to have a barbed hook in their throat and have no wish to inflict the same torture on another harmless soul.

Let's go down the list. Hemingway is first, if for no other reason than that his love for fishing was the most self-advertised. The popular conception of Hemingway as a fisherman revolves around his days fishing off Cuba and the Keys on his beloved *Pilar*, with the kind of epic, day-long encounters with marlin that formed the basis of *The Old Man and the Sea*. While this kind of big-fish fishing with its competitiveness, its emphasis on sheer physical power and machismo, obviously meant a lot to Hemingway and revealed much that was fundamental in his character, it doesn't present him in a particularly attractive light. Would it have been fun to be on the *Pilar* with him, fishing the "great blue stream" of the Gulf? For a while, perhaps, then something of a bore. Arnold Gingrich, his friend and publisher, claimed that "Ernest was a meat fisherman... intensely competitive about his fishing, and a very poor sport." This seems like an accurate appraisal; it's fun to catch a big fish, but not if your manhood is being measured by how fast you reel him in.

It's the younger, not-yet-legendary Hemingway—the Hemingway who fished grasshoppers for trout—that's the appeal-

ing one. The golden moments of his boyhood revolved around his trips to the lakes and streams of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the locale of his "Big Two-Hearted River." In this, and in his early journalism for the *Toronto Star*, there's a boyish sincerity and brightness that gives way to pontification twenty years later when he's writing about big game. Included in his early journalism are accounts of streams he's visited in Canada and Europe, illuminated by the typically compact Hemingway style. Here's a man who can sum up the enchantments of a trout river in one beautiful phrase: "A pool whose moselle-colored water sweeps into a dark swirl and expanse that is blue-brown with depth and fifty feet across." Here's a man who has an eye for things other than trout, who can include in an account of a Swiss fishing trip meditations on barmaids in station buffets, Napoleon's army in the St. Bernard pass, and the latest news in a trout-stained *Daily Mail*. This Hemingway—the young man who hiked across the Black Forest in the twenties with a rucksack and a fly rod and not much else—is the one with whom I would have liked to fish.

Thoreau is another writer it would be fun going out on the river with, though you'd have to be prepared for some trouble. I don't mean dealing with his reserved personality (Sonia Hawthorne said that taking his hand was like taking the hand of an elm), but with his ambivalence toward fishing. Did he love it or hate it?

Read his account of night fishing on Walden, and you'd swear no one ever loved the sport more. He tells of returning late to the pond from the village and spending the dark hours of midnight fishing from a boat, "communicating by a long flaxed line with mysterious nocturnal fishes... now and then feeling a slight vibration along it, indicative of some life probing about its extremity, of



John Burroughs with a brace of trout in Yellowstone Park, 1903

dull uncertain blundering purpose there, and slow to make up its mind."

Thoreau, for all his talk of simplicity, was too complicated a man to leave it at that. As much as he enjoyed fishing (we have that famous image of Thoreau playing the flute in his boat, charming the perch gathered about the bow), he was convinced that he *shouldn't*—that fishing, like hunting, was an important but essentially immature response to nature and its wonders, a pursuit for "embryo" man and not those attuned to the "higher laws." He puts down the fishermen who come to Walden thus: "They might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure." He's equally hard on himself: "I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect. I have tried it again and again. I have skill at it... but always when I have done I feel it would have been better if I had not fished... with every year I am less a fisherman... at present, I am no fisherman at all."

There's no apology at all in that other great nineteenth-century writer, John Burroughs. While Thoreau was at Walden deciding whether or not to fish, Burroughs was out on the Neversink, celebrating trout fishing with some of his happiest prose. "Trout streams coursed through every valley my boyhood knew," he writes in his essay, "Speckled Trout." He describes trips to the Delaware, Rondout, Beaverkill, and Esopus—trips in which it was nothing for each fisherman to take a hundred trout.

Burroughs had more insight into the sport than Thoreau. He claims he's seen more of woods and nature in "threading my native streams for trout," than he would have in any other way. Fishing "pitches one in the right key" to accept nature; the fisherman "is a kind of vagrant that nothing fears... all his

approaches are gentle and indirect." With this attitude, fly selection is no problem: "When you bait your hook with your heart, the fish always bite!" And later: "A certain quality of youth is indispensable to the successful angler, a certain unworldliness and readiness to invest yourself in an enterprise that doesn't pay in the current coin."

Washington Irving fished some of those same Catskill streams. One of the essays in his *Sketch Book*, "The Angler," is a self-deprecatory account of his flirtation with trout. Reading Isaak Walton has left him "stark mad[about fishing] as was ever Don Quixote from reading books of chivalry." Thus intoxicated, he ventures out on an upstate stream with all the necessary accouterments ("perplexed with half a hundred pockets") and begins to cast.

The results are meager. "For my part, I was always a bungler at all kinds of sports that require either patience or adroitness... I hooked myself instead of the fish, tangled my line in every tree, lost my bait, broke my rod and gave up the attempt in despair." Poor Irving! How we can sympathize with him! Nothing daunted, he ends the day reading his beloved Walton under the shade of a gentle oak. "There is certainly something in angling," he concludes, "if we could forget, which anglers are apt to do, the cruelties and tortures inflicted on worms and insects, that tends to produce a gentleness of spirit and a pure serenity of mind."

Irving's contemporaries were less fond of the sport. His friend Sir Walter Scott described himself as "No fisher, but a well-wisher of the game." He must have known a little about the subject; there's a scene in *Redgauntlet* where Darsie Latimer dismisses Charles Cotton's writings as not being applicable to Highlands streams, then goes on to spin his version of the familiar barefoot-boy-out-fishing-

sophisticated-angler story. Scott's dismissal of Cotton is echoed in Lord Byron's put-down of Walton: "The quaint, old, cruel coxcomb in his gullet; should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it." Tennyson's poetry includes an occasional reference to fishing—apparently he shared with Burroughs and Irving the opinion that it was good for the soul to engage in something so absolutely *un-economic*. "Lusty trout to him were script and share; and babbling waters more than cent for cent."

To find the real angling poet, you have to move ahead forty years to Yeats. It's funny about him. There's no mention of any fishing trips in his autobiography, and yet he wrote some of the finest poetry on the subject extant. There's "The Fisherman": "Although I can see him still, the freckled man who goes, to a grey place on a hill, in grey Connemara clothes, at dawn to cast his flies"; and "The Song of Wandering Aengus": "Because a fire was in my head... I dropped the berry in a stream, and caught a little silver trout."

Reading Yeats, you come to the conclusion that what he really loved was the sound of the word *trout* and the pastoral, innocent image it conveyed. To him, trout were like fairies in the Irish hills—something you thought well of without wishing to actually catch. In all the fishing in print, has there ever been a more magical line than the one from "The Stolen Child?" "We seek for slumbering trout, and whispering in their ears, Give them unquiet dreams."

If Yeats is the epitome of the mystical fisherman, then Chekhov is the personification of the earthy one. No great writer ever loved fishing more. Nina, speaking of the writer Trigorin in *The Seagull*, could easily have been describing Chekhov himself. "And is it not wonderful that a famous writer, the darling of the public, mentioned daily in the papers

... should spend his whole day fishing and be delighted because he has caught two chubb."

Chekhov would have been a good man to fish with—caring nothing for orthodoxy, whether in literature or fishing, and having that rare ability to forget he's a great man. Fishing was a welcome diversion from the cares of literature and medicine; the moment he bought his country estate at Melikhovo in 1892, he began stocking his ponds with tench imported from Moscow in glass jars. Trigorin, the bemused writer stumbling about other people's lives carrying a notebook and a fishing rod, is in some part Chekhov's wry laugh at himself. (I saw a performance of *The Seagull* recently in which Trigorin—a man fishing a farm pond for chubb—carried the kind of huge saltwater rod Zane Gray might have used, thereby making ludicrous what was otherwise a fine production.)

Chekhov's real fishing masterpiece is a lesser-known story called "Fish." It bears the simplest of plots. Berasim, a peasant, is working by the river preparing a bathing shed when he grabs a huge fish that's hiding under some willow roots. Other peasants come over and offer their advice on how to land him ("But why do you keep poling with your hand?" cries the hunchback Lubim, shivering as though in a fever. "You blockhead! Hold him, hold him, or else he'll get away, the anathema! Hold him, I tell you!"). The matter isn't resolved until the master himself, Andrey Andreitch, hears the commotion and joins the fun.

"A famous eel-pout," mutters Yefim, scratching under his shoulder blades. "I'll be bound it weighs ten pounds."

"Mm... yes," the master assents. "The liver is fairly swollen! It seems to stand out! Aach!"

The fish makes a sudden, unexpected upward movement with its tail and the

fishermen hear a loud splash... they all put out their hands, but it is too late; they have seen the last of the eel-pout.

It's all there—the simple excitement of it, the suspense, the climax, and the immediate anticlimax. Chekhov has always been regarded as the writer's writer, and based on the insights he shows in this story, he was the fisherman's fisherman as well.

T. H. White was another writer who had an uncanny insight into fish and fishing. We have that masterful scene in *The Sword in the Stone* where the Wart, the young King Arthur, is transformed into a tench by Merlin so he may swim about the castle moat and complete his education among the fish, nearly being swallowed by a pike in the process. White had a great natural affinity with animals, birds, and fish; nature was a balm for the torments of his inner life, offering him the companionship he could never find with another human. White—with his falconer's patience—would have been a methodical fisherman and a learned one; he and Chekhov could have taught each other a lot.

With White, the list nears its end. (It could be extended, though, by including contemporary fiction writers like William Humphrey, Norman Maclean, Richard Brautigan, and Tom McGuane, people who have written about fishing in imaginative and original ways.) Looking back on the writers mentioned, several names stick out by their absence—writers whose silence on fishing is in some ways a surprise.

Take Melville, for instance. Here's a man who in *Moby Dick* gave us what is arguably the best "fishing" story ever written (Melville, remember, insisted that the whale was a *fish*), and yet there are only three or four vague references to fishing in his entire output, and they're

all less than memorable. Take this poem from *Mardi*:

Fish, fish, we are fish with red gills;  
Naught disturbs us, our blood is zero;  
We are buoyant because of our bags;  
Being many, each fish is a hero...

Which is a long way from Yeats. But it's easy to understand why Melville wasn't a fisherman. To anyone who had clung to the sides of a whale boat on a Nantucket sleigh ride, catching ten-inch Berkshire trout must have seemed pretty tame.

Dickens is another novelist you might have expected to write about fishing, if for no other reason than that he seems to have written about everything else. There are no anglers among his characters, not even among the sporting Pickwickians. Dickens does, however, hold an honorary place in the angling hall of fame. The Dolly Varden trout is named after the irrepressible Dolly Varden of *Barnaby Rudge*, "the very impersonation of good-humour and blooming beauty... giddy, flirtatious and coquettish."

Robert Frost should by rights be an angler. Of all the greats so far mentioned, he's the only one who might have known the rivers I love, and I regret there's no record in his poetry of any involvement. Ernest Poole, the novelist who was Frost's Franconia Notch neighbor, mentions in a reminiscence that Frost liked to go fishing in the spring, but these expeditions left no trace in his work. In his collected poems there is only one reference to fishing. It comes in "The Mountain" where the local farmer, in explaining his relationship to the mountain that rises behind his farm, says "I've been on the sides, Deer-hunting and trout-fishing..." And that's it for Robert Frost. There are no hymns to New Hampshire trout streams, no recollections of fishing trips in the Green Mountains—his Hyla Brooks are always fish-





*Hemingway and Faulkner as seen by illustrator Allan Hassall*

less. Like Conrad, he knew too well the hard work that went into wresting a living from nature to spare much attention to people who went to the woods for sport.

And what about William Faulkner? Why didn't he leave us a fishing equivalent of "The Bear?" He lived in a region where fishing was a way of life, and he must have listened to his share of fishing stories during his spell of purgatory at the local post office. Mississippi is bass country—the stories would have been of monster largemouths caught on frogs. And while these were the kind of oral legends Faulkner thrived on, he never got around to writing as lovingly about fishing as he did of hunting.

There is one account of Faulkner's interest in fishing, and it's a poignant and moving one. After his death in 1962, his neighbors in Oxford put their recol-

lections of the man they called Bill into a book. Among the contributions is one by J. Aubrey Seay in which he describes meeting Faulkner by a lake four days before the great writer's death. Seay was going fishing, and he asked Faulkner if he would like to come along. Faulkner politely declined—he wasn't feeling up to it—but asked if he could sit and watch them fish through binoculars.

I've thought of that scene often lately—the great man bundled up against the death that was around the corner, staring out over the lake's surface with an old pair of binoculars, trying one last time to watch and learn. I think of Seay casting for bass from the bow of that boat across the lake—of how fishermen can never know when they're posing for someone who might just possibly make them eternal. I picture myself on the river under that doomed, all-seeing gaze, and it

makes me cast a little more carefully, doing everything in slow motion so that Bill Faulkner—his hands trembling on the binoculars—can get it right. §

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*This is Walter D. Wetherell's first contribution to The American Fly Fisher. His first novel, Souvenirs, was published in 1981 by Random House. His short stories and articles have appeared in the Atlantic, the New York Times, and other national publications. Two of his short stories have won O'Henry awards. He currently resides in Thetford, Vermont.*

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# Museum Opens

The American Museum of Fly Fishing opened its new exhibition galleries on May 26, 1984. In our next issue, we'll take you on a gallery tour in full color. For the time being, since the color pages in this issue were long ago committed, here are some scenes from the opening party held for trustees on June 2, together with some news pertaining to our recent opening.

After a truly herculean effort on the part of the museum staff and volunteers (our gallery renovation was accomplished in the middle of our busy spring-auction season), the exhibits and labels were finally in place, the new signs were installed on the grounds, and the doors were open. On Sunday, May 27, we hosted a reception for members of the community in order to acquaint them with the Museum. This was attended by more than a hundred people, all of whom seemed to be wonderfully impressed by our new facility. The next reception was held on June 2, this time for trustees and a few guests. Following a joyous celebration in the new galleries (our permanent home, at last, after sixteen years in temporary quarters), we strolled across the street for a sumptuous buffet at the 1811 House, where the celebration lasted well into the evening.

Among our honored guests on that day was Mrs.



*Trustee Mike Fitzgerald next to a portion of the Cushner Exhibit*



*Julie Cook and Trustee Chris Cook in front of one of our reel displays*



*Judy Gibbs, Trustee Ed Zern, and Outdoor Life Angling Editor Jerry Gibbs*



*TAFF Copyeditor Diana Morley, Editor and Trustee David Ledlie, and Tom Morley*

# New Galleries!

Marion W. G. Pleissner, with whose gracious cooperation we were able to put together An Ogden Pleissner Retrospective—an exhibition of twenty-seven original works by the late artist and friend of the Museum. Portions of this exhibit will be on display through our annual meeting in Manchester on September 8.

The Pleissner exhibit is in addition to more traditional displays of numerous items from our extensive collection of fly-fishing artifacts and memorabilia. Also on view as a special exhibit is a sampling from the fabulous collection created by William Cushner, formerly of Manhattan and now of Ingonish, Nova Scotia. Some members may recall the extraordinary exhibit of Mr. Cushner's framed, historic flies at The American Museum of Natural History in New York a number of years ago. Bill Cushner agreed last winter to a special loan exhibition at our museum, which will remain on display until next spring.

In the few weeks since our doors have been open, we've had visits by people from more than twenty-eight states and seven countries. We also have taken in more than one thousand dollars in contributions at the door. Truly a happy combination. §

—JOHN MERWIN



*Mrs. D. C. Corkran (left) and Mrs. Marion W. G. Pleissner*



*Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Corkran near a portion of the Pleissner Exhibit*



*Trustees Roy Chapin, Leigh Perkins, Dick Finlay, and Romi Perkins*

# Notes and Comment

## *Pleissner Book On Sale*

David R. Godine of Boston, widely known as a publisher of fine books, has announced the publication of *The Art of Ogden Pleissner* by Peter Bergh. The 120-page book is 12" x 11" and features 105 illustrations in color. All three editions of the book are available for purchase through the Museum. The trade edition is available for \$45. A limited edition of 400 copies features a different cloth binding, is signed and numbered by the author, and contains a suite of four small prints (one from each section of the book). The limited edition price is \$150. There is also a deluxe edition of 400 copies, bound in quarter leather, slip-cased, signed and numbered by Marion Pleissner, with the suite of four small prints. This edition includes a separate, unpublished spotting print by Mr. Pleissner ("Big Fish Rise"), numbered and estate stamped. The deluxe edition price is \$500.

Members will be notified of this offer by mail. Proceeds of sales through the Museum are to benefit the Museum's general fund. In the case of limited and deluxe editions, we suggest that you order early. Books will be available for shipment in early November. Make your check payable to The American Museum of Fly Fishing.

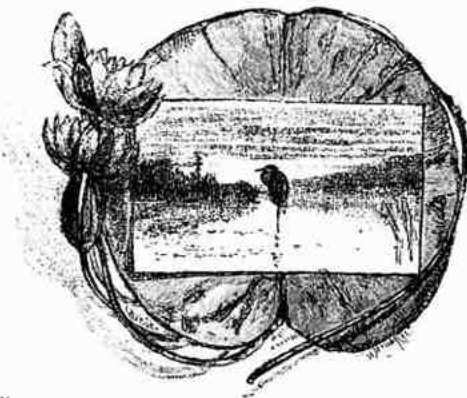
## *Letters to the Editor*

To the Editor:

In response to your encouragement of letters to you as mentioned in "On the Drawing Board," vol. 11, no. 1, I send a very early reference (circa 700 B.C.) concerning proper wading, which I have not seen mentioned in the various histories of angling available to me. It occurs in lines 737-741 of Hesiod, "The Works and Days":

*Never wade the pretty ripples of perpetually flowing rivers, until you have looked at their holy waters, and prayed to them, and washed your hands in the pale enchanting water.*

*For if one wades a river unwashed of hands and unwashed of wickedness, the*



## Did He or Didn't He?

*In volume 8, number 1 of The American Fly Fisher, Kenneth Shewmaker, a Daniel Webster scholar and professor of history at Dartmouth College, presented strong, circumstantial evidence that refuted the legend of Webster catching a fourteen-and-a-half-pound, world-record brook trout in Long Island's Carman's River (formerly spelled with an apostrophe). The event, which purportedly took place in 1827, can now perhaps be firmly put to rest. The following letter, entitled "A True Fish Story," appeared in the Spirit of the Times, September 14, 1878, and supports Shewmaker's thesis. While the letter's veracity cannot be easily verified, it accounts nicely for all the details heretofore associated with the Webster legend.*

DEAR SPIRIT: On the south side of Long Island, where the north shore of the Great South Bay turns suddenly south, and runs in that direction two or three miles, until that sheet of water narrows to the distance of a gunshot to the outer beach, empties Carman's River, flowing

*gods are outraged at him, and give him pain for the future.*

*Hesiod, Richard Lattimore, translator  
University of Michigan, 1959  
pp. 105-107*

Though Hesiod was not writing specifically about fishing, he was obviously referring to all wading for any purpose, which includes angling. The initial activities of contemplation and petition are still commonly done by many fly fishers. Who knows what luck will follow when the ablutions are performed as well!

Sincerely,  
Wayne H. Borges, M.D.  
Chicago, Illinois

into this "bight." It is, and has been from time immemorial, the home and nursery of Long Island trout.

In the days of Daniel Webster, Philip Hone, Walter Bowne, and others of that ilk, Sam Carman's was one of the prominent places on the South Side to unbend, "Where the wicked ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest." Here Martin Van Buren and John were wont to resort, and Seward Stevens, of Hoboken (who never threw a fly until he was forty years of age), ensnared the speckled beauties, which the Sage of Kinderhook, Prince John, and other members of the Suffolk Club, rarely failed to enjoy and appreciate. Carman's has a history, and one feature of it is a trout of 14½ lbs. weight.

In 1828 one of his negroes observed an unusual commotion in the deep pool below the mill dam, and reported the fact to Mr. Carman, who found upon examination that it contained a fish of unusual size. Obtaining a suitable net and aid, he succeeded in securing it alive, and it was kept in a pen constructed for that purpose, some weeks, to satisfy the curiosity of some and the incredulity of others. Its fame spread afar, and it was pronounced by judges a Long Island brook trout. In due time Uncle Sam concluded to send it to Philip Hone, Walter Bowne, and others, who had often been his guests from the city, first placing it against the wall of an outbuilding and marking thereon its outlines. That fish was the occasion of a feast that would have done no discredit to Lucullus, and a fund of \$100 was raised and sent to the donor.

About that time a church was erected near Mr. Carman's house, and Philip Hone, copying the outlines of the trout, had its counterpart carved and gilded by an artist, as a vane for the spire, of an exaggerated size, however, so as to appear natural when viewed from below. For fifty years it stood watch and ward, never turning in vain, until yielding to time's inroads, and a gale of wind, it fell to the ground, and is now in the possession of a son-in-law of Mr. Carman's, who designs it for the Long Island Historical Society.

From the outlines of this exaggerated memento, was the specimen of a trout drawn exhibited at the Women's Art Department of the Cooper Union, by one of the pupils. Without this explanation, it might be pronounced untrue to nature; with it, is has been pronounced correct in form, detail, and shading, by one of the three living witnesses of the original, who is doubly qualified, having been engaged many years in trout culture. He has this counterfeit presentment in possession, and to him I am indebted for my information, and those who know Nathaniel Miller, of Brookhaven, L.I., will need no other guarantee of their substantial truthfulness. SALMO FONTINALIS. §



## Books

*What the Trout Said*  
by Datus C. Proper, foreword by  
Vincent Marinaro. Alfred A. Knopf,  
New York, 1982, 273 pages, \$16.50

The firm of Alfred A. Knopf has favored American angler-readers with some good fishing books over the years. Datus C. Proper's *What the Trout Said* will not embarrass the company it keeps, although I doubt that it will give it a great deal of new luster.

This is a how-to book built around an idea (a gimmick?) that is touted by the publisher as new, by the writer of the foreword as a welcome change after five hundred years of error, and by the author as a departure "from tradition." These are overstatements, however. The "tradition" is about a hundred years old, not five hundred, and it is a historical accident, not a tradition. The idea itself merely seems new to those who do not know their own history. It is, in brief, a structure based in function ("design") that is to be preferred over fidelity to established fly pattern.

Pattern (especially patterned color) is, as Proper correctly shows, a bugaboo of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Earlier writers, those he mentions (Stewart and Pritt), as well as many he does not, were aware of the importance of design under other names—although not, obviously, of many of Proper's own

designs. Unlike him, however, they were regionally localized, even parochial, and reading them today we cannot get the valuable variety of fly designs that Proper offers in the soundly reasoned book. He has fished in many places and under many conditions, and his great strength is his catholicity. Unlike many—perhaps most—modern how-to writers, he does not push a single fly type like a peddler of patent medicine; rather, after building a careful foundation of anecdote and analysis, he offers a spectrum of "designed" wets and dries, sedges and mayflies, terrestrials, and nymphs (no streamers or bass bugs). He is careful to give credit to other people where it is due, and he is modest in his claims for his own innovations. This is a book to read, then, primarily for its sound advice on fly construction.

It is not, alas, a book to read for its historical rigor. The word "research" is used in the foreword, but there is a great difference between having read widely and actually conducting research. Omitted from the bibliography, for example, are such names as Bowlker, Salter, Taylor, Stoddart, Lawrie, and Ogden. In addition, the text contains such questionable statements as, "Traditional British wet flies, for stream-fishing, were usually small. . . ." (although a few pages later it notes Cotton's mockery of fat London flies); "Early American wet flies were larger . . ."; and "American flies evolved

in the Catskills. . . ." This magazine (*The American Fly Fisher*) is cited in both bibliography and text, but apparently only for what Proper calls "more detailed history," by which I think he means what I call "history."

Proper writes a readable prose, and Knopf has produced a fairly typo-free text. More careful editing might have eliminated the occasional dangling participle and the murky references. ("The flies are bigger than the ones used in Ireland: size 12, even 10. This does not work often.") I think it should have been expected of a modern publishing house, too, that it encourage the writer to eliminate inane sexist passages. ("My dun, all fancied up in a tight sweater with the braless look." That may not be viewed as sexist by some, but would he have written "My dun, all fancied up in a gold jockstrap with a cute moustache?") The author is a Foreign Service officer and may live, for all I know, in some holdout of exclusive maleness, but fly fishers, readers, and editors are often female nowadays. Let's put the sexual ha-ha's in the attic with the Calcutta rods.

Proper's title refers to the invented "conversations" with trout that are sprinkled through the book. His intent, apparently, was either to dramatize or symbolize his very rich streamside experience. They make my teeth ache, but other readers may just love them. Anyway, it's a nice title. § —KEN CAMERON

## Join the Museum

### Membership Dues:

Associate	\$ 20
Sustaining	\$ 30
Patron	\$ 100
Sponsor	\$ 250
Life	\$1000

Membership includes a subscription to *The American Fly Fisher*. Please send your application to the membership secretary and include your mailing address.

The Museum is a member of the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History. We are a nonprofit, educational institution chartered under the laws of the state of Vermont.

## Support the Museum

As an independent, nonprofit institution, The American Museum of Fly Fishing must rely on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. We ask that you give our institution serious consideration when planning for gifts and bequests.

## Back Issues of *The American Fly Fisher*

The following back issues are available at \$4.00 per copy:

Volume 5,	Numbers 3 and 4
Volume 6,	Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4
Volume 7,	Numbers 2, 3 and 4
Volume 8,	Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4
Volume 9,	Numbers 1, 2 and 3
Volume 10,	Numbers 1, 2 and 3
Volume 11,	Numbers 1, 2



# The American Museum of Fly Fishing

Post Office Box 42  
Manchester  
Vermont 05254

# Museum News

## Annual Meeting September 8

Our annual business meetings (one for members, followed by a trustees meeting) have been scheduled for Saturday, September 8, in Manchester. Meeting notices and proxies will go in the mail shortly. We urge every member and trustee who won't be able to attend to return his or her proxy well in advance of the meeting. As usual, the museum staff stands ready to assist with accommodations and reservations. Please call or write if you need assistance. We note also that this is an excellent time for fishing the Battenkill and other area streams. *Tricorythodes* mayflies should still be hatching on the main river, and afternoon hatches of small Blue-Winged Olives may also have started by that time. This year our annual meeting will be followed by the annual Manchester auction.

## Staff Changes

We're delighted to report that as of the Museum's opening, Paula Wyman has joined us as executive assistant/receptionist. Her desk is in the gallery area, so the galleries are monitored constantly during open hours. She worked with us many years ago on a commercial fly-fishing publication and is a competent angler in her own right. Her pleasant smile and welcoming manner have already won her many friends among museum visitors, and we're confident the membership will enjoy making her acquaintance by mail or in person.

We are sorry to say that Diana Morley, copyeditor of this magazine and our part-time receptionist, has left the area as of August. A change in jobs has taken the Morleys from Manchester to the Boston area. Her ready wit and sharp pencil has saved many a cloudy day here at the Museum. Fortunately, we expect to make use of her sharp pencil (at least) in ongoing fashion by mail, and she will continue to be involved in the production of the magazine.

Finally, and by no means leastly, Museum Trustee Dick Finlay has joined our staff as part-time associate curator. Dick has been involved with the Museum since it was first established in 1968. His knowledge of fly-fishing, tackle, and the industry is invaluable as we continue to build our collection and answer a growing stream of inquiries from the membership and others.



## Auctions

### MANCHESTER AUCTION SEPTEMBER 8

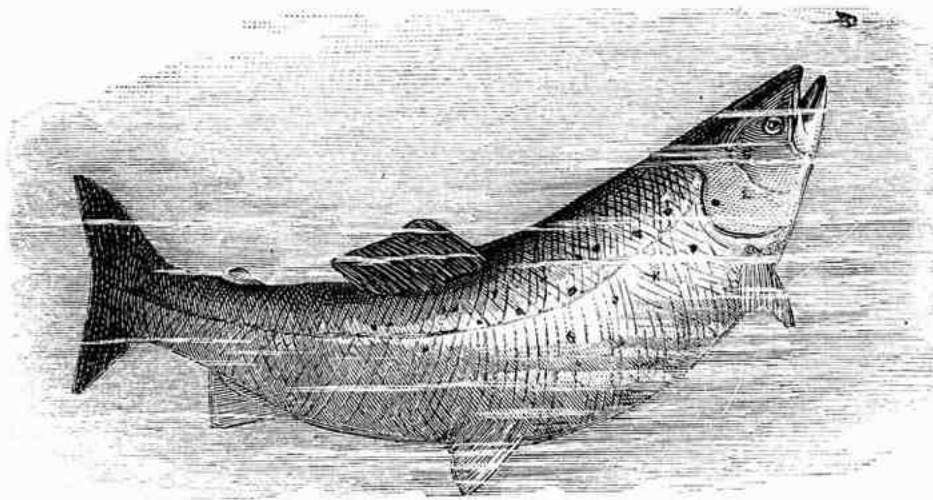
For many years, our annual Manchester museum auction was held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting. Somehow, in recent years the dates became separated, and this year we renew the old tradition. The auction/dinner will commence at 6 p.m. with a cash bar at the Avalanche Motel on Route 11/30 in Manchester, followed by a delicious buffet and the auction itself. Preliminary catalogs, invitations, and absentee bid forms will be distributed by mail shortly. As ever, raffle, door prize, and auction items are needed. For information or to donate items, call or write to Dick Finlay at the Museum.

### SAN FRANCISCO AUCTION NOVEMBER 27

Our annual San Francisco auction/dinner is set for Tuesday, November 27. Museum Vice-President Art Frey and his hard-working dinner committee tell us this year's affair promises to outdo all previous events—both at the dinner table and the auction table. For information and reservations or to donate items, please write to Art Frey at Post Office Box 13, Burlingame, CA 94010.

### PORTLAND AUCTION DECEMBER 7

Our first annual Northwest auction/dinner has been scheduled for Friday, December 7, in Portland, Oregon. Museum Trustee Jim Van Loan is organizing the affair, together with Trustee Ted Rogowski of Seattle and a solid committee of volunteers. Members will be getting information on this and other auctions by mail. Meanwhile, for information, reservations, or to donate auction items, please write to Jim Van Loan at Steamboat Inn, Post Office Box 36, Idleyld Park, Oregon 97447.



## And Last But Not Least



On May 26, 1984, the doors of our new exhibition galleries were opened to the general public. Festivities and ceremonies for this auspicious occasion were elegantly orchestrated by our Executive Director, John Merwin, on both May 27 (for members and friends) and June 2 (for trustees). The opening was highlighted by an exhibition of twenty-seven original paintings by Ogden Pleissner, as well as a unique display of flies mounted and framed by William Cushner. A major portion of the Pleiss-

ner exhibit will remain at the Museum throughout the summer. It is a representative, retrospective collection of both oils and watercolors, which contains not only sporting scenes, but also some of Pleissner's better-known European landscapes. We intend to include in the November issue of *The American Fly Fisher* a feature article, replete with color photographs, on all the new exhibits. In addition, Mary Bort, of the Manchester Historical Society, has agreed to supply us with a short historical sketch on the white clapboard building that houses our

new headquarters. Evidently, it was originally owned by Franklin Orvis (brother of C. F. Orvis), owner and operator of the Equinox Hotel complex. According to Frederick Nicklewhite, nonagenarian and longtime resident of Manchester, the museum building was used by Orvis as a place to put on plays and shows for his employees. We urge you to visit our new location. It is an exciting time for the Museum, and we hope to share this excitement with all our members.



