

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



SUMMER 2020

VOLUME 46 NUMBER 3

A Summery Sense of Time and Place



Sara Wilcox

Rangeley's colorful past is reflected in the Rangeley Sesquicentennial (left, originated by Gray Wolf) and the Rangeley Centennial (originated by Bam DeStefano) landmark streamers. Tied by Leslie Hilyard.

FREDERIC M. HALFORD, in 1888, handwrote common names of flies next to the scientific ones in two volumes by the Entomological Society of London, effectively matching the hatch. The museum acquired these annotated volumes in 2016, and in Fall 2017, we published the story as told by their previous owner, Robert H. Boyle. I was waiting for Boyle's conclusion to the piece—"Another dozen or so more lines to come" was written at the end of the manuscript—when I received word that he had died.

We ran the article without the ending, noting that it was missing. Then, in June, I received an e-mail from Andrew Herd, which read, in part: "I was interested by Boyle's 'Halford, Eaton, and Match-the-Hatch: Dry-Fly Fishing: Present at the Creation.' . . . I have been writing a history of the Flyfishers' Club (of London), which is very nearly complete. I know exactly what happened next—which is one of the questions Boyle asked—and the answer is fairly amazing. Every time I go to the club, I have coffee about 6 feet away from the result." He offered to write a follow-up, and I immediately accepted. I received the manuscript the following February and now, at last, we present to you "The Imitation Game, or What Halford Did Next" (page 2).

These days find me grieving the loss of another author: the delightful Graydon R. Hilyard. Most folks called him Bob, as I did for a long time, but when he switched his letter signature to *Graydon*, I went with it. We had just finished work on his manuscript, "The Rangeley Lakes: A Sinner's Paradise," when I received news of his passing. This piece begins with Fly Rod Crosby's concern that her beloved Rangeley Lakes haunts were "slouching toward Sodom and Gomorrah," details examples of city-imported bad behavior, and culmi-

nates with the story of homegrown Joseph Knowles, who raised "moral decay to an art form." Intrigued? To read the last article Graydon and I worked on together, turn to page 8. For more about the man himself, tributes by two of his friends, Peter Castagnetti and John Mundt, begin on page 14.

To Rangeley Lakes stories we add Adirondack ones, and the combination gives this issue a summery sense of time and place. Years ago, we ran a piece by Timothy Belknap about George La Branche and his sporting estate, in which La Branche's friend Don Bell made several appearances ("George La Branche's High Holt: A Place in His Life and Work," Spring 1992, vol. 18, no. 2). But Bell was character enough to deserve an article of his own, and Belknap happily offers a more-northerly-based one here. "Don Bell and the Adirondack Mountain House" begins on page 16.

For many, summer is book-reading season. This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the publication of a milestone in fly-fishing literature: George Parker Holden's *The Idyl of the Split-Bamboo*. On page 23, John Mundt discusses the importance of this book and its continued relevance (including quarantine commentary). Meanwhile, George Jacobi, in "A Forest of Fly-Fishing Books" (page 24), recognizes that the same love and skill of those who craft rods and reels "lives in many a fishing essay, and we can ramble through those words again and again." Jacobi invites us on a ramble through his fly-fishing library, during which he reports on his own readerly habit of catch and release.

Stay safe and healthy, dear readers.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR



TRUSTEES

Foster Bam	Frederick S. Polhemus
Dave Beveridge	Roger Riccardi
Peter Bowden	Robert G. Scott
Mark Comora	Ronald B. Stuckey
Ronald Gard	Tyler S. Thompson
Gardner Grant Jr.	Richard G. Tisch
Karen Kaplan	Andrew Ward
Woods King III	Patricia Watson
Walter T. Matia	Thomas Weber
Robert A. Oden Jr.	Frankie Wolfson
Annie Hollis Perkins	James C. Woods
Leigh H. Perkins	Alan Zakon
	Nancy W. Zakon

TRUSTEES EMERITI

James Hardman
James Heckman, MD
David B. Ledlie
Paul Schullery

OFFICERS

Karen Kaplan	<i>President</i>
Gardner Grant Jr.	<i>Vice President/Treasurer</i>
Frederick S. Polhemus	<i>Vice President</i>
Andrew Ward	<i>Vice President</i>
James C. Woods	<i>Secretary</i>

THE AMERICAN FLY FISHER

Kathleen Achor	<i>Editor</i>
Sarah May Clarkson	<i>Copy Editor</i>
Sara Wilcox	<i>Design & Production</i>

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

Foster Bam and Sallie Baldwin Robert McGraw
Dave Beveridge Johnny and Jeanie Morris
Peter Bowden David and Margaret Nichols
Mark Comora Leigh and Annie Hollis Perkins
Gardner Grant Jr. Robert and Karen Scott
Summerfield Johnston Ronald and Joan Stuckey
Jill Joyce Marye and Richard G. Tisch
Karen Kaplan Alan and Nancy Zakon

MUSEUM COUNCIL

Nick Dawes Janet Mavec and Wayne Nordberg
Charles Patrick Durkin Jr. W. Bruce McNae
Tom Evans Tyler and Francis Thompson
Alan and Linda Gnann Andrew and Elizabeth Ward
John Hadden Patricia Watson
Paul Tudor Jones Tom Weber
Art and Martha Kaemmer Robert Wilson
Wendy and Woods King III Tom Wolf
Beverly and Julia Landstreet Frankie Wolfson

DIRECTOR'S COUNCIL

Louis Bacon Walter and Pam Matia
Eugene Conroy Patrick McEvoy
Anthony Davino Bradford and Pamela Mills
Alan Guarino Robert Oden Jr.
James and Susan Heckman Jason and Shachar Scott
Ben Juergens Chris Smith
Anne Lovett and Steve Woodsum George Stark
James Woods

ANGLERS' CIRCLE

Parker Corbin Woods King IV
Bailey Hallingby Jason M. Scott

STAFF

Sarah Foster
Executive Director
Yoshi Akiyama
Deputy Director
Alex Ford
Digital Marketing Coordinator
Ava Freeman
Collections Manager
Clay Livingston
Gallery Assistant
Kelsey McBride
Administrative Assistant
Samantha Pitcher
Assistant Director of Development
Shane Quintana
Gallery Assistant
Patricia Russell
Business Manager
Sara Wilcox
Director of Visual Communication

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

SUMMER 2020 VOLUME 46 NUMBER 3

The Imitation Game, or What Halford Did Next 2
Andrew Herd

The Rangeley Lakes: A Sinner's Paradise 8
Graydon R. Hilyard

In Memoriam: Graydon R. Hilyard 14
Peter A. Castagnetti and John Mundt

Don Bell and the Adirondack Mountain House 16
Timothy Belknap

Milestones: Dr. George Parker Holden's
The Idyl of the Split-Bamboo 23
John Mundt

Notes and Comment:
A Forest of Fly-Fishing Books 24
George Jacobi

Museum News 26

Contributors 27

ON THE COVER: Some of the specimens of the Natural Fly Collection. Photo
courtesy of the Flyfishers' Club.

The American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) is published four times a year by the museum at P.O. Box 42,
Manchester, Vermont 05254. Publication dates are winter, spring, summer, and fall. Membership dues include the
cost of the journal (\$50) and are tax deductible as provided for by law. Membership rates are listed in the back of
each issue. All letters, manuscripts, photographs, and materials intended for publication in the journal should be
sent to the museum. The museum and journal are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, drawings, photo-
graphic material, or memorabilia. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations
that are wholly the author's. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless postage is provided.
Contributions to The American Fly Fisher are to be considered gratuitous and the property of the museum unless
otherwise requested by the contributor. Copyright © 2020, The American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester,
Vermont 05254. Original material appearing may not be reprinted without prior permission. Periodical postage
paid at Manchester, Vermont 05254; Manchester, Vermont 05255; and additional offices (USPS 057410). The
American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) EMAIL: amff@amff.org WEBSITE: www.amff.org

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

The Imitation Game, or What Halford Did Next

by Andrew Herd

All images reproduced by kind permission of, and copyright to, the Flyfishers' Club



Frederic Halford fishing on the chalk streams.

A FEW YEARS AGO, this journal published Robert Boyle's "Halford, Eaton, and Match-the-Hatch Dry-Fly Fishing: Present at the Creation."¹ Unfortunately, Boyle died before he could finish the piece, leaving his readers with the tantalizing words, "Another dozen or so lines to come,"² and pitching us all into a wild surmise about what more he might have written.

Boyle's article centered on a pair of copies of the *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* that covered the *Ephemeroidea*, once the property of Frederic Halford and annotated by him. It notes that the date penned in the copies—October 25th, 1888—was the day on which Halford had given "intellectual birth to what has since been called 'match the hatch' fly fishing."³ This is about as arresting an introduction as one could possibly wish to give to a pair of yellowing magazines packed with line drawings of insects and Latin, which now form part of the museum's collection. Boyle went on to describe the two copies and

their annotations in detail, summarizing the work of the Reverend Eaton, whose *Revisional Monograph of Recent Ephemeroidea or Mayflies* had established him as Britain's foremost expert on the insects that most excited the dry-fly movement.⁴ Boyle finished with an account of Halford's subsequent work, up to 1897, the year in which the great man published *Dry Fly Entomology*.⁵

Having completed a history of the Flyfishers' Club, of which Halford was a founding member and at one time the president, I am in a position to—if not write Boyle's twelve missing lines—fill the gap, and to describe one of Halford's lasting, most scientifically valuable, and yet almost completely forgotten legacies.⁶ But to do so, we must turn back the clock and rewrite a couple of sentences of Boyle's if we are to understand Halford's involvement in a project that occupied so much of his time from 1901 until his death in 1914.

Halford's thirty-year passion for entomology was based on his understanding

that fly fishers had been playing the imitation game in an attempt to match the hatch since the fifteenth century, if not before. One of the milestones in this ongoing process had been Alfred Ronalds's *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* of 1836, a book that Boyle noted in passing but which deserves more space.⁷ *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* is, in my view, the single most influential work ever published on the subject of fly fishing, because in it Ronalds set out for the first time a link between the vernacular names of waterside insects and their scientific classification, insofar as it had been established by then. To remove any possible doubt, Ronalds included hand-colored illustrations of each insect concerned, drawn by personal observation at life size, and linked it with a specific pattern. In the process he established a collection of natural specimens, which—although it has seen better days—is preserved at Oxford University.

Before the publication of Ronalds's work, there were no agreed-upon common

names for waterside insects, and the majority of trout flies were called by the local terms for the naturals. Thus, in the early nineteenth century, the March Brown was known as the March Fly, Dun Drake, Red Drake, Brown Drake (in Yorkshire), Great Red Spinner, Great Brown, Brown Fly, Brown Caughtlan, Cob Fly (in Wales), Turkey Fly (mainly in Scotland), Turkey Brown, Cuckoo Creel, Partridge Rump, Old Man, Light Mackerel, innumerable phonetic variations on the theme of “Devil Crook,” and doubtless a few others that I have missed. The natural is so variable that even Ronalds wasn’t totally clear what it should be called, and he gave two patterns in the first edition of this book, one of which imitated the Dun Drake and the other the Great Red Spinner, although in the second and subsequent editions he corrected the Dun Drake to the March Brown. As we know now, these two flies are the same insect, and to be completely fair to him, in the key to the plates Ronalds hedged his bets and classified the pair only as belonging to the genus *Baëtis*.⁸ This situation changed when an editor took over for the fifth edition of *The Fly-Fisher’s Entomology*, but that is a long, complicated, and somewhat sorry story.

It took some time for the seeds of Ronalds’s work to take root, but over the next fifty years, vernacular names for waterside insects began to be abandoned. The imitation game was still being played, but Ronalds had reduced the element of chance inherent in playing it. Fly dressers continued to dress their flies to imitate the naturals they saw being taken by fish, but now that they could refer to them by the same common name, the opportunities for duplicated effort were (in theory) much reduced. In a world in which it was possible to imitate a living insect exactly with silk, fur, and feather, this would have led to a steep and rapid drop in the number of patterns in circulation to about four dozen, but thankfully, exact imitation lives only in the eye of the beholder, so the contents of fly boxes remained as diverse as ever. The imitation game thus ensured that in the 1880s there were still fifty different imitations of *Rhithrogena germanica*, but most of the people who were tying them had given up calling them Light Mackerels, Cuckoo Creels, or other local names and had settled instead for the moniker March Brown.

Even in 1888, then, matching the hatch was a very old, if not an ancient, concept. This is an extraordinarily important point when considering Halford’s work, because unless one understands it, it is impossible to comprehend the abrupt change of direction that *Dry Fly Entomology* marks.

If an analogy is needed, then the imitation game can be seen as played upon a wheel to which every generation imparts its own spin. Halford knew enough of the wheel to be wary of the trap that its endless rotation posed—while each succeeding generation of fly designers argued that its spin of the wheel had been better than the last, the trout, as final arbiters, had no opinion on the matter. In understanding this point, Halford became focused on a different goal. He was going to stop the wheel forever.

The missing final paragraph of Boyle’s article might therefore have contained something along the following lines. By 1897, the results of Halford’s work on identifying and preserving waterside insects with George Marryat, and the understanding he had developed by reading and rereading the Reverend Eaton’s work, had led him to a conclusion that would determine the path for the remainder of his angling life. Sixty years after the publication of Ronalds’s milestone book, the task of classifying the waterside insects that were of importance to fly fishers remained incomplete. Furthermore, it was such a specialized area, with so little funding available, that it was unlikely to be completed within Halford’s lifetime. More work on classifi-

cation was needed, together with a reference collection to back it up, but such a project was beyond the capacity of a single individual.

It is to Halford’s undying credit that he helped to launch that project. I do not know whether Robert Boyle was aware of that; from the way he wrote, it seems probable that he was not. Halford died before the work was finished, but the monumental task was completed by other members of the Flyfishers’ Club, and the evidence lies in two mahogany cabinets that contain a comprehensive collection of waterside insects.

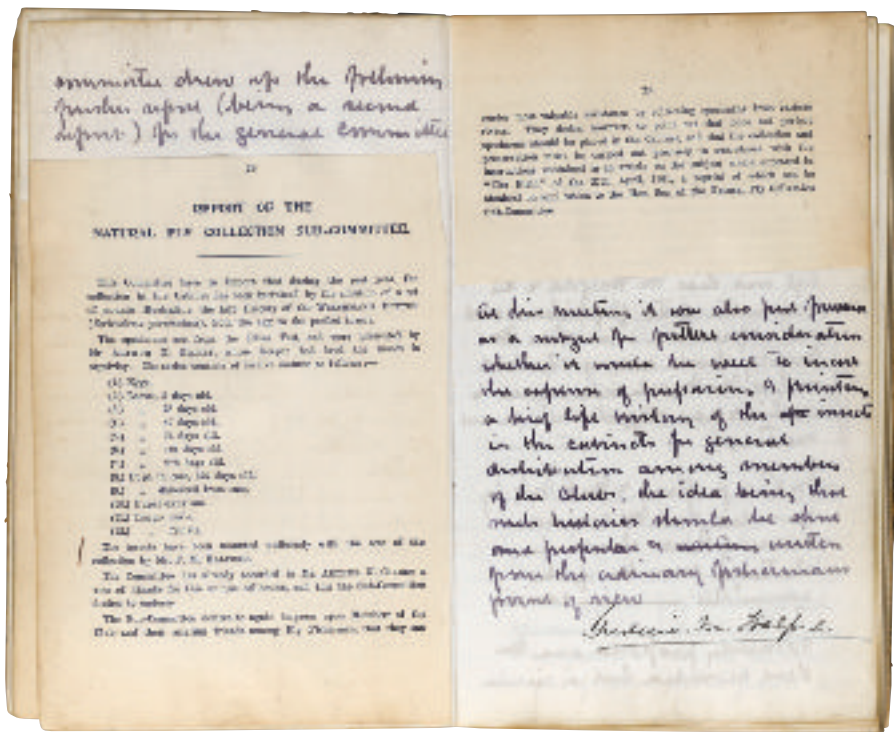
Halford’s greatest legacy is the one for which he is least famous. As an ambassador of the Flyfishers’ Club, I am going to open the doors for you and tell you the story that lies behind the collection, for some of the greatest anglers in history are connected with it.

THE NATURAL FLY COLLECTION

The roots of what came to be called the Natural Fly Collection are—like all great enterprises—buried in the mists of time, but they stemmed from discussions held in the Flyfishers’ Club about the need for



The Natural Fly Collection minute book, which has many entries by Halford.



A sample spread from the *Natural Fly Collection* minute book, showing minutes signed by Frederic Halford.

an updated version of Ronalds's book. The club had been founded in 1884, but ten years later it had become a thriving institution and was beginning to spread its wings and consider long-term projects. Halford's publication of *Dry Fly Entomology* in 1897 had stirred up a great deal of interest among the members, but as its author was well aware, the book showcased a conflict, which was highlighted by the hundred patterns he had chosen. The paradox of the book was that the naturals, so graphically illustrated on the plates, showed the way to Halford's future, but the artificials shown alongside them were steeped in his past.

Dry Fly Entomology was a marriage of inconvenience in almost every respect. By 1897, Halford's first book, *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them*, was out of print, and Vinton & Co., Ltd., had suggested that the time was ripe to bring the information it contained up to date.⁹ Vinton certainly rolled out the red carpet to capture their prize, and although they poured resources into the book, the timing of their approach to Halford could hardly have been worse. The first third of *Dry Fly Entomology* is a precis of the scientific work done to date on the *Ephemeroidea*, the *Trichoptera*, the *Perlidae*, the *Sialidae*, and the *Diptera*, written by Halford with Eaton's guidance. The second third of the work details artificials that imitated olive duns, pale watery duns, blue duns, blue-winged olives,

spinners, mayflies (the *Ephemera*), cures (*Empidæ*), caddis-flies, "various," and "fancy flies." Here lay Halford's problem. The first third of *Dry Fly Entomology* was impressive in its scope and detail, but it was completely disconnected from the second third, because only one of the lessons that could be learned from the first 140 pages could be applied in the following 150. The publication schedule had not allowed Halford enough time to reconcile the other learning points.

To appreciate why this conflict had arisen, it is worth understanding that when Halford and his friend George Marryat did their research for *Floating Flies*, their priority had been to develop effective dry flies that cast easily, floated well, and could be tied on eyed hooks. Entomology had taken something of a back seat, and so the artificials they had developed—or had chosen—were not always representations of specific insects, but instead of closely related groups of insects that they had imitated from life. To read *Floating Flies* is to discover that the connection between the patterns listed in it and the naturals they are supposed to represent are seldom explicit, often hazy, and sometimes entirely absent, but unfortunately, there was no time to do anything but to carry over a high percentage of the patterns listed in *Floating Flies* to *Dry Fly Entomology*. In the new book Halford did his best to link each to a natural, adding many explana-

tory notes and suggestions for modifications, but he could not escape an awareness that his 1886 patterns had been selected to serve a completely different agenda than the one Eaton's work convinced him he should now pursue.

Dealing with this reality enforced a compromise, in which, for example, Halford had to lump together patterns like the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear with Flight's Fancy and a bunch of other hopefuls under the general heading "Olive Duns." This was nowhere near the ideal that the first part of *Dry Fly Entomology* promised, but Halford kept up the pretense for as long as he could, assigning his aging artificials to generic groups such as "blue duns" and "spinners" before abandoning the attempt in the section on fancy flies. The blue dun group gave Halford the worst headache of all, and he candidly admitted that five of the patterns imitated a species that he had never seen and the very existence of which he doubted.¹⁰ Without developing a completely novel selection of flies, Halford had no other choice.

A CATHARTIC BOOK

Dry Fly Entomology might have been well in advance of the thinking of many other anglers of the time, but it isn't surprising that, even as the first copies were being sold, Halford's ideas had begun to shift. In my view, it was the most cathartic book that he ever wrote. The affair of the "Blue Dun Five" must have focused Halford's mind quite dramatically, bringing with it the realization that the only sure way to avoid a similar imbroglio in the future would be to start with the classification and to use it to identify which new artificials needed to be developed. By taking the opposite approach—starting with the naturals he and Marryat had observed and working back to the classification—he had done no more than to encourage the wheel of imitation to spin. The end result was a list that contained numerous duplicates and twenty-five flies that didn't represent any known species at all.

You might argue that this approach was splitting hairs. For ten long years, the readers of Halford's books had been fishing the flies he recommended and catching plenty of fish, but with the publication of Eaton's work, Halford had become convinced that the rules of the imitation game required a second and fundamental revision. An increasing conviction grew in Halford's mind, until it became a blazing pinpoint of light at the end of the long tunnel in which he found himself. Looking back at the patterns that he and Marryat had developed for *Floating Flies*, he saw in them nothing



The Natural Fly Collection cabinets.

less than the evidence that they had traversed the tunnel in the wrong direction. From that moment onward, Halford determined that he would no longer follow the shifting sands of his senses, but would instead place his trust in the bedrock of science.

And so Halford braced himself to begin the long drawn-out process of deleting the patterns he had championed for a decade and replacing them with new ones. The chapters he had written on entomology would inspire him in this move toward a direct, one-to-one connection between each species—or group of near identical species—and a newly developed artificial, but *Dry Fly Entomology* gave no hint of this, because it captured his thinking at a particularly awkward moment. In 1897, Halford had absorbed the content of the new discoveries in waterside entomology but had not had enough time to apply its lessons. It would take him more than a decade to complete a line of development that bore fruit in a later work, and the contents of that book would be determined by a project he took part in at the Flyfishers' Club.¹¹

A COMMITTEE, A COLLECTION

The Natural Fly Collection (NFC) subcommittee of the Flyfishers' Club met for the first time on 29 March 1901, and for the record, its members were Halford, F. Kent, A. Wylie Lloyd, H. Mear, and Charles Edward Walker. Apart from Halford, Walker is the most famous today, but then he was best known for his *Old Flies in New Dresses*, a book that established him as an entomologist and was illustrated by his friend Edward Wilson, who, in 1912, would perish on the Antarctic ice cap with Robert Falcon Scott.¹² Walker was greatly interested in catching chalk-stream trout feeding below the surface with imitations of *Corixæ* and shrimp, which he fished downstream, and yet Halford was quite content to sit on a committee with him.

What the subcommittee set out to do was to assemble a comprehensive collection of waterside insects under Halford's direction. This was part of an enormously farsighted plan by the general committee of the club, which included a collection of the materials needed to dress imitations and a reference library to back it up. As an approach, it was inspired, and it was only

because a lack of resources dictated a slow pace, and the turnover of general committee members removed some of the prime movers from time to time, that the grand vision took thirty years to implement.

Halford noted at the annual dinner of the Flyfishers' Club in 1904 that he had consulted Eaton, who approved the detailed plans for the collection. Unfortunately, under Halford's direction, the NFC subcommittee was not always as productive as it might have been, and few meetings are recorded in the minute book, with long gaps during which the group was effectively moribund. It had been agreed in March 1901 that the keystone of the collection should be Halford's collection of *Ephemeroidea* found on the Test, augmented by his collection of *Sialidæ* (alderflies). Halford also undertook to collect specimens of the *Trichoptera* while Walker agreed to build up a collection of *Diptera* and *Corixæ*.¹³ The final collection was planned to include more than 300 specimens, held in cabinets each of whose drawers would contain eighteen specimens, but the club's plans would not mature until Martin Mosely joined the subcommittee six years later.

Progress was necessarily slow because of the challenges involved in collecting all the insects, the majority of which were highly seasonal, some of which were sporadic, others downright rare. It took much time to classify and to preserve them all. In the end, the majority of specimens were preserved in custom glass liquid mounts, which were so well made and so expertly sealed that they have required renovation only in recent times. Samples were sent in from all over the country, but as a volunteer project, it was all rather potluck. For example, in 1902, Arthur Gilbey contributed a complete life cycle of the Welshman's Button, the specimens of which had been painstakingly collected by the keeper on the Houghton Club water. J. E. Miller, a tackle-shop owner and contributor to the *Fishing Gazette*, sent in stone flies and creepers from the River Ure, and C. H. Cook ("John Bickerdyke") presented specimens of March Browns from the Tweed.

As the collection grew, Halford began to appreciate that one of the factors that kept the great wheel of the imitation game spinning was the natural variability of the insects he was trying to replicate. To this end, he appealed to members who fished in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Midlands, and the West Country to contribute samples. The club's ambition was primarily to build

up a national reference collection, but Halford had a secondary aim: to "enable some of us who are engaged in working out various matters of detail, of variation of colour, variation of size, and so on, greatly to advance that work by giving us a larger number of specimens to work by."¹⁴ Having identified that the way ahead was to begin with the classification, Halford had appreciated that understanding the range of variability of each natural was key to designing an artificial that captured its most commonly shared features. It was this variability that had tricked him into listing the "Blue Dun Five," and he was not going to be fooled again.

Halford used what he learned from assembling the NFC to design a new set of artificials for *Modern Development of the Dry Fly*, published in 1910. This was a scorched-earth approach to his 1886/1897 selection: the fancy flies were gone, the sedges were gone, and of the thirty-three patterns that replaced the remainder, all but five belonged to the *Ephemera* or the *Ephemeroptera*. Even from the purist dry-fly fisher's point of view, Halford had followed a hard-line approach, compressing his selection down to the minimum number possible. In Halford's mind, the collision of science with art left no room for any more, and with the publication of that list, 98 percent of the

patterns that had featured in *Floating Flies* and in *Dry Fly Entomology* became relics of the past. Seldom can any angling author have so completely repudiated his earlier thinking, and although Halford's new selection didn't focus right down to species level, it was getting on that way.

Despite all of Halford's efforts, the wheel of the imitation game continues to spin, but to give him credit, he did manage to apply the brakes for awhile. That the slowing did not last for long was because it did not matter where the wheel stopped; fur and feather could never produce an artificial identical to a living, breathing, moving natural. What is often described as "exact imitation" is a poor compromise forced upon us by the materials we have available, the need for them to survive the tremendous stresses we impose on them during casting, and the fashions of fly tying accepted during any given period. The judgment of time was that the compromise that Halford chose in his *Modern Development* was too tight a straightjacket for the majority even of chalk-stream fly fishers. Having overshot with multiple patterns that represented similar insects in *Dry Fly Entomology*, Halford now undershot by providing too little choice in *Modern Development of the Dry Fly*. Hugely influential though it was, and long though Halford's new fly selection remained on offer through firms like Farlow and Hardy, fly dressing tastes moved on, which is probably just as well. But what of the NFC subcommittee?

Reading between the lines, the work that Halford put into *Modern Development* left him drained, and by 1908, the NFC subcommittee was becalmed again. In that year, Martin Ephraim Mosely accepted a post, and so a new era began, for Mosely would finish the work that Halford had helped to start. Mosely, who had only just joined the club, was tenuously related to but well acquainted with Halford; he was a serious entomologist with a particular interest in caddis. In 1910, he became a fellow of the Entomological Society of London, and in 1921, he published *The Dry-Fly Fisherman's Entomology*, which became the standard work on the subject.¹⁵ After his appointment to the subcommittee, Mosely became more or less solely responsible for classifying all the insects sent in, and he bore much of the responsibility for collecting them too, as often being seen on the riverbank with a collector's net and bottles as with a rod. Under his guidance, the subcommittee managed to compile tables of the flies captured on the Test, Itchen, Anton, Kennet, Wylde, and Wharfe, and incomplete data on no fewer than thirty other rivers. These tables



Some of the specimens of the Natural Fly Collection.

were gathered into a manuscript book, which was sent to the general committee for further consideration, but what became of it I know not, unless Mosely based his *Entomology* upon it.

Halford died in 1914, which came as a great blow to the club, for he had been a friendly and generous man, well liked by most. World War I stopped work for five long years, but by 1921, the NFC subcommittee was back in action. A member called F. J. Mitchell had sent in a small collection of “trout food” from lakes and streams in Kashmir, and when Mosely, unable to identify one of the specimens, sent it to the Natural History Museum, it was found not only to be a previously unknown species but to come from a previously unknown family. The find created a small sensation at the museum and was subsequently exhibited at the Entomological Society in London.¹⁶

UNDAUNTED AND RESTORED

By the early 1930s, the work had been completed, and very few waterside insects were not represented—an extraordinary achievement, given that most of the missing naturals were not even known to be species at the time and that all were rare. The collection was housed in three cabinets, two holding what has become known as the “wet” collection, contained in formalin-filled glass blocks, and the third the “dry” collection, which was mostly composed of pinned caddis captured during Mosely’s expeditions. The NFC sat in state in the Flyfishers’ Club until the night of 16/17 April 1941, when the club, then in Piccadilly, was bracketed by two German bombs. The building was completely wrecked, but by some stroke of providence, the collection was scarcely affected, with the exception of one of the cabinets containing the “wet” collection. It is hard to judge precisely what was lost, because the NFC catalog was also destroyed in the air raid, but at least part of the contents of the damaged cabinet appears to have been saved. The club had already survived two other Luftwaffe attacks, in the process of which the then president, Charles Mildmay Giveen, had endured an apocalyptic night in which he had saved the building and its contents from burning to the ground. This was the most heroic act, especially when you understand that high explosives and incendiaries continued to rain down while he struggled to keep the flames at bay.

It may no longer be complete, but the surviving parts of the NFC—which is most of it—are in better condition today than ever before. The insects in the wet collection have lost their color and have stained a uniform brown with age, but their anatomy is well preserved and the glass wells that contain most of them have an almost irresistible appeal as *objets d’art*. As a result of a report submitted in 2008, the club approached



Martin Ephraim Mosely, from the Anglers’ Club’s N. E. Hicken (1910–1990) collection.

Peter Barnard, then recently retired from the directorship of entomology at the Natural History Museum, to inspect the collection. He and a member of the club, Peter Hayes, determined that there are few serious gaps in the NFC and that it could be brought back up to standard, as a result of which work began on the restoration in 2010 and is in progress as I write. There is nothing like the NFC outside of the world’s greatest museums, and it contains insects collected by some of the most famous names in fly fishing: Halford, Marryat, Skues, Walbran, Mosely, Cook, Mottram, and Taverner, to name but a few.

One last thought. The specimens that appear to have been lost from the NFC are mostly of species that were common a century ago and should remain so today. However, such a decline in fly life has occurred in recent times that it is proving more challenging than it should be to replace them. Because the very existence of our sport depends on the insects

that are preserved in those cabinets, there may be, as with Boyle’s account of Halford and Eaton, “another dozen or so lines to come” in this article. Who knows what the future holds, but the ending I do not wish is that the Natural Fly Collection might come to stand as mute witness to the biodiversity that our generation so unthinkingly destroyed.



Andrew Herd’s *The Flyfishers* was published by the Flyfishers’ Club in July 2019. Copies may be ordered from the Medlar Press at www.medlarpress.com.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert H. Boyle, “Halford, Eaton, and Match-the-Hatch Dry-Fly Fishing: Present at the Creation,” *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 2017, vol. 43, no. 4), 2–6.
2. Boyle, “Halford, Eaton, and Match-the-Hatch Dry-Fly Fishing,” 6.
3. *Ibid.*, quoted from auction lot description in editor’s introduction, 2.
4. Rev. A. E. Eaton, “A Revisional Monograph of Recent Ephemeridæ or Mayflies,” collected in *The Transactions of the Linnean Society of London, 2nd Series: Zoology* (Part I [vol. 3, no. 1, December 1883, 1–77], Part II [vol. 3, no. 2, July 1884, 77–152], Part III [vol. 3, no. 3, April 1885, 153–230], Part IV [vol. 3, no. 4, December 1885, 229–281], Part V [vol. 3, no. 5, December 1887, 281–319], Part VI [vol. 3, no. 6, February 1888, 320–346]).
5. Frederic M. Halford, *Dry Fly Entomology* (London: Vinton & Co., Ltd., 1897).
6. Andrew Herd, *The Flyfishers: A History of the Flyfishers’ Club* (London: Flyfishers’ Club, 2019).
7. Alfred Ronalds, *The Fly-Fisher’s Entomology* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1836).
8. *Ibid.*, 58.
9. Halford, *Dry Fly Entomology*, iv.
10. *Ibid.*, 158.
11. Frederic M. Halford, *Modern Development of the Dry Fly* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1910).
12. Charles Edward Walker, *Old Flies in New Dresses* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1898).
13. Peter Hayes, *Imitators of the Fly: A History* (Machynlleth, U.K.: Coch-y-Bonddu Books, 2016), 47.
14. Frederic M. Halford, quoted in “Annual Dinner of the Fly Fishers’ Club,” *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XLVII, 27 February 1904), 138.
15. Martin E. Mosely, *The Dry-Fly Fisherman’s Entomology* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, and New York: E. P. Dutton, 1921).
16. Martin E. Mosely, “The Natural Fly Sub-Committee,” *Journal of the Fly-Fishers’ Club* (Winter 1921–1922, vol. 5, no. 8), 195–96.

The Rangeley Lakes: A Sinner's Paradise

by Graydon R. Hilyard



Our Lady of the Lakes Church, Oquossoc, Maine.

MISS CORNELIA “Fly Rod” Crosby (1854–1946), Maine’s first Registered Maine Guide, had to be distraught.¹ For years, she had been extolling the virtues of Rangeley and its hinterlands in the local and national press. So effective had she been, the Maine Central Railroad hired her in 1895 as their first marketing representative.² Over time, however, she became increasingly alarmed by evidence that her favorite haunts were slouching toward Sodom and Gomorrah. Something had to be done.

Since the Civil War, Maine’s Rangeley Lakes region had been besieged by fishers in search of exceedingly large brook trout. For many, this gemstone fish reflecting an artist’s palette was (and still is) the holy grail of fishing. Smelling money, local subsistence farmers and woodsmen happily became guides to the wealthy and obsessed. But along with the gold came sin.

So, in 1908 Miss Crosby raised five thousand dollars and built Our Lady of the Lakes, a Catholic chapel in the Rangeley hamlet of Oquossoc. Strategi-

cally located not far from Mooselookmeguntic Lake’s shores, it still offers redemption for those on the way to ground zero for large brook trout.

True enough, the Protestants had arrived much earlier in 1827, but those Baptists had clearly failed their mission. Devastating lightning strikes to their lofty steeple—not once, but twice—hinted at celestial annoyance. Eventual total destruction by fire would seem to remove all doubt.³ Time for the Catholics to intervene.

While the sins of Rangeley were many, the breaking of the ninth commandment was the initial charge: rampant lying or “bearing false witness” as the King James Elizabethans would have it. Old Testament furor had come spewing out of the Adirondacks in 1863 following reports of 5- to 10-pound brook trout being caught in the Rangeley Lakes. Ten-pound brook trout simply could not be.

Enter George Shephard Page (1833–1892), an established New York City businessman and early Rangeley fisher. Thinking that physical evidence would settle the matter, as Exhibit A he plunked

baskets of 5½- to 8½-pound brook trout on the desks of four New York City newspaper editors. Glowing reports immediately followed in the *New York Times*, the *New York Evening Post*, and the *Spirit of the Times*, an early sporting newspaper.⁴

“Not so fast,” the Adirondack gentry countered. Maybe the fish were large, but they were not brook trout. At best they were the lowly lake trout. The Rangeley rustics were either lying or stupid or both. So began the Great Rangeley-Adirondack War of 1863. Exhibit B of a 10-pound brook trout displayed at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, America’s first world fair, did little to calm the waters. It would take Harvard’s Louis Agassiz, the leading ichthyologist of the day, to do that in 1883.⁵ Score: Rangeley 1, Adirondacks 0.

BREACH OF TRUST

On one level, that twenty-year turmoil should not have come as any great surprise. Rangeley had arrived on the scene via hard-to-imagine reports. Trust is a

fragile thing, and chicanery in fishing has a long history. The early underground Christians adopting the fish as their coded symbol for Christ may have upgraded the image of the fish, but it did little for the already tarnished image of the fisher.

Early on, Plutarch (c. 46–119 A.D.), a Greek biographer of the ancients, documented the use of fishing guile by none other than Antony and Cleopatra. Eager to impress Cleopatra with his prowess, Antony had his slave dive in upstream and put a series of large fish on his hook, which he landed to great applause. However, Cleopatra got wind of the deception. The next day she had her diver put a dead fish on Antony's hook and tug the line ferociously. Antony battled fiercely with great glee that rapidly turned to chagrin. Tactfully, Cleopatra lets him off the hook saying:

Leave the fishing-rod, General, to us poor sovereigns of Pharos and Canopus. Your game is cities, provinces, and kingdoms.⁶

Using language that would make a drunken sailor blush, in 1608 Shakespeare dusted off the event in his *Antony and Cleopatra*, act 2, scene 5.⁷

Deceit, however, comes in a variety of packages. Just getting to the water was a problem for nineteenth-century fishers, thanks to the fourth commandment banning anything remotely fun on the Sabbath. Rod makers got around that by creating multipiece rods housed in walking sticks. After church services, with stick in hand, a fisher could casually amble streamside without incurring the wrath of the righteous. Chances are good, however, that breaking the fourth commandment was of little concern to Rangeley fishers. Considering the days and dollars spent getting to Rangeley by train, boat, stagecoach, and buckboard, there would be no days off.

Covet: Per *Webster's*, to intensely want what another person has.⁸ The tenth commandment covers a host of things not to covet, but fish are not among them. This is good, as fishers want nothing more than the largest fish in the creel. Ever. This is particularly true of fly fishers, who are by nature an infantile and competitive lot. Witness that great Rangeley-Adirondack War that raged on for twenty years.

In the realm of fly fishing, the manner of fishing is far more important than the catching. Dragging bait behind a boat simply will not do. Glory is a process with the emphasis on the method—the more expensive, the better. Thus it has always been, thus it will always be. Verily, a properly caught nineteenth-century

fish required a rod of exotic wood, a reel of German silver, and a line of braided silk attached to a gut leader, the labor of Spanish silkworms. All of this to cast an artificial fly designed to imitate a natural insect in hopes of deceiving a fish blessed with a brain the size of a pea. A deceitful and snobbish act, if ever there was one, that has withstood the test of time.

HYPOCRISY AT PLAY

By the late 1860s, the Upper Dam Pool at the foot of Mooselookmeguntic Lake had been ordained the mecca of brook trout fishing. Overlooking it were the Upper Dam House and cabins capable of housing some sixty fishers. Understanding well the foibles of their guests, the management established the Upper Dam Fish Record, which ran from 1879 to 1949. Should any fisher at the pool catch a 3-pound-plus trout or salmon on the fly, they got to record the achievement, noting the date, species, weight, fly pattern, guide, and comments. These were documented and dated bragging rights to be read by successive generations of envious fishers. What could be better? And so, on 16 September 1897, Thomas B. Stewart of New York City logged the first entry of a 7-pound, $\frac{7}{16}$ -ounce brook trout into the Upper Dam Fish Record.⁹

This was somewhat ironic, as ten years earlier, in 1887, Stewart was accused of snagging fish using weighted hooks. Jigging was against the law and a cardinal sin for any fly fisher. Worse yet, the jigging violation had occurred at that bastion of sporting integrity, Upper Dam.

Although he paid the 28-dollar fine, Stewart vehemently denied the violation that became nationally known in sporting circles as the Maine Jigging Case. *Forest and Stream* was the leading weekly sporting newspaper of the day and considered itself the guardian of sporting ethics. Its pages reported the charges and countercharges that raged on for months.

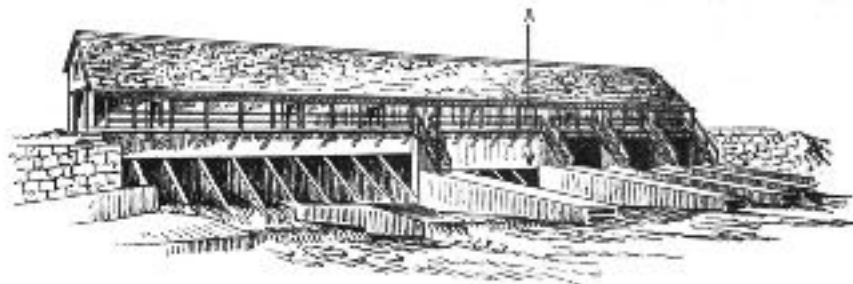
Using their moral authority, they called Stewart in for an interview, and he complied. Weighing all of the evidence, they determined that Stewart was guilty as charged.¹⁰

However, Stewart did not go underground before the court of public opinion. He continued to fish Upper Dam, inking the fish record pages with spectacular catches until he died there on 26 September 1902. Curiously, his *Forest and Stream* obituary would have him a candidate for sainthood.¹¹ Despite the threatening ninth commandment, lying is often effective and not going away soon.

By no means was Rangeley's history of sin limited to fishing infractions. Sometime in 1886, an alleged millionaire Boston lawyer named James L. Whittier got into an intense poker game with a confirmed Boston multimillionaire named Bayard Thayer. Whittier owned a palatial compound called Birch Lodge on the Upper Richardson, the fourth in the chain of six Rangeley lakes. His chips running out, Whittier put Birch Lodge on the table, neglecting to mention that his name was not on the deed. Thayer won, but Whittier lost much more than Birch Lodge: four and a half years, to be precise.

On 21 October 1886, Whittier pled guilty in Boston court to embezzlement of \$250,000 from the estate of Miss Harriet Reid, the elderly owner of Birch Lodge.¹² That would be \$6,864,761 in 2020 funds.¹³

Devious, if not adept, Whittier had gained access to the Reid estate by marrying the lady's grand-niece. Sensing problems, the grand-niece had already fled Birch Lodge for Boston, cleaned out what accounts that remained, packed her steamer trunks, and sailed to Europe, accompanied by a frequent Birch Lodge guest, a young Mr. Brown, whom she would later marry.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Whittier gambled on. So much for commandments seven (adultery), eight (stealing), nine (lying), and ten (coveting).



THE UPPER DAM.
From a photograph by R. H. Stoddard. The gate or "stall" on the east side of the group of five is indicated by the arrow. Four of the walls are partially shown, the fifth is hidden by the pier.

One of the illustrations from Forest and Stream's examination of the Maine Jigging Case, which included an interview with Stewart himself, in the 3 November 1887 issue.

While the gentry sinned with reckless abandon, the townsfolk's hands were not entirely clean. True, there was nothing illegal with the frugal Rangeley folk taking turns buying a single copy of the *Rangeley Lakes* newspaper, then passing it along throughout the village. But when the publishers pled that selling a single copy a week was not a viable business plan, their plea fell on deaf ears, effectively killing off the local press.¹⁵ So in early 1897, the Dill brothers packed it in after a brief run that had started on 30 May 1895. Local newspapers would not return to Rangeley until 1934. Apparently, in the interim, the good Rangeley

folk had discovered 2 Corinthians 3:6: "not of the letter [of the law], but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."¹⁶ Certainly, the *Rangeley Record* had a better run, lasting until 1960 when it lost the three-year newspaper war to the *Rangeley Highlander*, still publishing in 2020.

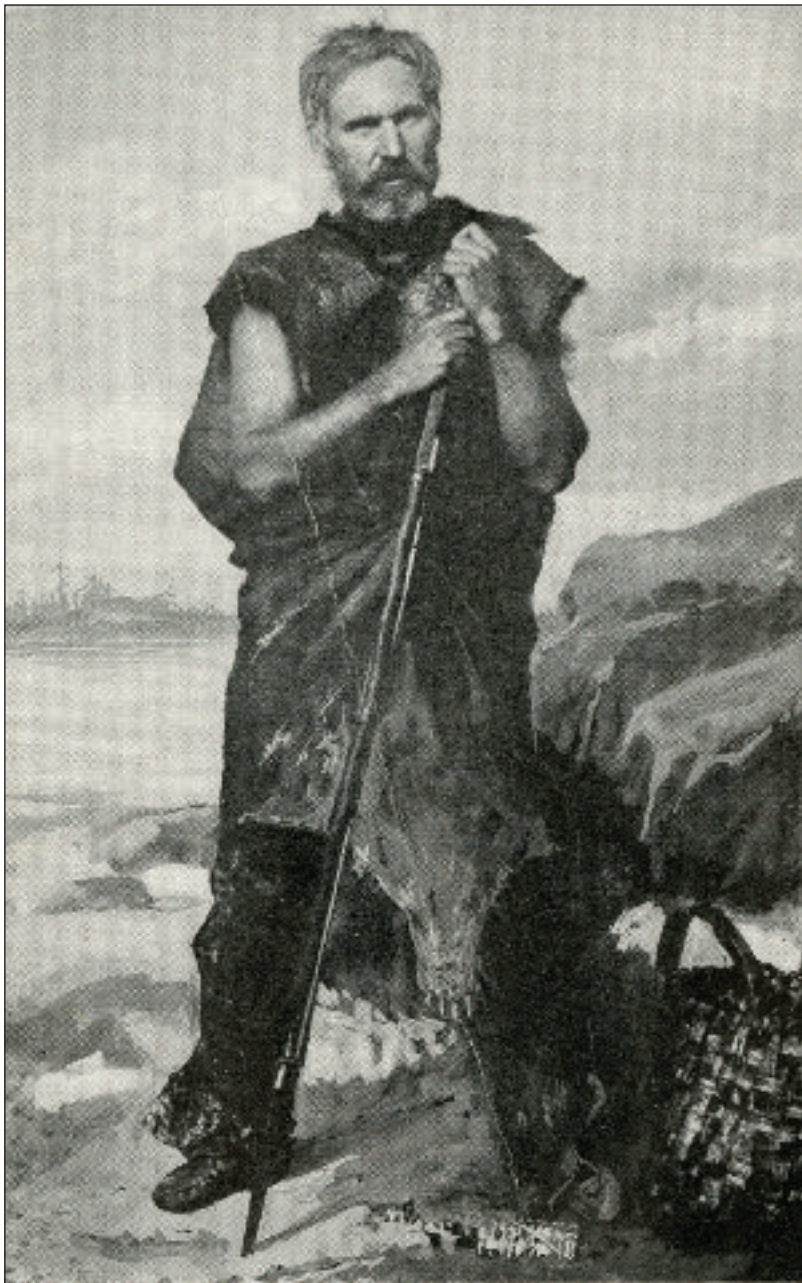
CALL OF THE WILY

But for all the cavorting, coveting, and commandment bashing throughout Rangeley history, it was left to Joseph Knowles (1869–1942) to raise the moral decay to an art form. No longer could

Rangeley citizens blame their sins on those affluent summer folk "from away." Born in nearby Wilton, Maine, Knowles was homegrown. Nearer still, he staged his elaborate hoax out of King and Bartlett Camp, where he had guided sports and run winter trap lines in years past. Located northwest of Rangeley, it still exists as a 34,000-acre private estate extending to the Canadian border.

On August 4, 1913, the undersigned observed Joseph Knowles disrobe and deliver his effects to [camp operator] Harry M. Pierce on the shore of Spencer Lake, after submitting to our examination to see that he concealed no material of any kind that would aid him in any way. He entered the forest at 10:40 AM, alone, empty handed, and without any clothing.

Signed: Forbes Mundson, MD
T. A. Buckley, MD¹⁷



"Joseph Knowles in wilderness garb. Photographed at Megantic on the day he came out of the woods, October 4, 1913." From Joseph Knowles, *Alone in the Wilderness* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1913), facing title page.

So began the two-month saga of Knowles vs. Wilderness to be played out on the national stage.

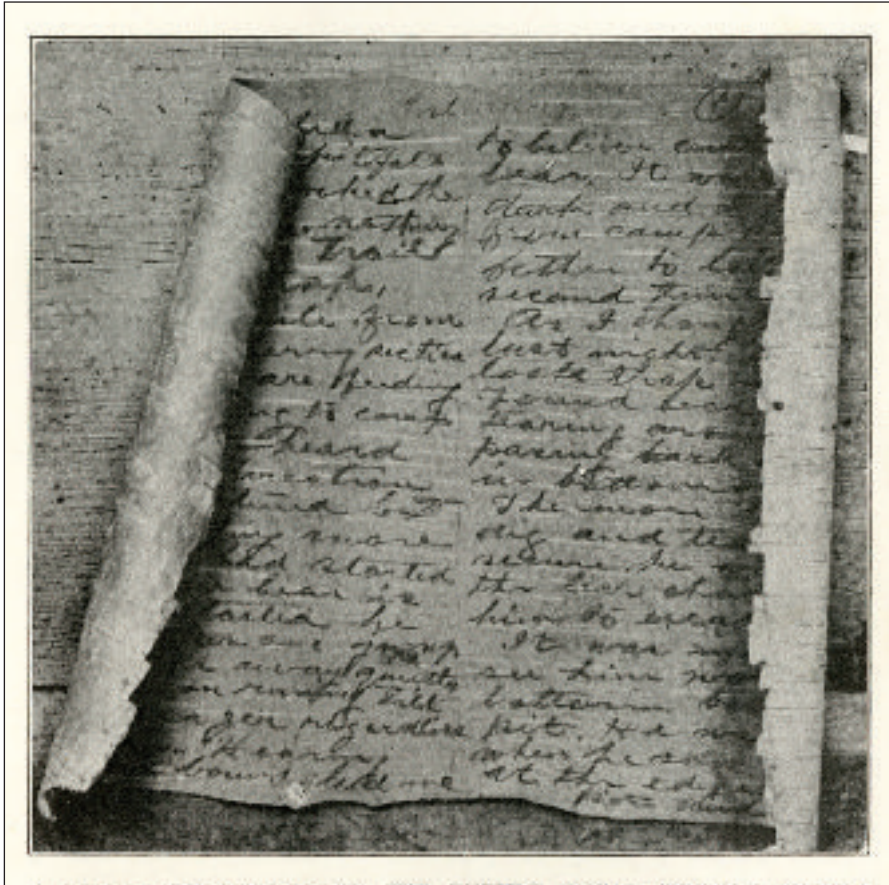
When Knowles entered the forest primeval dressed as Adam, he was no longer a bronzed Adonis sculpted by his earlier years of guiding in the wilderness. A self-taught artist, he had spent far too much time in Boston bar rooms, thanks to part-time work as an illustrator for the *Boston Post* (1831–1956). Contrary to Knowles's account in his best-selling *Alone in the Wilderness*, the *Boston Post* was where the back-to-nature plan was hatched.¹⁸

Several generations removed from the countryside by the Industrial Revolution, city-bound Americans were pining for the good old days when you could breathe the air and not trip over each other. Early on, Emerson had led the charge with his essay *Nature*, which established the superiority of nature over the machine age.¹⁹

His acolyte, Thoreau, went further, briefly abandoning society by seeking solitude in Emerson's nearby woodlot. Located a few miles from downtown Concord, it was not exactly an Arcadian wilderness. Nonetheless, it was sufficient to lay the groundwork for his *Walden*, mandatory reading still for long-suffering undergraduates.

Led by Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran, the Hudson River School of painters and their sweeping wilderness vistas were gaining credibility on the international art scene. In June 1873, Moran fished at Upper Dam for a ten-day period. No reports of fish, but a sketch titled *An Eddy on Rangeley Stream* and an oil based on the Rapid River have been documented.²⁰

Theodore Roosevelt had established the Boone and Crockett Club, reflecting



"A birch-bark message to the outside world, written by the author in the woods with burnt sticks from his fires." From Joseph Knowles, *Alone in the Wilderness* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1913), facing page 140.



the values of those legendary woodsmen, Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. As president, Roosevelt established the Forest Service, charged with creating our national forests.

The Boy Scouts had been founded on the premise that in the absence of war, going into the woods was the only path for boys becoming men.

Jack London was stirring readers' primal DNA with his best-selling novels *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild*. Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* was so popular that it achieved newspaper syndication in 1917.

The public was primed for tales of wilderness derring-do. As it was losing the Boston newspaper wars, the *Boston Post* gleefully supplied the naked man to feed city dwellers' fantasies. On Saturday, 9 August 1913, the *Post's* provocative news was a banner at the bottom of their front page:

Alone and Stripped of Everything,
Faces Existence in the Maine Woods.
Boston Artist's Exclusive Story
in Tomorrow's Post.

The plan was that Knowles would leave weekly messages in the roots of a designated blown-down spruce. At sundown, two guides would retrieve them and hand them over to a *Post* reporter stationed at King and Bartlett. There would be no contact with the so-called Nature Man or messages left for him. Naturally, the illustrated reports were written on birch bark using the carbon created by a friction-induced fire. Should Knowles fail to leave a report, a bloodhound was standing by to track him. By Sunday, interest would be at a fever pitch. Breathless interim *Post* reports of the danger, deprivation, and desolation did little to lower the temperature.

A partial catalog of his adventures includes Knowles making clothes from the hides of deer and bear he had captured using Indian-style deadfall traps; Knowles making leggings and moccasins from witchgrass and cedar bark; Knowles making a bow and grinding stones for arrowheads; Knowles fletching the arrows with great blue heron feathers and shooting down partridge on the wing; Knowles eating roots, bark, and berries when meat ran out; Knowles fighting crushing loneliness by befriending an albino fawn.

"The deer and the white fawn. A sketch made in the woods by the author on birch bark, with burnt sticks from his fires." From Joseph Knowles, *Alone in the Wilderness* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1913), facing page 58.

Knowles's own lengthy philosophical meanderings would have to wait for his *Alone in the Wilderness*, which would sell some 30,000 copies: "To me, there is not only an education in nature but a religion as well. My God is in the wilderness. The great open book of nature is my religion. My church is the church of the forest."²¹

The *Boston Post* Sunday circulation soared to 37,000, much to the chagrin of the three competing Boston papers:

- 4 October 1913: Fearing arrest for breaking Maine game laws, Knowles emerged on the Canadian side of the border at Lac Mégantic in Québec. Prearranged, he was mobbed by the press and the public and decreed a conquering hero. Pronounced healthy by a Dr. Gregory of the Parliament of Canada, he immediately resumed smoking.²²
- 5 October 1913: Four Maine game wardens escorted Knowles back through the wilderness into the United States. The Knowles victory tour was about to begin, but not before he first visited his aged mother to assure her of his well-being.²³
- 6 October 1913: Knowles was met at the Wilton train station by a brass band and an amped-up crowd yelling "Three cheers for our Joe!" School was closed and the townsfolk paraded to the town square, where the officials eulogized. Still dressed in his bearskin, an emotional encounter ensued with his seventy-five-year-old mother on the steps of his boyhood home. The sentimental crowd wiped tears from their eyes while a film crew recorded.²⁴

All told, it took the Knowles tour five days to reach Boston with an initial stop in Augusta, Maine, attended by some eight thousand adoring fans. Not so adoring was the Maine Game Commission, which fined him \$205 for hunting and trapping without a permit and setting illegal fires. Still fearing an arrest that would derail the schedule, Knowles quickly paid up and boarded the next train out of town to Portland, where a cheering crowd of ten thousand waited. Following a few intermediate stops, it was on to Boston, where he was met at North Station by a howling crowd primed by two months of *Boston Post* reporting. Men climbed on top of railway cars to get a better view. When Knowles's face appeared in the open car window, women tried to climb in. Police were not happy. *Boston Post* cameramen were.

Then on to the Boston Common by motorcade, where the bearskin-clad Knowles enthralled an estimated crowd of twenty thousand. Next was Harvard University, whose leading fitness guru, Dudley A. Sargent, MD, examined Knowles and pronounced him "in the pink of

condition." Stripping the Nature Man to the waist before an awestruck audience, he noted Knowles's perfect skin, "whose pores close and shield him from sudden chills." So saying, the good doctor encouraged the young women to line up and stroke the velvety skin.²⁵ *American Heritage* magazine estimated that, all told, some 200,000 people saw Knowles that first day in Boston.²⁶

The following day was marked by a meeting with both the governor and the mayor of Boston ("Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, the grandfather of JFK). Then on to Filene's, where he lunched on "brook trout Knowles" and partridge. Knowing a bit about marketing, Filene's scheduled a public makeover of the Nature Man. One manicure, pedicure, and haircut later, Knowles shed his bearskin for a new suit and rakish walking stick compliments of Filene's.

That evening found Knowles at dinner at the Copley Plaza Hotel hosted by the attorney general, who proclaimed him a "Robinson Crusoe without a man Friday and a Robin Hood without his archers."²⁷

The Boston clergy chimed in from the pulpit, decreeing that "the Almighty has raised up such a man as he to go forth into the wilderness. And behold, a sermon for the people of the United States."²⁸ No word on how the Reverend Herbert Johnson of the Warren Avenue Church reacted to Knowles's later confession of his conversion to pantheism.

Next up was the vaudeville stage, where Knowles demonstrated how to create fire without matches, tan animal skins, hunt with a bow and arrow, and make coffee from roasted acorns. Capitalizing on his press, he climbed back into his bearskin and took the show on the road, producing a \$1,200 weekly income. *Alone in the Woods* was a best seller, and a silent movie was in the works.

The *Boston American* had seen enough. For months now, the *Boston Post* had been kicking them in the Sunday ratings. The *Boston Traveler* and the *Boston Transcript* were none too happy either. With a vengeance, the *Boston American* scouts took to the woods. It did not take long for cracks in the *Post's* story lines to appear.

Reportedly, the iconic bearskin valiantly removed from its owner in hand-to-hand combat had four sewn-up bullet holes in it. The pit used to trap the bear was found and measured at "a scant 4 feet wide and barely 3 feet deep. . . . a cat could have hopped out of it at ease."²⁹ Pencil lead was found on some of the birch bark messages, one famously sent to President Woodrow Wilson. Provisions and the *Maine Sunday Telegram* had been delivered to a newly built log cabin near King and Bartlett by a young lady who lingered. Hush money had been paid out but under questioning was being confessed to.

The threat of a \$50,000 libel suit by the *Post* quieted things down, but not for



"A portion of the crowd that greeted Joseph Knowles on his arrival in Boston." From *Joseph Knowles, Alone in the Wilderness* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1913), facing page 290.

long. After huddling with their lawyers, the *American* resumed its negative drumbeat. Knowles's heroic image was taking a hit, and the *Boston Post* was losing interest in defending it.³⁰

By April 1914, Knowles was headed west, arriving in San Francisco, where he convinced the *Examiner* to fund a repeat performance of Knowles vs. Wilderness. Interestingly, both the *Examiner* and the *Boston American* were owned by William Randolph Hearst, long famous for yellow journalism and whatever it took to sell newspapers. Trading in his eastern jockstrap for Tarzan's loincloth, Knowles plunged into Oregon's Klamath National Forest accompanied by much fanfare.

All told, his monthlong wilderness exploits paled when compared with those in Maine. Game was lacking, and his diet was more gatherer than hunter. He never found the promised bear and mountain lion to kill and was reduced to painting their images using natural materials. There was little isolation, with park visitors reporting frequent sightings that drained off the element of suspense. Worse yet, his reports were pushed off the front pages by the run up to World War I. On the bright side, any fakery charges were savagely squelched by the militant Hearst organization, capable of working both sides of the street.

There was a victory tour of sorts that eventually led to Hollywood, where Knowles's ego was steamrolled by egos that defined the word. Despite the prior success of *Alone in the Wilderness* starring Evelyn Selbie, a leading star of the period, his film proposals were rejected. Like so many early films, because of poor storage and film combustibility, no trace of any Knowles film can be found.

Charges of faking it would haunt Knowles for the remainder of his life. Ultimately, he settled in Seaview, Oregon, with his wife and two other women, eking out a living as a competent painter. Overlooking Cape Disappointment, he would die there in his ramshackle house made from salvaged shipwrecks and driftwood. In later life he was quoted as saying, "I have sinned and repented. I have made mistakes and apologized for them. It has all been very interesting."³¹

HEIR OF DISAPPROVAL

Curiously, despite Fly Rod Crosby's press credentials, she never reported on the Knowles saga unfolding in her own backyard. Likewise, there was never a mention of Stewart's nefarious behavior at Upper Dam, one of her favorite haunts.

However, she cannot be faulted for not reporting on the arrival of Carrie Stevens (1882–1970) to Upper Dam, as



Carrie Stevens's most famous "ghostly" creation, the Grey Ghost.
From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

the arc of their celebrated lives would never intersect. Although she would have heard of Carrie's placing second in the 1924 *Field & Stream* fishing contest with a 6-pound, 13-ounce brook trout caught at Upper Dam, by then her reporting days were over.

But even if they were not, Carrie's choice of names for her world-renowned streamer patterns would have presented problems. For the religious Fly Rod, Carrie's creations of Ghosts, Devils, Demons, Dragons, Wizards, and Witches may have smacked a bit too much of sin.

Then too, Carrie was a Baptist.

For further reading on Joseph Knowles:

- Joseph Knowles, *Alone in the Wilderness* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1913)
- Jim Motavalli, *Naked in the Woods: Joseph Knowles and the Legacy of Frontier Fakery* (DeCapo Press, 2007)

For further reading on Rangeley history:

- Graydon Hilyard and Leslie Hilyard, *Carrie Stevens: Maker of the Rangeley Favorite Trout and Salmon Flies* (Stackpole Books, 2000)
- Graydon Hilyard and Leslie Hilyard, *Herbert L. Welch: Black Ghosts and Art in a Maine Guide's Wilderness* (Stackpole Books, 2018)

ENDNOTES

1. Julia Hunter and Earle Shuttleworth Jr., *Fly Rod Crosby: The Woman Who Marketed Maine* (Gardner, Me.: Tilbury House, 2000), 43.
2. *Ibid.*, 68.
3. "Baptist Church Hit in Lightning Storm," *Rangeley (Maine) Record* (21 June 1957).
4. George Shephard Page, "The Rangeley Lakes," *Forest and Stream* (21 January 1888).
5. "Professor Agassiz Was Convinced," *Forest and Stream* (24 June 1905).
6. Quoted in Arthur Weigall, *The Life and Times of Cleopatra* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924), 263.

7. The fishing begins at line 10, with the drunken-sailor-blush language following at 18.

8. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 4th edition, ed. Michael Agnes (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, 2002).

9. *Upper Dam Fish Record, Vol. 1: 1897–1914*, 1.

10. "The Maine Jigging Case," *Forest and Stream* (vol. xxix, no. 15, 3 November 1887), 1.

11. Thomas B. Stewart, obituary, *Forest and Stream* (30 September 1902).

12. "Whittier Pleads Guilty," *Burlington (Vermont) Free Press* (22 October 1886), 5.

13. According to the U.S. consumer price index inflation calculator found at <https://www.officialdata.org>, which uses official records published by the U.S. Department of Labor. Accessed 27 April 2020.

14. "Yankee Life Out-of-Doors: How the Latest Boston Embezzler Enjoyed It," *New York Sunday Tribune* (31 October 1886).

15. *Rangeley Lakes (Maine)* (vol. 2, 18 October 1896), 2.

16. 2 Corinthians 3:6, *The Holy Bible* (King James Version) (New York: American Bible Society, 1882), 1077.

17. Jim Motavalli, *Naked in the Woods: Joseph Knowles and the Legacy of Frontier Fakery* (Cambridge, Mass.: DeCapo Press, 2007), 2–3.

18. *Ibid.*, 76.

19. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature: Addresses and Lectures*, vol. 2 (New York: Caxton Society, undated), 14.

20. Thomas Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 115.

21. Joseph Knowles, *Alone in the Wilderness* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1913), 224–25.

22. *Ibid.*, 282–83.

23. *Ibid.*, 283 (photo page 276).

24. Motavalli, *Naked in the Woods*, 54.

25. *Ibid.*, 58, 61.

26. *Ibid.*, 56.

27. *Ibid.*, 61.

28. *Ibid.*, 59.

29. *Ibid.*, 67–68.

30. *Ibid.*, 69.

31. *Ibid.*, 262.



Graydon R. Hilyard

24 May 1944–2 April 2020

James Hardman



Graydon Hilyard (right) with Thomas Aquinas Daly at the May 2007 Heritage Award event honoring Stan Bogdan in New York City.

MAIL FROM GRAYDON HILYARD could be identified at a distance. There were field markings: Gold manila envelope with clasp. Scotch tape wrapped over and around the clasped, gummed flap. Sometimes around the envelope's other end too. This made it damned near impossible to open, and when attempting it with scissors, one ran the risk of slicing the contents (or fingers).

Graydon had ways of making others slow down.

If the manila envelope was full size, it likely contained a two-pocket presentation folder. If he was submitting an article, the folder contained the typed manuscript and illustrations, both pockets full. His letters were headed with a photocopied cartoon, often irreverent, always funny.

Sometimes he'd include bonus items: a Leslie Hilyard fly, a WHO SHOT OTIS BEAN? bumper sticker, a NIXON'S THE ONE campaign button (the last now on ironic display in my home office).

Sometimes he'd simply share copies of articles he thought I'd like on topics that had nothing to do with fly fishing: musicians and bands, the English language, books. Humor pieces. When he replied to my last round of queries for "A Sinner's Paradise" (page 8), he sent what turned out to be the last batch of these, including several already-dated obituaries from the *Economist*: Stanley Bard, Mostafa el-Abbadi, Richard Booth, Johnny Hallyday.

He was the first person I told I'd scored Rolling Stones tickets.

No doubt most of Graydon's friends were treated to similar correspondence over the years. Graydon had a generous spirit. There was always a surprise inside.

Among Graydon's friends were Peter Castagnetti and John Mundt, both of whom share tributes here. I should mention that Peter's original draft listed many of Graydon's close friends and relations by name; as an editor, I was afraid that including such a list would inadvertently leave out someone important. Graydon cared about a great many people, and a great many people cared about him. You know who you are.

—EDITOR

BOB HILYARD REMEMBERED

AFTER A BRIEF ILLNESS, Graydon Robert Hilyard ("Bob") passed away at Tufts Medical Center in Boston surrounded by his family. He was the author of three fly-fishing histories: *Bogdan* (2006) and, with his co-author and son, the fly tier Leslie Hilyard, *Carrie G. Stevens: Maker of Rangeley Favorite Trout & Salmon Flies* (2000) and *Herbert L. Welch: Black Ghosts and Art in a Maine Guide's Wilderness* (2018). Bob, who made his home in Ashland, Massachusetts, was a beloved fixture in the New England fly-fishing community,

having endeared himself to fly tiers, rod makers, reel makers, artists, editors, booksellers, and other historians. He was a respected advisor and historical contributor to the Outdoor Heritage Museum in Oquossoc, Maine.

He was my good friend.

I first met Bob and his wife Pauline in 1983. At the time, they were both employed as psychiatric counselors. Bob's father was a Reformed Baptist minister, and Bob attended Eastern Nazarene College, then Suffolk University.

One day in the summer of 1998, I arrived home to find a note from Bob tucked under a cedar shake on the front porch. He asked me to stop by his house; he had something that he wanted me to look at. When I got there, he asked if I would read the first chapter of what became the Carrie Stevens book. He wanted my opinion. I told him that he'd hit a home run and that the fly-fishing community would embrace his efforts. It turned out I was right about that.

A noted researcher of fly-fishing history, Bob was quite thorough. Once, while working on the Bogdan book, Stan (Mr. Bogdan) questioned him as to why he (Hilyard) needed to know the name of the ship his parents came over on from Poland. Very calmly, Bob assured Mr. Bogdan that his readership would want to know.

Bob's most recent book on Herb Welch was a labor of love, as the Welch store was just up the road from his beloved Camp Meeting at Haines Landing at Oquossoc, Maine. Coincidentally, the Welch establishment sold flies tied by Carrie Stevens and reels made by Stanley Bogdan.

As research can't always be done over the phone—and as Bob wasn't one for computers or the Internet—road trips were

an important part of his fly-fishing research. A trip to Maine's capital, Augusta, for example, was necessary to find out more about the blueback trout and its importance to the Rangeley Lakes fishery. Among the trips I took with Bob were ones to the Gaspé Peninsula of Québec, the Miramichi region of New Brunswick, and a particularly memorable one to New River Beach, New Brunswick.

We took our final trip together last fall to the American Museum of Fly Fishing to see the exhibit *Commemorating the Catch: Fish Carvings by Stephen R. Smith*—a trip that Bob really enjoyed.

Bob is survived by four of his six children and their spouses, seven grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, countless friends and admirers, and his beloved Newfoundland, Luther. He will be deeply missed.

—PETER A. CASTAGNETTI
ASHLAND, MASSACHUSETTS

A FLY FOR A FRIEND: REMEMBERING GRAYDON R. "BOB" HILYARD

IT WAS AN AUSTERE-LOOKING FLY, but it was tied by Carrie Stevens. A stop at a junk store many seasons ago had me rummaging through a cigar box full of random flies when I spotted a Carrie Stevens streamer with PATTERN NO. 11 printed on the card. It was not a pattern I was familiar with, so I asked Peter Castagnetti about it when chancing upon him at the Marlborough Fly Fishing show that winter. Peter said he didn't know anything about it but definitely knew who would: Bob Hilyard, who at that time was working on a biography of Carrie Stevens.

Peter made the introduction, and I'll never forget the sudden pause and stunned expression on Bob's face when I mentioned the pattern's name. He quickly regained his composure and informed me that it was a rare prize: Carrie had only numbered her patterns in "her first year or two" before naming them for the remainder of her storied career. Bob added that he had never found an example of a numbered pattern and asked if he could use it for an illustration in his book. I smiled with surprise and said of course. When *Carrie G. Stevens: Maker of Rangeley Favorite Trout & Salmon Flies* was released by Stackpole Books in 2000, the No. 11 was the only original numbered pattern to appear in the book. From that point on, we remained in regular and enthusiastic contact.

For those who knew Bob, he had a quiet charm and dry sense of humor that made conversation a pleasure. As an angling historian, he was as tenacious as they come. Following the success of *Carrie Stevens*, Bob went on to author *Bogdan* (Frank Amato Publications, 2006), the definitive biography of acclaimed reel maker Stanley Bogdan, and in 2018, Stackpole Books released his decade-long work, *Herbert L. Welch: Black Ghosts and Art in a Maine Guide's Wilderness*. Bob was also a contributor to the pages of this journal. It was always fun to receive his letters and discuss these various projects in development, while sharing a few of our own fishing and collecting stories along the way. The three aforementioned volumes are certainly an enduring contribution to the literature of fly fishing, but Bob's real legacy is his family, the friends' lives he touched, and the passion he devoted to our sport. I will miss him terribly, but remain grateful that I had the opportunity to know him and enjoy his fellowship.

—JOHN MUNDT
SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT

Leslie K. Hilyard



Graydon Hilyard with his Newfoundland, Luther.

Don Bell and the Adirondack Mountain House

by Timothy Belknap



The Adirondack Mountain House overlooked the East Branch of the Ausable and catered to anglers from the 1920s into the 1940s. Photo used with permission of Wells Memorial Library, Upper Jay, N.Y.

Don Bell had a cameo role in my story for the Spring 1992 American Fly Fisher, which centered on his friend George La Branche and La Branche's sporting estate, High Holt, just north of Hillsdale, New York. An expert dry-fly man himself, Bell was a memorable character and the subject of many stories among his friends. This article retells some of those stories and describes a few of his notable companions and their favorite Adirondacks fishing inn.

THE DAY-LONG DRIVE into the Adirondacks ended with disappointment. It was just early summer, but the streams seen on the way up were pitifully low. Then—wouldn't you know it—a terrific deluge washed away all prospects of fishing anytime soon.

In the mid-1930s, folks played cards to kill time, but three days of that was enough. The skies had cleared, but both branches of the Ausable were running high and discolored. It seemed a day for feeder streams, and two couples headed for Stiles Brook, where they could all picnic by a waterfall and the husbands could fish.

This hardly thrilled one of those husbands, Don Bell. He didn't care much for feeder streams and catching 9-inch rain-

bows. He was a big-fish man and had been since at least 1906 when brook trout on Newfoundland's Torrent River "annoyed" him by intercepting flies intended for Atlantic salmon.¹ He helped fill half a barrel with brookies for smoking and shipment home. The other half presumably held the three dozen salmon he caught, up to 35 pounds each.

Now, three decades later, odds seemed against getting anything big in Stiles Brook. After lunch, puffing his pipe, Bell descended to check out the East Branch, leaving his rod with the ladies. His angling companion enjoyed himself, catching little rainbows one after another, and even, under the falls, getting a decent brown to inspect (but ultimately decline) his offering.

There was a distant shout. Putting his rod aside, the Stiles Brook angler hurried down the slope and saw Bell staring out at the East Branch, excited. Exposed wet rocks meant the river was dropping. Better yet, Bell was pointing to a rising trout. Bell was a stout man, in his sixties, so his younger friend rushed back uphill for the rods. Brookies, browns, and rainbows commenced a major feast. By the time it was over, holding only four keepers each, neither man's creel had room for more.²

The younger fisherman was Ray Bergman, a former tackle salesman who ran a mail-order fly business and wrote for outdoor magazines. In 1938, he would compile his knowledge in *Trout*, which sold 225,000 copies.

The Bells and Bergmans were staying about a mile downstream at the Adirondack Mountain House in Upper Jay. Along with Bergman, other authoritative writers' names could be found in the inn's 1930s guest registers, including George M. L. La Branche, Lee Wulff, and Preston Jennings.³ Most of the guests, however, were journeyman anglers, such as Don Bell and his companions from the village of Hillsdale in the mid-Hudson Valley. George A. Colclough and Jim Stevens were beginning long teaching careers—both still going strong at my high school thirty years later—and F. Park Dimmick and Dick Herrington worked in thriving family businesses. These anglers represent the Everyman of that era of Tonkin cane rods, split-willow creels, and silkworm gut. Often unknowingly in the company of giants, they shared the same pools, the same inns and watering holes, the streamside pleasantries and observations. They were there when it happened.

A fishing license button, pinned each spring to the hatband of a well-seasoned fedora, was standard issue at that time; my grandfather had one—maybe yours did, too. A new one for 1932, 1933, 1934 . . . evidence in tin and celluloid of good times amidst hard times. Along with the buttons, the surviving photographs evoke a sense of peace: a smiling George A. Colclough, for example, roadside with car and cleaned trout, somewhere up north, the gas station in the background right out of an Edward Hopper painting.

A FORCE OF NATURE

James Donald Bell—called Don by everyone in Hillsdale—was a generation older than the two teachers. He was the grandson of a Scottish mariner who, tiring of the East India trade, sailed to America with his wife in 1839 to become a farmer.⁴ There was something restless about the grandson, too. Simply put, Don Bell was a force of nature.

As a newly shingled attorney, Cornell Law class of 1892 and now partnered with his father, Bell was described in an 1895 local paper article as “a popular young member of the Columbia County bar.”⁵ A few years later, however, readers got a fresh impression. In those days of paltry civic budgets, main roads had tollgates. One summer day, Bell set out west with horse and buggy for Hudson, the county seat. At one of the gates, he was refused passage in a dispute over what was owed. Bell stormed off, then stormed back with a borrowed ax, and chopped off the latched end of the tollgate. According to the weekly *Hillsdale Harbinger*, “The gatekeeper made numerous threats but nothing more serious than a war of words ensued.” The young lawyer swung the truncated gate around, and the buggy trotted off for Hudson.⁶

Bell was hard-boiled on the outside, for sure, and no stranger to hard-nosed legal tactics. But for all his gruffness, he possessed a great sense of humor and a good heart. One of the old-timers I knew in Hillsdale, the late Andy Morandi, once told me, “You couldn’t find a more gracious friend than Don Bell.”⁷

He had a fondness for Ballantine’s scotch and English setters, every one of which, generation after generation, he named Roddy. So here’s our first Roddy story, handed down to Buzz Colclough from his father, George.

Don was bragging up his dog, how great a bird dog this Rod was going to be. Sure enough, he got gamey and locked into a point. “Now George Albert”—that’s what Don called my dad—“I told you how good he was going to be . . . get ready, I’m going to send him in.” Rod went in one side of the cover, a cat came out the other. Colorful injudicious language followed, including a threat to shoot Roddy.⁸



On the road: George A. Colclough, homebound from the Adirondacks with cleaned trout. His companion on this trip was fellow teacher Jim Stevens. Photo courtesy of the Colclough family.



From his fedora to his pipe to his cane rod, George A. Colclough was every inch the classic fly fisherman of the 1930s. Photo courtesy of the Colclough family.



A formal portrait of Bell, circa 1910–1920. A prominent attorney, he was active in Republican politics on the town and county level. He had the means to fish from Newfoundland to the Rockies. Photo courtesy of Sally Laing.

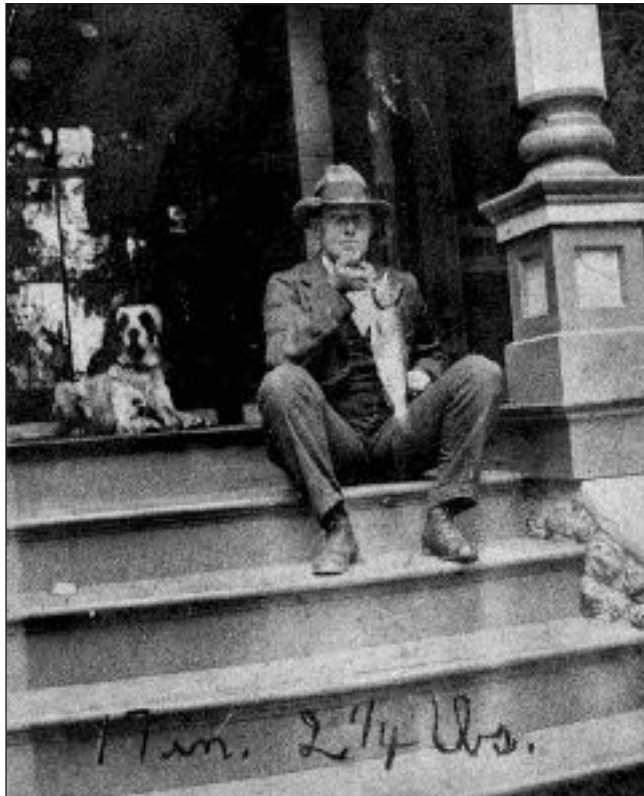
Bell's law practice was at the foot of Coldwater Street, a short walk from the Hillsdale village green. There, at the Civil War monument, the name of his father, Sgt. Charles M. Bell of 28th New York Infantry, was on the list of veterans below a bronze statue of a pair of resolute Union flag bearers. Ten or so houses farther along, on the village outskirts, was the Bell homestead, stately and Victorian with a barn and a meadow out back suitable for dog drills and winter casting practice. Bell's walks between his office and home were Hillsdale's version of the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. His best friend (they were inseparable) paraded at his side, unleashed. As commands were reinforced—"Heel, dammit Roddy, heel!"—the stout lawyer would exhale pipe smoke in puffs as measured and steady as the New York Central locomotives coming up the valley.

Fact check: Dog and man were *usually* inseparable, which leads to Roddy story number two.

This particular Roddy "was a cat chaser, and good lawyer that he was, Don sometimes had to make amends," recounted Dick Herrington's son, Ed. "Roddy killed a cat, and a mouse damaged the coat of the woman who had owned the cat, and she sued."⁹ The claim was dismissed, but I imagine Bell somehow made it up to the poor lady.

Empathy is part of a good heart, and his own life was not without sorrow. His first wife and infant daughter died in 1904.¹⁰ Two summers later, his live-in hired man, aging and in poor health, hanged himself from a beam in the barn.¹¹ In World War I, Bell's son, Archie, was gassed in the trenches in France; he never fully recovered and died young.¹² Still, Bell knew his road was not as hard as some others', and he was generous with his time and resources in civic work, such as helping establish a library for the village.

Bell eventually married again, this time to a schoolteacher, Jeanette Platt. He developed into a formidable lawyer, as capable of arguing cases before the state's Supreme Court as handling the real estate and probate business typical to any village. According to a medical-specialist directory, one of his credentials was "attorney in lunacy."¹³ His own mental health he nurtured by fishing for trout on the Black Grocery (which over the years became better known as the Roeliff Jansen Kill). One would see Bell's buggy, eventually horseless, parked alternatively by one of two bridges less than a mile from his house: one to the east, one to the south. They bracketed a gravelly pasture stretch where a surprise push from behind meant nothing more than the nuzzling of



Don Bell and Roddy relax on the porch of his house in Hillsdale, which still stands on what is now Route 22, just north of the Route 23 intersection in the village.

Photo courtesy of Sally Laing.

a curious Holstein. Bell enjoyed the evenings, his pipe smoke keeping the mosquitoes at bay, if not the cows.¹⁴

By the 1920s, city people, including my family, were buying up properties outside the village and turning them into summer retreats. To the amusement of the locals, they gave the old places fancy names—our family’s was Nine Acres—and, to the locals’ displeasure, they posted them. Even some of the posted signs were fanciful. An old berry farm became Edna St. Vincent Millay’s Steepletop, protected with the poet’s romantic warning: “NO TRESPASSING—EXCEPT BY MOONLIGHT.”¹⁵ Across a fold in the Berkshire foothills from Steepletop was High Holt, the estate of investment broker George M. L. La Branche, the author of *The Dry Fly and Fast Water*. That influential little gray book had made its way up from the city—to the bookshelf of my grandfather Robert C. Green, for one—and was a game changer for a nascent breed of American anglers learning to cover all water and to do so fishing upstream, with dries. Bell was a solid convert; my grandfather wasn’t.

LATE DINNERS FOR SERIOUS ANGLERS

I don’t know how Bell met La Branche, whether it was through legal work on High Holt, trout fishing, or woodcock hunting; one thing probably led to another. The two were a study in contrasts, one a hardworking country lawyer, the other vested with such genteel Edwardian mannerisms (his sporting tweeds as tailored as his evening wear) and myriad side pursuits (yachting not the least of them) that one might wonder if he ever worked at all. Of course, La Branche did work. The stock market “has had me by the ears for so long that I have not only not written my friends but almost forgotten that I had any,” he wrote to his English angling companion G. E. M. Skues in 1928.¹⁶ (Follow the character of the stockbroker Merton in Millay’s poem-play *Conversation at Midnight*, and those Edwardian mannerisms of La Branche will come alive.)

Now let’s venture north. In early summer of 1931, George and Emmala La Branche and Don and Jeanette Bell spent the better part of a day motoring up Route 9 to the Adirondack Mountain House in Upper Jay.¹⁷ There the anglers could come and go as they pleased; Byron and Mabel Blanchard first and foremost ran a fishing inn, with hearty meals served early in the morning and as late as 11:00 p.m. Since 1923, when the Blanchards became its proprietors, the inn had been a haunt of serious anglers.

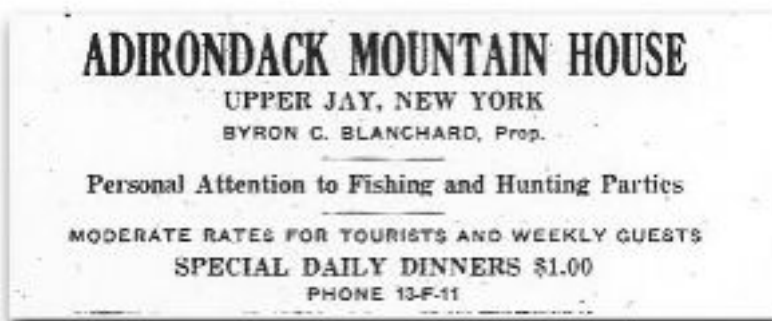
There’s a story about how as the years progressed, some of the aging regulars at the inn, their hearing diminished, spoke a bit loudly. One of them brought along a teenager and, when the lad asked if he could go into Lake Placid for a dance, was heard clearly to exclaim: “Dammit, son, we didn’t come here to enjoy ourselves, we came to fish!”¹⁸

Quite right.

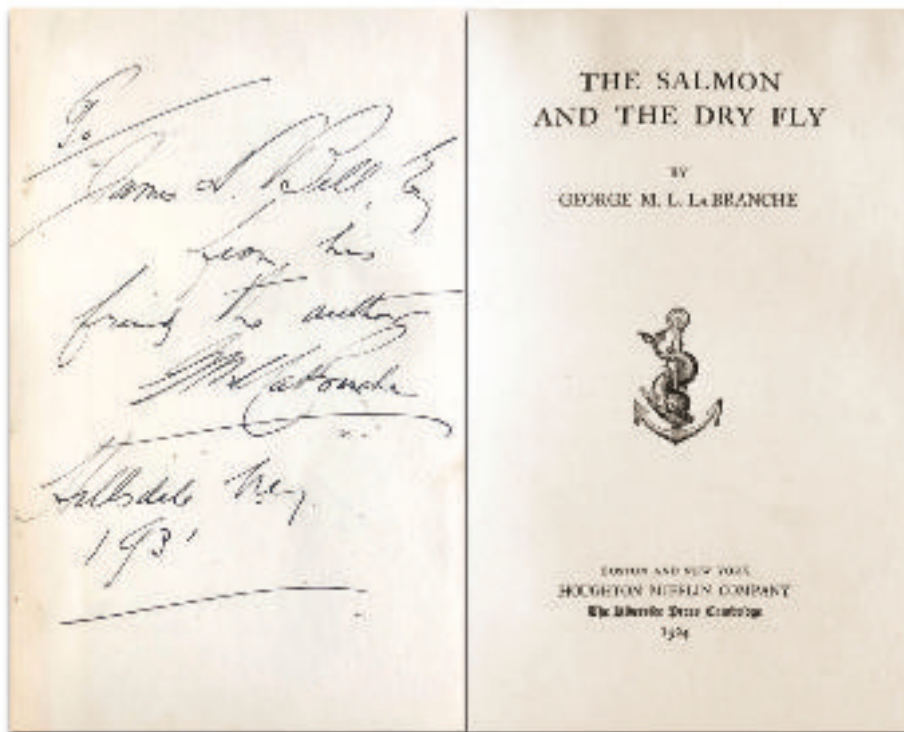
For that matter, neither Bell nor La Branche were spring chickens. Bell was born in 1869, La Branche in 1875. They favored the West Branch, which with its tricky, slippery rocks, is no river for old men. As always, the best fish held in that zone just beyond the fringe of reach and caution. Well, perhaps not out of the reach of La Branche, who could accu-

rately cast nearly 100 feet.¹⁹ But that was off a dock on a Central Park pond, footing assured. Buzz Colclough remembers his dad coming back from the Ausable bemoaning the hazards of wading into what seemed like surprise manholes.

That La Branche was competitive and, like Bell, contentious at times made their friendship all the more remarkable. Down in Columbia County and the neighboring Berkshires, on smaller streams, they would typically have fished out of sight of each other. Often casting in a crouch or on his knees, La Branche was a stickler for minimizing, if not eliminating, the human silhouette from his quarry’s cone of view. Today, in less gracious times, we talk of spooking fish; La Branche didn’t want the fish “becoming acquainted” with him. His



Ads for the Adirondack Mountain house ran in newspapers near and far. This one was in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. A dollar bought a sumptuous meal in the Depression.



George M. L. La Branche inscribed *The Salmon and the Dry Fly* to Don Bell in Hillsdale in 1931. Photo by George Colclough Jr.

stealthy stream craft was along the lines of a still-hunter seeking deer: long pauses between small movements.

Was Bell in the same league? No less a judge than Ray Bergman declared his burly friend “a maestro,” a vastly experienced “old time dry-fly man.”²⁰ Both men were more fussy about presenting the fly than imitating it.

On the West Branch, with all its pocket water, Bell and La Branche could fish in closer proximity. Let’s try to picture it. For the right atmospheric and the soft hues of early summer, we have lovely hand-tinted postcards of the river, traces of snow lingering on Whiteface in the background. We envision La Branche as polished and rather reserved, a small, slight, prim dandy even afield. Bell is a large, dynamic man, with a dominating voice given to bellowing at times. If he wanted your attention, you had little trouble hearing Don Bell over the rush of a mountain river.

If apart for awhile, any lapses in sociability were made up for once they reassembled and drove back to Upper Jay along Springfield Road. Waders were removed on the inn’s porch. The shadows of the elms grew longer over the meadow leading down to the East Branch as drinks were poured, stories told, and experiences exchanged—the analysis of which has informed the contents of fly boxes to this day.

The creations that came out of the vises (or, in Lee Wulff’s case, the fingers and teeth) of regulars at the inn were often modifications of the imitations effective on the hatches just weeks before on Catskill and Hudson Valley streams. The same mayfly, it seemed, wasn’t quite the same mayfly up north.

To walk off dinner, some of the guests might take their constitutional over the hamlet’s steel-truss bridge and savor the piney air and twilight music of the East Branch on its way northeast to Lake Champlain. A quiet man, Bergman would repair to his room to tap out on his old travel Corona the tips he wanted to pass on to readers of *Field & Stream* and (later) *Outdoor Life*.²¹ Flies were tied for the morrow, and because the inn had electricity, the light for tying them was good.²²

In several of his books, Dana Storrs Lamb fondly recalled those days, expending not a few words on the delicious fare served up by the Blanchards, which included blackberry pies, vegetables grown on the premises, and fresh eggs from Mabel’s chickens. We are fortunate that Lamb, too, was there when it happened, as the evening hatches intensified and rubber-clad feet tentatively poked for purchase, and the Sirens enticed with big splashes out beyond in the gloom of shadow, and sport presented itself with a capital S.

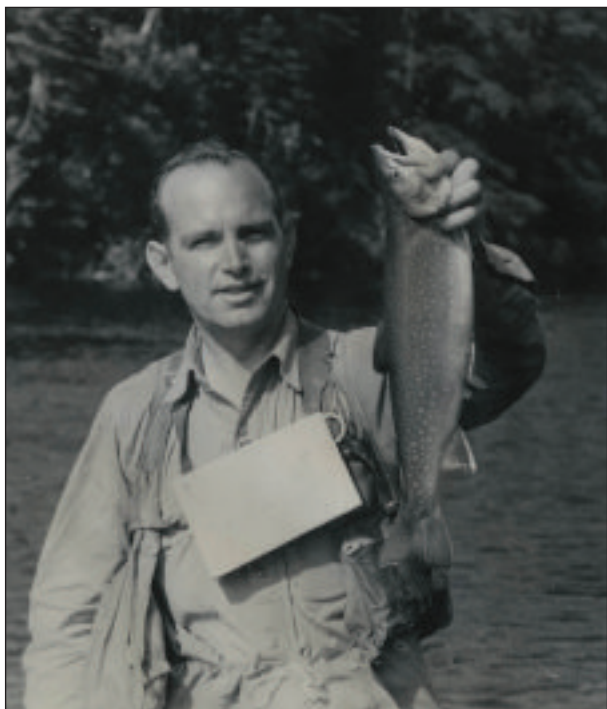
Read Lamb’s books and we get scattered glimpses of “old Don Bell” as he invites Lamb and his wife and fishing partner, Helen, to come along on a particular stretch. Lamb remembers not only the close-to-4-pounds brown trout that Bell landed but also the pool (Ski Jump on the West Branch) and the fly (Badger Spider).²³

More on those spider flies later.

GUESTS AT THE INN

Victor Coty was at the inn during La Branche’s and Bell’s 1931 stay. He was an executive for the family factory in Watertown, New York, which was involved in the prosaic business of producing machinery for the paper-bag industry. More to Coty’s intellectual interest was the making of professional-grade outdoor films—he shot about 2,000 feet of fishing action that particular visit—and devising flies.²⁴ Hence we have the Dark Coty and the Light Coty, blue-gray bivisibles designed to do on northern waters what the Quill Gordon and Hendrickson did downstate: imitate the respective *Epeorus pleuralis* and *Ephemerella subvaria* mayflies.

Brooklyn-based commercial artist Lee Wulff, who sometimes fished with Coty, concocted the Gray Wulff in response to *Isonychia bicolor* hatches that started on



Victor Coty with a brookie of a size seldom encountered these days in the North Woods. The river was the Lamoille near his home in Stowe, Vermont. “I have never known a person who was so passionate about fishing as my father,” says Lewis Coty. “If he didn’t have a daily dose of it during the season, he would quickly wilt.” Photo courtesy of Lewis Coty.



For once, Victor Coty himself is in the frame of this action shot. He liked to film other people—primarily skiers but also anglers—and his ninety-minute outdoor movies were enjoyed by thousands at sporting clubs and auditoriums across the country. Photo courtesy of Lewis Coty.



An assortment of Ray Bergman's flies in a box was sent to "Mr. J. D. Bell, Hillsdale, Columbia Co., N.Y." The mailing sticker is visible under the scrawled handwriting in the lower right corner of the box: "Mostly blue gray spiders." The box was discovered inside a creel in a barn after Bell's death. The postmark is indistinct, but the stamp was first issued in 1923. Photo by George Colclough Jr.

the Ausable after the first week in June and reappeared throughout the summer. Tied with bucktail, they floated well and were durable, representing a dollop of protein to fish whose appetites, like those of the anglers, seemed improved by mountain air. By using the bucktail's underside, the White Wulff imitated *Ephemera guttulata*, the Green Drake, which had epic hatches along the Ausable in those days.²⁵

Wulff recorded his very first morning as a guest at the inn. It started with the customary early breakfast. He then walked a mile upstream and fished back down to the bridge. Each trout added to his fern-lined creel was bigger than the last. By the bridge, he netted a 3-pound brown, and again came that awful Ausable dilemma: no room left in the creel. To Wulff's embarrassment, or so he claimed, he heard clapping and looked up to see a small audience on the bridge. He brought the trout up for the folks to admire and later purchased a bigger creel, lamenting that the old one was scaled for Catskills trout. The new one would be his last, and when he retired it, he hung it on the wall by his fireplace as memento of the days before catch-and-release became his ethos.²⁶

By early June 1934, another guest, Preston Jennings, was dislodging the West Branch's lesser stones and collecting specimens of *Rhithrogena impersonata* to catalog for *A Book of Trout Flies*, which was published the following year.²⁷ These

flat-headed little fellows seemed custom designed to do what no Ausable angler could: cling to its slick rocks in strong current. But wets and nymphs were seldom resorted to in those days of terrific hatches. What anglers wanted to know was how the fly looked from below. One student of light was John Hillhouse, whom Ray Bergman said was one of the best anglers he ever knew. Indeed, according to Dana Lamb, Bell and Hillhouse, who often fished together, were each good for at least one 18-incher every evening on the West Branch. After studying the effect of sunlight on water, Hillhouse helped Bergman come up with a theory that any one of us can test: gray flies do best on gray days, brown flies on bright days. Bergman's key Ausable contribution was a series of stiff-hackle brown and ginger spiders. For once, this humble man was outwardly proud of what he had created, and his fellow inn guests came around to agreeing they were infallible. They endure to this day. I knew a fine angler in Hillsdale, the late Jackie Decker, who swore by these spiders as the weapon of choice at dusk. If you've ever had a wood spider plop on your hand while trying to free a fly from a logjam and don't suffer heart stoppage, you'll realize it's a trout meal that would make a no. 12 Wulff seem like an appetizer.

The previous fall in Hillsdale, George La Branche had thrilled nineteen-year-old

Dick Herrington by inviting the lad along on a grouse shoot in Scotland. Back in Columbia County, La Branche, with one of his German shorthairs and a small-gauge Parker double, hunted woodcock with Bell and his setter on coverts they co-owned west of town. Ed Herrington, Dick's son and Bell's great nephew, remembers as a boy, after a short hunt, listening in as his father and the old attorney, his dog within petting range, unwound over drinks in the living room.

Here's one tale Ed never forgot, the locale somewhere in the Adirondacks but unknown. Bell couldn't sleep because of the raucous drinkers and jukebox downstairs. It was the Depression, and a dollar was a dollar. He offered five of them to the man he perceived could do the job of quieting down the rest. Bell returned to his bed to await results, only to be startled by a tremendous blast. More inebriated than Bell had realized, his man had retrieved a shotgun from the parking lot and dispatched the jukebox.

That surely wasn't at the well-managed Adirondack Mountain House. Not much disturbed the peace there except the shouts and clinks out back at the horseshoe pitch or, on rainy days, bidding at the bridge games on the porch and animated conversations in the dining room under the big mounted brown caught by Dana Lamb's fellow Princetonian and fishing mentor, Johnny Easton. Lamb

wrote that he knew and liked everyone in the place. He also liked the rate: \$22 a week for bed and board.

The Blanchards and Bells became such firm friends that on at least one occasion, the Blanchards came down to visit in Hillsdale over the holidays. Often, they would winter in Florida. The inn would reopen around the third week in May, and the regulars would show up in numbers in June and July. The Depression didn't do much to change their cherished routine. La Branche even got a breather, albeit an unwelcome one, from the rigors of Wall Street in 1933 when he was suspended for two years from the New York Stock Exchange for rules' violations.²⁸

The 1939 season marked the beginning of the end. That April, By Blanchard died unexpectedly during his return trip from wintering down south with Mabel. Bell and Lamb still visited the inn through 1945. A few years later, it burned down. Mabel died in 1955.

The era was winding down. The first of the Roddys—Roderick Dhu out of the formidable Gladstone line—had been entered in the 1899 American Kennel Club stud book; the last Roddy was taken in by the Herringtons at the time of Don Bell's death in 1954. His friend George Albert Colclough has passed, too, but Colclough's son George (Buzz) and grandson George Colclough Jr. are ardent fly fishers and no strangers to the Ausable.

The West Branch is still known for large trout and scenic splendor—a period of tacky amusement parks and the like has come and gone in Essex County—and its past is honored with stretches such as Bergman's Run and Coty Flats. The East Branch, which once had anglers wishing for bigger creels, after the 1940s wasn't what it used to be, according to old-timers like the late Fran Betters.²⁹

Born in 1900, Dana Lamb was younger than many of the regulars at the Adirondack Mountain House. When he reminisced about the place, long after it and most of his friends were gone, he said he didn't feel unhappy or alone because it was all still alive in his mind—the pools, the personalities, and the times. "I close my eyes and see again my river in its old unravished loveliness," he said.³⁰

Relics of that era have found their way into my life. Those tin New York State hunting and fishing licenses fetch a pretty penny at a nearby antique mall. At half their price—\$17, to be exact—I was delighted to purchase a crisp 1970 edition of *A Book of Trout Flies* and with it, on page 78, a poignant little word picture. Preston Jennings, describing the caddis *Psilotreta frontalis*, notes his specimens were collected on 8 June 1934 by Byron Blanchard. I can imagine the genial

innkeeper hurrying back up the lawn with his tiny captives and perhaps calling Jennings to tell him, yes, the green drakes were out, too—better hurry on up.



ENDNOTES

1. "CJR" (Clarence Reynolds of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.), untitled social item, *Hillsdale (NY) Harbinger* (3 August 1906), 5, and "CJR" (Clarence Reynolds of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.), "An Angler's Letter to an Angler," *Forest and Stream* (10 November 1906), 739.

2. The gist of this afternoon is recalled by Ray Bergman in *Trout*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1976) 319–21. Details were added by the author from sundry sources.

3. Joseph Hoffman, "Fishing Days in Upper Jay," *Adirondack Life* (May/June 1997), 12–14. According to Hoffman, the guest register read "like a Who's Who of American fly-fishing" (page 12). Other angler/writers who were guests included Eugene Connett, John Alden Knight, and Sparse Grey Hackle, according to Ernest Schwiebert in his introduction to Dana Lamb's *The Fishing's Only Part of It* (Clinton, N.J.: Amwell Press, 1982). In "The River Collector" in the March/April 1984 issue of *Sporting Classics* (42–48), Schwiebert says the register also held the names of Richard Carley Hunt, Corey Ford, Guy Jenkins, and Ted Townsend. A determined effort by the author to locate the register was unsuccessful. It may have perished in the fire that destroyed the inn in the late 1940s.

4. *Biographical Review: The Leading Citizens of Columbia County* (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Co., 1894), 184–85, entry for James D. Bell.

5. "About the Folks," *Columbia Republican* (Hudson, NY) (4 July 1895), 2.

6. "What We Hear," *Hillsdale (NY) Harbinger* (12 August 1898), 5.

7. Quoted in Timothy Belknap, "High Holt: The Sporting Estate of George LaBranche," *The Double Gun Journal* (Summer 1993), 60.

8. Buzz Colclough, personal interview with author, 29 March 2018.

9. Ed Herrington, personal interview with author, 22 March 2018.

10. Minnie Cohen (compiler). *Directory, Village Cemetery, Hillsdale, Columbia County, New York, Volume 7* (June 1938), 3.

11. "A Suicide: Egbert Curtis Kills Himself by Hanging," *Hillsdale (NY) Harbinger* (17 August 1906), 5.

12. Ed Herrington, personal interview with author.

13. "County Claims," *Columbia Republican* (Hudson, NY) (22 May 1902), 10. An inserted supplement included a list of approved specialists who rendered medical and forensic services to the Columbia County authorities.

14. Author interview with the late George Colclough before publication of Timothy Belknap, "George LaBranche's High Holt: A Place in His Life and Work," *The American Fly*

Fisher (Spring 1992, vol. 18, no. 2), 4–8.

15. Everett Wood, "Snowstorm Girl," *Field & Stream* (April 1984), 152.

16. Letter from George M. L. La Branche to G. E. M. Skues, 28 August 1928. It can be found in Paul Schullery's "Selections from the Skues–La Branche Correspondence, 1925–1947," Appendix 2 in G. M. L. La Branche, *The Dry Fly and Fast Water* (Helena, Mont.: Greycliff Publishing Company, 1998), 185.

17. "Brooklyn People Resting in Valley of Ausable River," *Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle* (12 July 1931), 33; "Jay News," *The Adirondack Record–Elizabethtown (NY) Post* (9 July 1931), 3.

18. Letter from Kingman Putnam to Ed Zern, mentioned in Zern's "Can Fishing Be Fun?" *Field & Stream* (October 1977), 154.

19. Composite of results of various casting tournaments, early 1900s, as reported in *Forest and Stream*.

20. Bergman, *Trout*, 350.

21. Bill Desmond's tribute to Bergman on page 5 of the 23 February 1967 *Rockland County (NY) Journal News* ("Ray Bergman: 'Babe Ruth' of Fly Fishing") described him as quiet and unassuming. So did Fran Betters in his chapter on the Ausable in *Good Fishing in the Adirondacks* (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Northeast Sportsman's Press, 1990, 55–69). Bergman's 1912 Corona Model 3 portable typewriter was featured in the winter/spring 2010 issue of *The Drake* (Bill Monan, "Ray Bergman's Typewriter: Take Inspiration Where You Find It," www.drakemag.com/back-issues/2010/winter-spring/533-ray-bergmans-typewriter-take-inspiration-where-you-find-it.html; accessed 29 August 2018).

22. "Electric lights" was one of the appointments highlighted in an undated promotional flier of the Adirondack Mountain House. Electrical power was not a given in rural areas in the 1930s, although the Ausable Valley was somewhat ahead of the game because of local hydroelectric projects.

23. Dana Storrs Lamb, *Where the Pools Are Bright and Deep* (New York: Winchester Press, 1973), 56.

24. "Brooklyn People Resting in Valley of Ausable River," *Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle* (12 July 1931), 33.

25. For example, the May 1916 *Forest and Stream* describes green drake hatches in the Champlain region as "very abundant" (Louis Rhead, "Halcyon Angling Days in May," 944).

26. Lee Wulff recalled that day in 1929 in "Thoughts on Trout" in the March/April 1984 *Sporting Classics* (62–64).

27. Noted in Ernest Schwiebert, *Nymphs* (New York: Winchester Press, 1973), 265. See also Preston J. Jennings, *A Book of Trout Flies* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1970), 39.

28. "Stock exchange suspends member 2 years," *New York Times* (27 October 1933), 29. La Branche violated rules governing the conduct of specialists. Although much was legal in 1933 that is illegal now, such as insider trading, this was a serious breach, judging from the severity of the suspension.

29. Fran Betters, *Fly Fishing, Fly Tying and Pattern Guide* (Wilmington, N.Y.: Adirondack Sports Publications, 1986).

30. Lamb, *The Fishing's Only Part of It*, 10.

Dr. George Parker Holden's *The Idyl of the Split-Bamboo*

by John Mundt

We sing the song of the Split-Bamboo.

—George Parker Holden

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON, Dr. George Parker Holden's *The Idyl of the Split-Bamboo* remains a milestone in the literature of fly fishing. Published by Stewart & Kidd Company in 1920, this book encouraged the early-twentieth-century angler to take on the daunting task of constructing a bamboo fly rod and spurred on subsequent generations of amateur and professional rod builders.

Bamboo rod making has always been shrouded in mystique, with the majority of famous makers keeping their means and methods guarded secrets. Even today, the acclaimed rod maker Per Brandin grins and changes the subject if one inquires about his technique for hollowing out bamboo strips. Holden's *Idyl* brought hard-won information and insight to the reading public. Although primarily a technical treatise, *Idyl* opens with a brief foreword by Dr. Henry van Dyke, followed by Holden's timeless chapter, "The Joys of Angling," which will resonate with today's angler on numerous fronts. To me, this chapter alone justifies adding the book to your library as it presents an inspirational discourse on the allure of fly fishing itself. (Various hardcover, paperback, and digital editions are available for sale through antiquarian and online booksellers.) This apologetic is followed by the main body comprised of various chapters on "Rod-Making," with detailed information on bamboo as a rod material, and 142 pages of instruction on how to craft a rod, through the stages of splitting out a culm to varnishing and finishing the completed article. There are also supplemental chapters on "Cultivating Silk-Worm Gut at Home" and "Landing Nets and Equipment." The book concludes with "The Angler's Camp," which reminds the modern angler that fishing in the emerging years of automobile travel was vastly different than the day trips many of us take for granted today.

It's important to note that Dr. Holden was a mentor to the legendary rod maker Everett Garrison. To place this in perspective, in the Winter 1996 edition of the *American Fly Fisher*, Jon Mathewson, in "A Rod-Crafting Legacy," references the apostolic succession of "a tradition handed down from one rodmaker to another: from George Parker Holden, to Everett Garrison to Hoagy Bix Carmichael." He goes on to note that "as a writer, [Holden's] influence on rodmakers is immeasurable. The *Idyl* became the standard how-to manual for amateurs and professionals alike" (vol. 22, no. 1, 24). Following Garrison's passing in 1975, Carmichael completed the publication of *A Master's Guide to Building a Bamboo Fly Rod*, which inspired many of our contemporary rod makers to take up the craft. A Carmichael rod is just as dear to come by as a Garrison.

One eerily startling excerpt in *Idyl* relative to 2020 addresses how rod making might help one cope with the monotony of quarantine:



Cook Neilson

An assortment of items once belonging to George Parker Holden, Everett Garrison, and Hoagy B. Carmichael. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Patients often read and read during a forced period of shutting-in until they can't read any longer, and don't know what in the world next to do to alleviate the tedium of the dragging hours and days. We escaped this experience during an eight-week's quarantine for scarlet fever, in beguiling many an hour by winding rod-joints with silk, satisfied that the subsequent coats of varnish preceded by an alcohol bath would prove effectively disinfectant (29).

This past spring, with Connecticut's COVID-19 Stay Home, Stay Safe order in full effect, I decided to fish the entire season with bamboo only. It was fun and definitely helped me feel more connected to the past and the makers whose rods were being used for their intended purpose. I also felt grateful that Hoagy Carmichael took the baton that was passed from Holden to Garrison and kept the art of bamboo rod making alive for all who take delight in casting these beautiful instruments. I'm sure the good doctor would be pleased.

~

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

A Forest of Fly-Fishing Books

by George Jacobi



THE SPORT OF FLY FISHING has attracted some of the world's greatest writers. It's also the favorite pastime for many number crunchers, grocery-men, and steamfitters. All of us like puzzles. This one—how to catch a feeding fish with an imitation of its natural food—combines man's natural inclination to solve an interesting problem with his or her predatory instinct. And the fact that it takes place in some of the most beautiful settings on earth doesn't hurt.

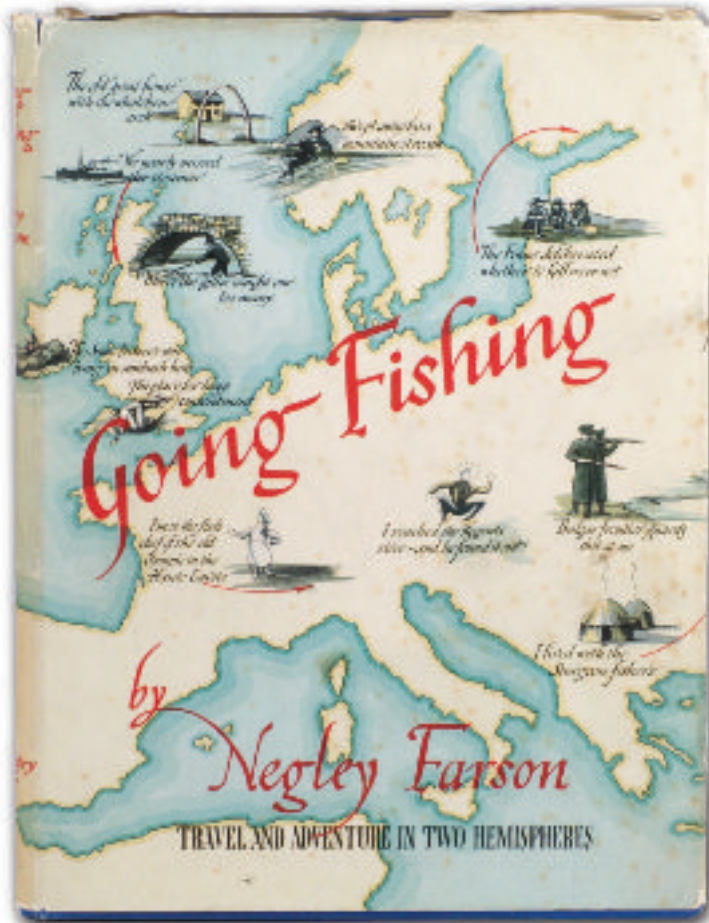
We live in a world of mass-produced goods; fine handmade tools are rarer all the time. Quality bamboo rods are still being made, but there will be no more Paynes or Leonards. The last impeccably smooth fly reel by the late Stanley Bogdan is out in the world somewhere, probably in a safe rather than on a reel seat.

Yet the same love and skill these craftspeople exhibited lives in many a fishing essay, and we can ramble through those words again and again. Blood, sweat, tears, and time, invisible to readers, go into every book. A writer shapes sentences as a rod maker uses his planer on bamboo, sculpting again and again until satisfied. He wakes up at night to scribble down an idea before it's gone, then does it again, just as he is about to fall back to sleep. Then again. The art thereby composed magically awakens memories of the reader's own angling adventures.

The fact that essayists haven't found as much food for thought in the game of golf despite its popularity tells us something. Both pastimes are games with arbitrary rules, but in fly fishing the brain and all of our senses (vision espe-

cially) are on full alert, just as if dinner tonight is dependent on our survival skills the way it was ten thousand years ago. That there are many more reflective hunting books than golf books also comes as no surprise. Games are at best an imitation of life and death; outdoor sports are the real thing. Some of us still hunger for the real thing. Those 20,000-year-old cave paintings in Lascaux, France, primarily of large game, are evidence that our ancestors told each other the same stories we now share via electronic words. And over the centuries, a gentle stream with rising trout, overhung with willows and sycamores, has been the site for many a serendipitous insight about our life on earth.

The library in my study takes up most of a wall. It's a familiar landscape to me,



Negley Farson's *Going Fishing* is a prized part of my angling habitat.

full of well-worn trails I can wander through again and again. Those volumes (which once were trees) carry me back to my gentle waters—sometimes I need only to look over at the rows of spines.

My fly-fishing library includes how-to books, where-to books, stories, and essay collections—what academics now call creative nonfiction. The best of the how-and-where books teach skills and techniques with engaging accounts and anecdotes. Ray Bergman's *Trout* comes to mind, along with Art Flick's *Streamside Guide*, as ones that supported my initial recognition of what was going on as I stood in a river with a chestnut brown Fenwick fiberglass 6-weight.

The great writers, though, take it a step further. They strike a balance between the mind and the river (or the sea), and in the process the reader too is carried, consciously or otherwise, to a place of stillness and insight. A good angling story is not just about fish behavior; it's about human behavior, in ways that we can relate to. It takes us on a familiar quest. Thus some books become a treasured part of one's life, particular tomes dependent on one's generation. Tom McGuane's *The Longest Silence* and Ted Leeson's elegant works take up where Dana Lamb

and Norman Maclean left off. John Gierach follows in the footsteps of Robert Traver, Nick Lyons, and Sparse Grey Hackle. If you've followed me to this point, you probably already know and cherish these men and their writings.

In the introduction (he called it a "statement") of his 1942 book *Going Fishing*, Negley Farson said something about flies that holds true for literature as well: "What I do know are a couple of dozen old reliables, and I think I know where and how to use them. As time goes on, I shall add others to this coterie, when I've found them useful." From a few strong roots, one's bookshelf grows throughout life with meaningful narratives, branches linking them all to each other and to the reader's own experience. Although he's a perfect example of a terrific fishing author, Farson has almost slipped through the cracks. *Going Fishing* was his only piscatorial book, yet he was a decorated foreign journalist who met Gandhi and Hitler, and was in Petrograd the day the Russian Revolution broke out. His astonishing life and charming tales were appreciated by another famed fisher/writer, Ernest Schwiebert. Ernie once remarked after a presentation of his that *Going Fishing* remained his favorite

angling book, which surprised and warmed the heart of this angler—my father brought the volume home for me from a church tag sale.

The "nature" book club I recently joined functions on a drastically slower schedule than I find comfortable: one book a month. I read most books the way I trout fish: play them fast, appreciate them, and release them quickly. The strike, the first real contact, can be thrilling. If it'll be a serious encounter, it's apparent in the introduction or the first chapter. If it's a small and weak "hatchery" book, it gives up fast, and I unhook it quickly (skim through it or take it right back to the library). I can then proceed to a better opportunity without wasting time. In a good month, I catch and release quite a few books. A powerful one, a wild one, will take me deep, pull me all around, and I'll come out of the experience gratified. What was imparted will have enriched my life. Still, I move on right away, looking for the next one. It can't be relived (not immediately), but something worthy stays behind; I can only cast about for the next meaningful encounter, one that recharges my awareness. The most valuable book, like the most valuable fish, forces me to slow down and pay attention, knowing that if I don't, I may miss something significant.

The exercise we call nature writing is about human perception. A clever writer directs attention not only to awareness of nature, but awareness of how we interpret and misinterpret that reality through our own psychology, culture, and spirituality. From Rousseau to Thoreau, contemplative writers have tried to see the world both as it is and as it appears (yes, sometimes darkly) through the glass of the mind. I'd suggest that outdoor sporting literature, and especially that of fly fishing, inhabits the same ecosystem, and because of its comprehension of the human as a predatory animal, focuses even more clearly on the relationship between man and the planet. We learn consequential things by watching and studying the natural world. We learn even more by interacting with it—and within it. Good fishing books retell us something valuable.

There is a vast library of fly-fishing books out there. Going as far back as 1496 with Dame Juliana Berners's *A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, they are part of a thoughtful angler's habitat. Negley Farson remains a prized part of mine. Bound and tangled together over centuries, fishing books echo the fungal rhizomes that mysteriously connect trees by their roots and share nourishment, forming a forest of riches for us anglers to wander in during the off-season.





Andrew Herd and Paul Schullery Named 2019 Austin Hogan Award Recipients

Writers Andrew Herd and Paul Schullery have been named co-recipients for the museum’s 2019 Austin Hogan Award for their two-part article, “The Oldest Flies.” The award, which recognizes exemplary contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*, was established in 1985 to honor the memory of Austin Hogan, who founded the museum’s journal in 1974.

Samantha Pitcher



The awards given to Andrew Herd and Paul Schullery, each of which features an illustration by the award’s namesake, Austin S. Hogan.

“The Oldest Flies” gives a thorough history of the museum’s Harris collection, which, as far as anyone knows, contains the oldest flies in existence. “Part I: In Which the Extraordinary Harris Fly Collection’s Origins Are Finally Discovered” appeared in the Winter 2019 issue; “Part II: In Which the Harris Flies Are Sorted and Replicated” appeared in Spring 2019.

Both gentlemen are authors of multiple books and among today’s most respected fly-fishing historians. They worked on the Harris flies project long distance: Herd lives in County Durham in England; Schullery in Montana in the United States.

Both have been regular contributors to the *American Fly Fisher*, which Schullery edited from 1977 to 1982 while serving as the museum’s first executive director.

Recent Donations to the Collection

Robert DeMott of Athens, Ohio, donated a collection of documents, notes, and ephemera related to Gordon M. Wickstrom and an L.L. Bean fishing vest that belonged to Nick Lyons. James E. Bacon of Redding, Connecticut, gave us a copy of his book, *Fishing Upstream: The Balsam Lake Club’s Adventurous History* (Indie Author Books, 2019).

Graydon R. Hilyard of Ashland, Massachusetts, brought us an original photograph of Polly Rosborough posing with game. And **Rod Crossman** of Marion, Indiana, donated his original painting, *Changing Flies*. It was the featured illustration for Jimmy Watts’s 2019 Traver Award–winning essay, “A Wet World that Burns,” which was published in the Spring 2020 issue of this journal.

Upcoming Events

As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, events will take place virtually on amff.org unless otherwise noted.

August 8
13th Annual Fly-Fishing Festival

September 12
Members-Only Event: AMFF Confidential

October (TBD)
Annual Members Meeting

October 15
2020 Heritage Event
The Heritage of Fly Fishing: A Sport for the Ages

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

CONTRIBUTORS

Tim Belknap and his wife, Susan, live in upstate New York in the orchard country near Lake Ontario. Lately Tim has been working on a documentary about a bush pilot. He finds trout streams ideal for social distancing, and, for the time being, his ministry as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is on remote (Zoom, etc.). Two beagles, Flash and Kate, round out the family, plus visiting celebrity Kara, their eight-year-old granddaughter.

Susan Belknap



Barbara Herd, MD, FRCP

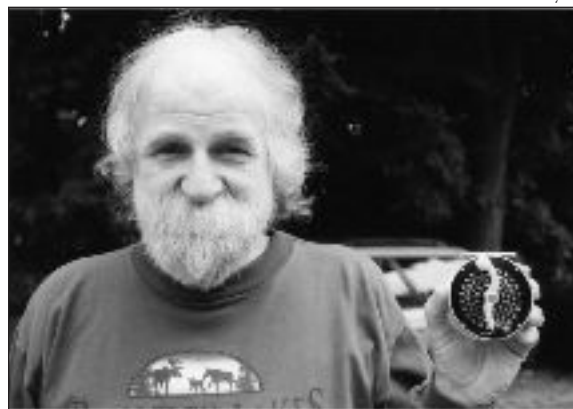


Andrew Herd trained to become a fishing bum, but made a mess of his career path and had to become a physician instead, qualifying at the Middlesex Hospital, London, in 1982 at the age of twenty-two. After a varied career in medicine, which included a spell as the McIndoe Research Fellow at the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, he took one of the best decisions he ever made, which was to marry Dr. Barbara Holder and settle in County Durham, where he was a family practitioner until his retirement.

Herd has published many books, including his *History of Fly Fishing* trilogy (available from the Medlar Press), and was the executive editor of *Waterlog* magazine. His most recently published work is *The Flyfishers*, a history of the Flyfishers' Club of London, which appeared in 2019, and he is working on *The Story of the Salmon Fly*, an illustrated history of the salmon fly up to 1867, which will be published by the Medlar Press this year.

Graydon R. Hilyard (1944–2020) lived in Ashland, Massachusetts. He was the author of three fly-fishing histories: *Bogdan* (Frank Amato Publications, 2006) and, with his co-author and son, the fly tier Leslie K. Hilyard, *Carrie G. Stevens: Maker of Rangeley Favorite Trout & Salmon Flies* and *Herbert L. Welch: Black Ghosts and Art in a Maine Guide's Wilderness* (Stackpole Books, 2000 and 2018). His previous contributions to this journal included "Bogdan: Milestones" (Spring 2007), "Tracking Shang" (Fall 2009), and "Tracking Atwood" (Winter 2013); and, with Leslie K. Hilyard, "Carrie Stevens: A Family History" (Winter 2000) and "Carrie Stevens: A Fly Tyer's Progress" (Spring 2002). He also wrote our memorial piece for Stanley E. Bogdan (Summer 2011). "The Rangeley Lakes: A Sinner's Paradise" (page 8), the last piece we worked on together, is a fine example of Hilyard bringing his unique voice to the telling of the tale.

Leslie K. Hilyard



John Preston

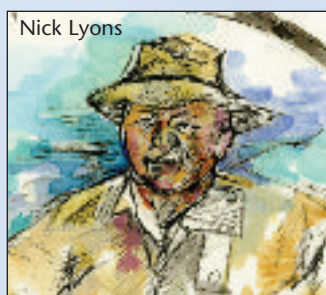


George Jacobi is an artist, outdoor writer, and musician who has fly fished since the 1970s. His first published article was probably "Connecticut's Willimantic" in *Fly Fisherman* (March 1980). Jacobi's solo art shows include one at the D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts, and his photorealistic pencil drawings won first prize at the Slater Museum in Norwich, Connecticut. In 2016 he spent three and a half months as a volunteer at Grand Canyon National Park writing a blog, which remains on the park website and its social media outlets. His 2019 project was to curate a history exhibit for the University of Connecticut Archives and Special Collections, "Dayglo and Napalm," about his own student unrest years of the late 1960s.

Jacobi is retired from a career spent mostly in the wholesale fishing-tackle industry, which enabled a lot of time on rivers, beaches, and jetties. Those early years often found him in the Catskills, on the Batten Kill, and, in particular, on the Housatonic in its prime. Jacobi lives in eastern Connecticut and continues to be involved in local conservation organizations while fly fishing from Martha's Vineyard to Yellowstone National Park.

We invite you to join us online for our 2020 Heritage Event *The Heritage of Fly Fishing: A Sport for the Ages*

October 15, 2020 • 8 P.M. EST



Featuring a tour of our new exhibit, *Reflections: The Angler and Nature in Art*, highlights of some favorite items from our collection, and interviews with fly-fishing luminaries, including:

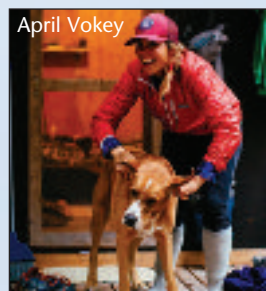
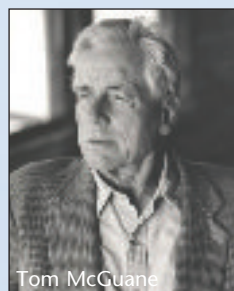
Rachel Finn
Jim Klug
Pete Kutzer

Nick Lyons
Tom McGuane
Flip Pallot

James Prosek
Robert Rubin
April Vokey

There will also be an online auction with an introduction from Nick Dawes, Senior Vice President, Special Collections, Heritage Auctions New York.

We are so excited to be able to share this event—usually held in annually in New York City—with all of our members and supporters around the globe. For more information, please e-mail amff@amff.org.



AMFF in the Time of Corona

Wanda Robinson



Sarah Foster, with daughter Lila and son Lain, enjoying their favorite section of the Batten Kill in Shushan, New York.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING is proud of how quickly and seriously our team has reacted to the ever-changing COVID-19 situation. We have continually been ramping up our social media and digital outreach, so adapting during these unprecedented times seemed almost natural. We're reminded how fortunate we are to have a team of ambassadors who not only stand behind the museum's mission, but advocate for the sport in ways that engage people across the globe. These ambassadors have stepped up with live streaming videos, fly-tying demos, social media takeovers, and blog posts as ways to bring relevant and interesting content to the world of anglers as we all shelter in place. Stay-at-home orders have also given many people the opportunity to sift through their archives, resulting in a surge of queries for AMFF. We've enjoyed connecting with so many of our members and supporters, and are thankful for the opportunity to serve as the stewards of fly-fishing history.

We have been eager to open our newest exhibition, *Reflections: The Angler and Nature in Art*, which features works from our Trophy Art Collection. Pieces have been carefully selected to showcase the collection's diversity and highlight perspectives that reflect the angler's experience. The works are supported with artifacts from our permanent collection and take you on a curated and chronological journey:

- Restoration and Sense of Place in the Nineteenth Century
- Identity in the Early Twentieth Century
- Autonomy and Purpose in the Mid-Twentieth Century
- Harmony in the Late-Twentieth and Early-Twenty-First Century

Because we had to postpone the exhibit's physical opening, we are thrilled to be able share highlights online (<https://www.amff.org/portfolio/reflections-angler-nature-art/>). We are also pivoting our annual festival to a virtual event and trust that the expanded reach will help spread the passion for fly fishing. Join us August 8 at [amff.org](https://www.amff.org), [#amffinthewild](https://twitter.com/amffinthewild), and [@flyfishmuseum](https://twitter.com/flyfishmuseum).

My three-year-old daughter stares with wonder at the characters in her favorite children's book. "Why are they not wearing masks, Momma?" And that was one more affirmation that spring of 2020 has changed us—all of us—in one way or another. While some of these changes have been unexpected, scary, and uncomfortable, others have been inspiring. I hope you move forward with a deepened desire to be outside, be it on a river, a lake, or saltwater flats. Go ahead, surrender to your innate urge to connect with nature. You won't be sorry.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Catch and Release the Spirit of Fly Fishing!

4070 Main Street • PO Box 42
Manchester, Vermont 05254
Tel: (802) 362-3300 • Fax: (802) 362-3308
E-MAIL: amff@amff.org
WEBSITE: www.amff.org

MISSION

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

The museum provides public programs to fulfill its educational mission, including exhibitions, publications, gallery programs, and special events. Research services are available for members, visiting scholars, students, educational organizations, and writers. Contact amff@amff.org to schedule a visit.

VOLUNTEER

Throughout the year, the museum needs volunteers to help with programs, special projects, events, and administrative tasks. You do not have to be an angler to enjoy working with us! Contact Samantha Pitcher at spitcher@amff.org to tell us how we would benefit from your skills and talents.

SUPPORT

The American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. If you wish to contribute funding to a specific program, donate an item for fund-raising purposes, or place an advertisement in this journal, contact Sarah Foster at sfoster@amff.org. We encourage you to give the museum consideration when planning for gifts, bequests, and memorials.

JOIN

Membership Dues (per annum)

Patron	\$1,000
Sustainer	\$500
Contributor	\$250
Benefactor	\$100
Associate	\$50

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher*; unlimited visits for your entire family to museum exhibitions, gallery programs, and special events; access to our 7,000-volume angling reference library; and a discount on all items sold by the museum on its website and inside the museum store, the Brookside Angler. To join, please contact Samantha Pitcher at spitcher@amff.org.

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

