The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

FALL 2024 VOLUME 50 NUMBER 4

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The *American Fly Fisher* has been published in fifty volumes over fifty-one years. That alone is impressive, but perhaps even more so is this: today's journal team has been working together for twenty years.

Copy Editor Sarah May Clarkson, who now lives in Idaho, was a local when she first appeared on the masthead in Spring 1991 and had just moved to Pennsylvania when I arrived in Fall 1995. Art Director Sara Wilcox began work at the museum in 1998 as special projects coordinator, then took over as the journal's art director with the Winter 2005 issue. The three of us have just completed twenty volumes—eighty issues!—together, and we've never all been in the same room. In fact, Sarah and Sara have never met in person.

Even though we haven't managed simultaneous proximity, we're all three part of maintaining physical spaces for fly-fishing history: a print journal with pages to turn, a museum with real walls. We're proud of that.

As volume 50 draws to a close, we're celebrating with reprints of a few articles from the 1970s. Our first index issue (vol. 5, no. 4) included a museum history written to "concentrate on the progress of the institution, to indulge in a naming of names." It's a fascinating read, and I'm struck by how the early challenges of becoming a museum are basically the same as remaining one. (You'll see that a few early players never managed to get themselves into the same room either.) "Every Day Was Christmas: An Informal History of the Museum of American Fly Fishing" begins on page 2. It's joyful.

It's followed immediately by two articles from Volume 6 about pieces in the museum's collection: "The Ray Bergman Wet Flies" (page 8) and "An Extraordinary Acquisition: The Daniel Webster Rod" (page 10). These reprints don't carry bylines, but all were written by then–Executive Director *and* Editor Paul Schullery (a true AMFF hero!), acknowledged now by name on our contributors page.

While Editor Schullery was likely working on Volume 6's summer number in 1979, Christopher Pibus was hitchhiking from Montreal to his usual Ausable River haunts, where he had an unusual adventure. Attend the tale of "Green Despair" on page 18.

Early in *A River Runs Through It*—that now-classic published just as this journal began its third volume—the Reverend Maclean tells his sons that Izaak Walton "is not a respectable writer. He was an Episcopalian and a bait fisherman." Timothy Schilling, in response, notes, "We may pass over Maclean's slam of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* in silence . . . seeing it merely as a humorous aside, but a close reading of Walton's book suggests that Maclean in fact slyly pays homage to his seventeenth-century brother angler." In "Norman Maclean and Izaak Walton: 'Brothers of the Angle'" (page 20), Schilling offers up a glimpse of how Maclean goes about this.

Looking for more from our collection? Check out Gallery on page 13, Curator Jim Schottenham's "George Paddock's Amateur Anglers' Outfit." And continuing his series of flies and tying traditions, Scott Biron presents Carrie Stevens's Gray Ghost (page 23).

It feels as if museum staff have been busy with nonstop events of late, including our annual Fly-Fishing Festival (page 26) and presentation of the 2024 Heritage Award to the Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation (page 14). This museum may be in its fifties, but it's certainly not slowing down.

Kathleen Achor
Editor

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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.

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ON THE COVER: *A Wheatley fly box with flies used by Ray Bergman, circa late 1940s. Gift of Joseph Weise. AMFF Permanent Collection. 1978.005.001.*

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.

Reprinted from the Fall 1978 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* (vol. 5, no. 4).

The Museum as it appeared in 1970. Since this photograph was taken, an additional room has been added to the front, and the entrance is now on the side.

Every Day Was Christmas

An Informal History of The Museum of American Fly Fishing

by the Editors

The story of The Museum of American Fly Fishing has been told regularly over the past few years. Articles and features have appeared in many periodicals, including THE FLYFISHER, TROUT, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, AND FLY FISHERMAN, and in countless newspapers. These articles usually introduced the Museum and its work, and mentioned a few highlights of the collection. The following article is different in that it will highlight events and individuals rather than objects. The Museum magazine will continue to feature the Museum's many treasures in future issues, so it seems more appropriate here to concentrate on the progress of the institution, to indulge in a naming of names, as it were. It would hardly be possible to mention all those who have contributed to the Museum's phenomenal growth and success, but neither should we neglect our own history. Though only ten years old, the Museum has been working long enough preserving our angling heritage to create a heritage of its own.

HISTORIANS have an embarrassing tendency to study themselves. As events and ideas are repeatedly reinterpreted by each new generation of historical scholars, more and more scholarship is devoted to the origins of earlier interpretations, so that after a while it is possible to find historians who specialize in nothing broader than the study of earlier historians, or even historian. It is a necessary process, but it often leaves the specialist open to ridicule; the actual study of the past has been replaced by the study of other studiers. Major historians take on great significance in the world of scholarship. Frederick Jackson Turner, historian of the American Frontier, recognized the situation years ago, and among his papers were found helpful notes to his biographer, whoever that person might turn out to be. Jackson didn't know, but he knew his own place in scholarship well enough to know there would be one. The Museum of American Fly Fishing is devoted to preserving and studying the history of American angling, but it differs from many historical projects in that the people who support it, and who define its direction, are the people whose story it is preserving. There is no gap here between the studier and the studied. They are the same. As technological and cultural history, American Angling History contains very few abstractions, and surprising vitality. What seems most sur-

prising, in looking back, is that the Museum did not happen even sooner than it did.

Relatively few institutions are fortunate enough to be able to trace their origin to the idea of a single person. The Museum can, and the person is Hermann Kessler. In 1963 Hermann, then Art Director for *Field and Stream* magazine, spent several weekends in Manchester with his wife Helen Shaw researching an article on early fishing tackle. He met with Dick Finlay and D. C. Corkran of the Orvis Company, and examined the collection of Orvis memorabilia then being stored in the old Orvis factory. Out of this examination came an article in his magazine, written by Harold Blaisdell, "Americana of Angling" (May, 1964). Something much more important also came of it, though, for Hermann had a bigger idea, which he presented to Leigh Perkins, who became President of Orvis in 1965:

> The idea of a museum was presented to Leigh Perkins by me in the bar of the Williams Club in New York City the night Wes Jordan presented for sale, for the first time, a limited edition of the "Theodore Gordon Brushy Bank Fly Rod." The sale was limited to that evening only to members of the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers (TGF) in good standing.
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> I do not know whether Leigh Perkins still has that rod, but it was a sight to see. (Therein lies still another story. Naturally the club was in an uproar, albeit enthusiastically appreciative, and all Wes Jordan kept mumbling to me was what would his new boss, Leigh Perkins, say when he saw this 10-foot rod with a corkscrew taper and not a straight stretch in it!)
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> After that meeting, down in the bar, I offered my idea for a museum to Perkins. Present at the table were Lee Wulff, Helen Shaw, Richard Grossenbach, Wes Jordan and some other members of TGF.
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> Six months or so later, Leigh came back to me and showed an interest in my developing the museum idea. Months later, after much correspondence and many phone calls, a meeting was called, at which time a board of trustees was formed. At this first meeting, Leigh suggested that a president should be chosen.
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> It was Arnold Gingrich, bless him, who reminded Leigh that inasmuch as the museum idea was presented to him by me, I should be the first president.
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> And so it was ordained. I am still pleased about it.

In the summer of 1967 the Museum first opened its doors to the public, housed in a much smaller version of its present space off one end of the Orvis showroom in Manchester. Though still an informal exhibit, lines were drawn between commercial displays and historical exhibits, so that when one entered the museum rooms one knew that this was no longer a store, and that it sold history, not goods.

In order to increase and diversify the collection (which, at first, contained primarily Orvis gear), appeals were made in various magazines and newsletters, so that quickly the Museum exhibits became truly representative. In 1968 the Museum was incorporated, and shortly afterwards, in the same year, was granted tax-exempt status as a non-profit educational institution. Since then it has not been an "Orvis Museum" either in constitution or in exhibit, and from an examination of the treasures on exhibit one would not know if its landlord was Orvis, Leonard, or any of countless other fishing tackle manufacturers of past and present. By 1969 the original board of trustees (pictured) was formed and the sport of fly fishing at last had its own historical institution.

There is no end for the need for money. The Museum was fortunate in its infancy to have the generous support of Ogden Pleissner, one of America's foremost outdoor artists. Ogden's print "The Lye Brook Pool" sold well for us and brought in over $17,000 . . . a substantial start for the new Museum.

Of course the most exciting part of the story, and the part that so much space has been devoted to in this magazine, is the continual flow of contributions. The donations have not stopped since those first appeals, and every mail brings new surprises. Kenneth Cameron, who served as Museum Registrar in the early 1970's, recalls the mood of those early efforts to gather material:

> Perhaps surprisingly — for somebody who became an enthusiastic supporter of the Museum — my first impression of it was one of acute disappointment. I had come over from the Adirondacks to look for research materials in angling history, knowing only that the Museum existed; this was 1969, and I had no idea that it was very new, hardly more than an egg. Dick Finlay was the Registrar then and he took me around. There were some books in two of the cases (the entire library, I believe) and a few mounted rods and flies, and of course the Chicago Exposition display, but it was not quite the noble institution I had ignorantly expected. Later, I got in touch with somebody named Austin Hogan, whose name had begun to crop up in my research. It was Austin, I am sure, who first suggested to me that writing the entire history of angling in the Western world might be more than a six-month's project. That we became friends and then co-workers is a credit to his patience and, perhaps, to my boundless lack of knowledge, for we spent many, many days and evenings talking about the history he knew so well.
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> I suppose that my warmest memories of the Museum will always be of opening things . . . rod cases, packages, fly books, letters. I became a consultant about 1972, ignorant as I was, and took part in a three-day orgy of rod and reel identification with Dick and Austin and Martin Keane. What a revelation! To touch the things one had only read about . . . the thrill of those moments never wears off. Later, when I was Registrar in my turn, I was jealous of every new arrival, wanting to open it, savor it, learn from it. I was paid to do that job, but I would have done it for free. Every day was Christmas at the Museum. I would drive up from my home north of Boston for a week every month. The energy crisis caught me up there and I thought I'd never make it home — long lines in the dark, cold mornings at the Mobil station in the middle of Manchester. But we survived that, and gasoline became plentiful again; by then, the Museum was flourishing, and Leigh and Austin and Arnie were already beginning the new room for the Museum.
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> Austin and I, and then the two of us and Dave Ledlie, made the transfer from the Museum down to the storage rooms in the old factory. That move

Photo by Hermann Kessler

The original Board of Trustees of the Museum, 1970. First row, from left: Dick Finlay, D. Clarke Corkran, Alvin Grove, Ted Rogowski, and Wes Jordan. Second row, from left: Milford K. Smith, Hermann Kessler, Clayton Shappy, Leigh Perkins, Donald DuBois, and Capt. Raymond Kotrla. Third row, from left, Austin Hogan, Ben Schley, Jane Gingrich, Arnold Gingrich, and Harry Darbee. Not pictured are Warren Shepard and Gene Anderegg.

was a miracle back then — to have work space at last: We had an old rod-varnishing bench from the Orvis Company, and a couple of old rod racks (still in use, perhaps), and we were able to put things into a crude sort of order for the first time. I often wondered how Dick Finlay had ever kept his sanity, trying to make sense of the collections with no storage space and no work space. But he did, somehow. The Museum has been most fortunate in its coincidences — the right people at the right time, each in its proper rhythm. Twenty years from now, I'm sure, the place will be bigger, grander, glossier, far more a "proper" Museum, and the staff then will wonder how anybody ever got any work done now, as I sometimes wonder how the very first staff ever did. But, each thing comes in its season. The Museum, happily, is an organism; it grows, adapts, changes. And if I were to walk into it now, in all my decade-old ignorance and look for research materials, I would find them, so fast has it grown. We should all be proud of it.

The Joe Brooks Memorial Exhibit features one of his favorite rods, as well as his hat, vest, and a number of personally tied flies.

The behind-the-scenes work of the Museum has always been the most challenging and, in many ways, the most fascinating. Most of it has been done by volunteer and part-time help, in an almost imponderable contribution to the health and welfare of the organization. The "Arnie" referred to is Arnie Abramson, an Orvis craftsman who has managed to squeeze into his busy days countless tasks, from building new showcases to framing historical artwork to designing special shipping crates for rare and delicate treasures. And while we're naming the "backstage" museum staff, there are others who must not be neglected. An ever-increasing amount of secretarial work (and not a few administrative duties) were handled by Millie Delaney and later by Laura Towslee, both employees of Orvis who worked part-time for the Museum. Registrar duties — a critical function in the organization and preservation of collections — have been handled by Dick Finlay (now an Advertising Manager for *Fly Fisherman*), Ken Cameron, and Dave Ledlie. Special attention has been paid to the various branches of the library, and to compiling a usable card catalogue for them, by Romi Perkins, Kay Brodney, and Ruth Upson. And overseeing all of them, either in the thick of the fray or from an "Administrative position" in the Workroom's ancient rocking chair, has been Austin Hogan.

Austin became involved with the Museum just shortly after it first opened, and remained its directing force and historical conscience until it expanded its programs in 1978. His contributions were recently outlined in the Museum magazine (Spring, 1978) as the reasons he was given the Arnold Gingrich Award. They are worth repeating. For several very critical years, Austin provided the necessary continuity to keep things running. His vast expertise and reputation as an angling scholar gave the Museum's cause added credibility, and his willingness to devote weeks of his own time often made the difference between success and failure. It was, in fact, under Austin's reign as Curator that

The Museum Catalog, 1973

the Museum began to make active contributions to the historical scholarship of American Angling History.

Membership in the Museum became available in 1971, through a series of advertisements, but as with most non-profit organizations there was need for additional enticements to encourage the potential member to make the investment. The answer was obviously publications. At first there were information brochures, but these were not enough and membership did not increase significantly until 1973, when two landmark volumes appeared. The first was the Museums *Acquisitions Catalogue,* 1969-1973, a soft-cover 24-page book that listed the Museum objects contributed to that date. It contained Austin Hogan's important essay, "An Introduction to the History of Fly Fishing in America," a thoroughly documented examination of the origins of our sport. The catalogue section was compiled by Dick Finlay, and contained "only the more notable features of the collection." Even at that date a complete listing would have been too large for practical publishing. The *Catalogue* was offered to new members, at a time when there was a shortage of such historical information for them. It was, and still is, an important part of American Angling Literature.

The same year there appeared another Austin Hogan work, *American Sporting Periodicals of Angling Interest: A Selected Check List and Guide.* The title left much unsaid. Besides its valuable reference section, with a checklist and directory to help serious students of fishing history, the book (128 pages) contains some equally useful supplements, including a lengthy list of angling writer pseudonyms, a detailed discussion of the often confusing geneology of early angling periodicals, and excerpts from more than a dozen significant early angling works.

1974 marked the beginning of the Museum's most ambitious publication project, its quarterly magazine *The American Fly Fisher.* Austin Hogan was recruited as editor, adding another voluntary duty to his list. The first issue set the pattern that is still maintained; a mixture of past and present, vintage remembrance and modern research. It contained, in its first two numbers (at 24 pages each), an assortment of historically significant reprints of early articles (including one by Theodore Gordon), and modern articles by some of our leading angling authorities; Austin Hogan, Ken Cameron, Martin Keane, George Grant, Steve Raymond, "Pal" Alexander, and John Orrelle among them. In an ever more collectible-conscious world the first numbers of *The American Fly Fisher* are already hard-sought items. The exhaustive index in the present number is an affirmation of the importance and durability of what the magazine has accomplished for fly fishing. It is a reference work of enormous scope. And it is good entertainment, a refreshing and noncommercial break from the sporting magazines we are accustomed to. With Austin as Editor and Anne Secor as Art Director, the Museum produced the quality periodical so necessary to successful membership recruitment.

1974 heralded the coming of another major figure in the angling world to the forefront of the Museum's cause. In September, Trustee Arnold Gingrich was elected President of the Museum, replacing Capt. Ray Kotrla (Rtd. USN), who had served for more than two years (and who continues to do much important behind-the-scenes work for the Museum). Arnold took office and held it until his death in 1976,

A 1972 symposium group studies the Museum's growing collection of rods. Pictured, from the left, are Arthur Walker, Ben Upson, Martin Keane, Dick Finlay, and Ken Cameron.

One of the Museum's most valued historical items, the fly rod and reel of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

contributing his knowhow, erudition, and good name to the cause in many ways.

The challenge for Arnold, as for all the Museum Officers before and since, was money; there never seems to be enough of it. Membership dues do little more than cover the cost of producing the magazine. Other donations have come with gratifying regularity from a few generous individuals. This may seem like a precarious arrangement, but it is a very common one in the world of museums and of non-profit organizations. Increasing membership of course increases public visibility of the Museum, which increases likelihood of additional donations. Museum publicity is important for the sake of alerting anglers to our work, but it is equally important for telling them of our financial needs. In publicity we have been faithfully assisted by Don Zahner, Museum Trustee and Editor of *Fly Fisherman,* and by several editors of *The Flyfisher,* the publication of the Federation of Fly Fishermen. Col. Henry Siegel, of The Angler's and Shooter's Bookshelf, has included Museum brochures in his catalogue mailings, and many of the Trustees and members have assisted in public relations as their resources allowed. This is the tough side of museum work; it gets right down to having people willing to go out there and "rassle anyone in the crowd for five dollars," as Arnold once put it. It will never be easy, but it has been done for ten years, and we are getting better at it. We have expanded our investigations of funding sources, and are taking other routes, such as additional fundraising auctions. Perhaps the most disappointing part of this effort, from the viewpoint of this little history of the Museum, is that those most successful in obtaining funds, and those most generous in providing funds, prefer to go unmentioned. We can at least thank them here.

Museum publicity has also been aimed at making the Museum a truly national institution. Though the "Cradle of Civilization" for American Angling is in the east, anglers in all parts of the country are fascinated by their past. The Museum recognizes this; it is obvious from the geographical distribution of the subjects of articles in *The American Fly Fisher.* It is also obvious from the number of western items on exhibit in the Museum. Having the Museum located in any one place is bound to leave someone out, though, and the problem was well summed up by Steve Raymond, our western Vice President. While working as Editor of *The Flyfisher,* Steve got to know Austin Hogan, who acted as an unofficial eastern editor for that magazine:

> As time went on, Austin and I began to correspond more and more frequently and he told me about his work with the Museum. I expressed interest in what he was doing, became a Museum member and scrounged up a few items of interest to lend a little West Coast representation to the Museum's displays. Then one day, much to my surprise, Austin told me he was nominating me to a trustee's position with the Museum. But that surprise was not nearly so great as the one that came a couple of years later when he told me I was being nominated for vice president! Despite my protest that a vice president 3,000 miles removed from the scene of action couldn't be much help, Austin insisted there were some things that I could do — and so now I am Vice President of the Museum.
>
> Perhaps the strangest part of this story is that even after all this time, Austin and I have never

A photograph from the 1890's, from the Museum Collection. Such pictures tantalize the collector, who can never know for sure what those cases held, or when he may come across a similar cache gathering dust in some forgotten closet.

Photo by Sid Neff

An early picture of the Museum Exhibit Rooms, about 1970. The windows have since been closed and covered, to improve light control.

met one another in person. But I feel I know him well through our lengthy and continuing correspondence, and feel grateful for the privilege.

Being an absentee vice president still isn't easy. It's difficult to sell the concept of the Museum to Pacific Northwest fly fishermen — not only because the Museum is so far away, but also because fly fishing still is a relatively recent phenomenon on the West Coast and most people have not yet learned to think of it in historical terms. Many of our pioneers are still alive and still contributing, and we are fortunate for that. But it also places upon us a special responsibility to ensure that the fruits of their talents and experience are not lost. I think we have made good progress, both in recruiting new members and in taking steps to preserve some of the angling history of the area as it develops. But much remains to be done.

And there is one other thing I would like very much to do: Shake hands with Austin Hogan.

Steve's support and interest *has* made a difference, his own feelings notwithstanding, and the Museum has repeatedly benefitted from its involvement with the Federation of Fly Fishermen. Most recently they have undertaken the duplication and distribution of our new slide program. Another western Trustee is Charles Brooks. Charlie also became involved with the Museum through Austin Hogan:

> In the early seventies, he was much occupied with the Museum, got me to become a member, write some articles for it — which I enjoyed doing — and finally, with great skill, persuasion and pure artistry, conned me into making a horsehair fly line for it.
>
> It took several attempts before I came up with a usable line, which I also took out and fished. It was during this that I developed a hell of a lot of respect for those old boys of Cotton's day, and began to see what a legacy they had left us, and also to see what the Museum was trying to preserve. Not just artifacts but memories, history and continuity of thought. I think that this is what that sly old fox had in mind all the time.
>
> Occasionally he sends me a technical piece that goes over my head like a flock of sparrows. I keep reminding him that I'm just a high school graduate and not a PhD, but he brushes aside such inane protestations and fires off another broadside at the Madison Avenue outdoor magazines and types, and acidly inquires if I read anything serious. I assure him I do — his letters.

Meanwhile, back at the Museum, things continued to happen. Besides the customary arrivals of incredible treasures

The Arnold Gingrich Memorial Exhibit, including rods by Pezon et Michel and Edwards.

(a Kosmic here, a Gillum there . . .), special exhibits were arranged. One featured the stunning photography of westerner Ralph Wahl (a Museum Trustee), another exhibited the various crafts and arts of Milton Weiler. A traveling exhibit was prepared and proved too difficult to handle, but cooperation with several museums, in loans and information exchange, broadened the research base of the Museum. The Annual Meeting, first held in the fall, and, after 1976, in the spring, became a popular and anticipated tradition. Speakers included Dermot Wilson, Vincent Marinaro, Don Zahner, Dana Lamb, and Arnold Gingrich. In 1976 an auction was added to the agenda, and has proved to be a major fund-raiser. In 1977 a series of awards, for services rendered to the work of the Museum, were initiated, so that now the Annual Meeting of the Museum has all the trappings and traditions (as well as the celebration and fellowship) appropriate to its heritage.

And the gifts kept coming. The original catalogue was never updated; instead new acquisitions have been listed in the Museum magazine from time to time. But growth, as much as it has been encouraged and welcomed, is a mixed blessing. In 1977 the Officers of the Museum recognized the need for additional man-hours to keep up with the blossoming collection and handle the growing number of administrative concerns. Advertisements were placed for an executive director, and Paul Schullery, an historian with the National Park Service in Wyoming, was chosen. He began his work in December of 1977.

In the Spring of 1978 health problems caused Austin Hogan to also step down from his position as Editor of *The American Fly Fisher.* This duty was assumed, then, by Paul, with the assistance of David Ledlie, who had worked closely with Austin on the magazine almost from its beginning.

Carl Navarre succeeded Arnold Gingrich as Museum President in 1976, and served two good terms. In 1978 he was replaced by Leon Martuch, former President of Scientific Anglers, and very active both in the fishing tackle industry and in conservation. Leon's presence and his activities as President have already been of great help. His association with the Museum has been seen as another good sign the Museum is not at all an "Orvis Museum." Indeed, within the past year recognition of the Museum's place has been more widespread than ever. For our collections and our various fund-raising functions we have received major contributions of angling equipment from many of the leading tackle firms, including Cortland, Eagle Claw, Garcia, Fenwick, Hardy, Scientific Anglers, and Pflueger to name only a few.

The Museum has come a long way from that table at the Williams Club where the idea was first mentioned. Those sitting at the table probably had no idea at the time how far it would go. But now that we're here, with all our gathered treasures, all our exhibits, and, as well, all the good memories, we can see how much further we have to go. We look forward to scores of small projects, all part of the greater task of recording and preserving our history; from historic interviews to photographic archives. Much, as Steve Raymond says, remains to be done. But we have much to be proud of. The very fact that there is an office, and someone to sit in it and write this history, proves that.

There are many others who should be thanked, but they will have to settle for our gratitude. Some of them customarily have their names listed on the inside cover of the magazine; the officers and trustees. Many others don't even get that small tribute. But all of them are appreciated. The Museum has required patience, it has endured the usual disagreements and failures (after all, we're only fishermen) and the assorted privations that are visited upon any small institution. It will certainly encounter more, just as it will certainly continue to grow. But the Museum is a sure thing. It has arrived. It is a part of the angling world that deserves the best we can give it.

Reprinted from the Summer 1979 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* (vol. 6, no. 3).

The Ray Bergman Wet Flies

Anglers are always interested in what flies their fellow anglers carry; streamside meetings often turn into mini-seminars on fly pattern and theory. Probably even more interesting than the flies our friends carry are the flies carried by acknowledged "experts." More than one generation of American fly fishermen would have been delighted at the opportunity to study the flies preferred and carried by a well-known figure like Ray Bergman. Many of the best-known anglers of the 20th century, including Hewitt, Flick, Cross, and Bergman, were also professional tiers, so it is not all that difficult to locate original flies tied by them. It is another matter, however, to know their own personal preferences. Thanks to Mr. Joe Weise (who has in the past several years donated a number of fascinating Bergman items to the Museum) we can know Ray Bergman's personal favorites, at least when it comes to wet flies.

The box is as Ray last used it, full of his own flies. Mr. Weise suggested that these flies were used by the author of *Trout* on his numerous trips to the west. Judging from the sizes and patterns this seems like a good guess. There is profit and pleasure in studying this collection. Notice the simple worm-patterns, and the clipped deer hair bodies on some flies. Mixed in with traditional wet flies are bucktails and simple chenille-bodied flies, some with leader clippings still attached.

We have in our collection a tracing (also donated by Mr. Weise) made by Ray Bergman of three trout he caught in late September of 1941 in the Firehole River, Wyoming. The fish were 17, 17-3/8, and 18 inches long, with a total weight of 7-1/2 pounds. Written on the edge of the large brown sheet is the following note: "Caught 13 of same size – lost one 4-1/2 at Biscuit Pool – held him for a time but he went in the log – jumped three times so know his size fairly well." It is easy to imagine the angler, shivering in the "snow squalls" he noted in another margin of the tracing, casting through the heavy mist that gathers along the geyser-fed river. In the cold and in the excitement of the jumping trout he may have fumbled with this fly box as he chose another fly to replace the one the 4-1/2 pounder took with him. Through such imaginings, as unproven as they are, this fly box can bring us as close to Ray Bergman's experiences as can his books.

Reprinted from the Fall 1979 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* (vol. 6, no. 4).

An Extraordinary Acquisition
The Daniel Webster Rod

In Volume 6, Number 2, of *The American Fly Fisher*, we published Charles Lanman's essay on Daniel Webster as an Angler, that essay being the most thorough treatment of the subject. It is plain, however, that much more research could be done about the fishing pursuits of this leading 19th century statesman.

Webster was born in 1782, in a very restless political era. He fished from youth, though of his first fly fishing we are ignorant. We know he was interested in the natural history of streams, and, as Lanman demonstrated, he was a lifelong devotee of sportfishing. In 1801, while at law school, he wrote that "I have dismissed from the office of this life a few Federal partridges, pigeons, and squirrels, and have drawn from the abundance of Merrimac a few anti-Federal fishes — no loaves — such as sword-back, perch, and flat-headed demi-semi-crotchet quavers, *alias* scaly flat-sides." His correspondence, throughout his life, contains references to fishing. There is need for some enterprising scholar to undertake a careful search of this correspondence, as well as other original source material.

The rod we have recently received is probably an acquisition of his later years. It was made by the New York tackle firm of B. D. Welch, a company we know was in existence as early as 1851. Since Webster died in 1852, and since in the last decade of his life he more than once received fine-quality tackle of New York make, we suspect this rod was probably from the period 1840 — 1852.

The rod has the heavy pool-cue appearance of pre-civil war tackle, and was probably a 4-piece 12 ft. rod (the tip has not survived). The fittings, which were polished and restored some years ago by the Smithsonian Institution, show both fine craftsmanship and the slight irregularity of form that characterize this earliest and least-understood era of American tackle manufacturing. Only the second section has guides, though the butt section does show markings toward its ferrule end, where there may at one time have been mounted a similar guide.

We have estimated the stand on which the rod currently rests to have been produced many years after Mr. Webster's death, probably in the period 1910-1925. There are no legible

markings on the leather case, and other markings are clear in the photographs on page 10.

It is not uninteresting how the rod came into our possession. Slightly more than two years ago, Mr. Henry Dunbar of Warrenton, Virginia, alerted the Museum at the urging of then-Trustee Benjamin Fuller, that a fishing rod once belonging to Daniel Webster was owned by a Mrs. James Mitchell of Warrenton. In the ensuing two years, a lengthy correspondence developed, in which Mrs. Mitchell expressed interest in the Museum and gave us additional information on the rod. We were sad to learn, early this year, that Mrs. Mitchell had died, but her son, Samuel Mitchell of Washington, D. C., was equally interested in seeing to it that the Museum received it. From that point arrangements proceeded smoothly, and an agreement was reached whereby we purchased the rod from Mr. Mitchell.

Under the circumstances it does not seem at all inappropriate to explain that we paid $2,000 for this rod, a price well in line with current markets in such rarities. Indeed, Mr. Mitchell received higher offers from private collectors, but his interest in the Museum, and in having the rod exhibited professionally, prompted him to accept our best offer. We were, in fact, delighted with all aspects of our dealings with Mr. Mitchell. The transaction was completed in August, when Museum Trustee Ben Schley picked up the rod from Mr. Mitchell and personally transported it to Manchester for us.

We could not ask for a happier circumstance in this rod's "pedigree," either. Quite often items of this age are difficult to identify absolutely; their authenticity is easily challenged. This rod, however, has changed hands very few times, and has never really left the family. As Mr. Mitchell explained to us,

> "Julia Webster, Daniel Webster's daughter, married my grandfather's grandfather, Samuel Appleton of Ipswich, Massachusetts. My grandfather, Samuel Appleton Appleton, left the fishing rod to my mother Sally Appleton Mitchell, who in turn left it to me."

High quality fishing rods from before 1850 are extremely hard to come by. Thus, this rod has considerable historic value notwithstanding its ownership; we have only two other rods we can positively date to before 1855, though we have a number of others that are probably their contemporaries.

But it is ownership that makes this such a priceless find. Webster's role as a political force, as well as his fame as an orator, are unique. Very few Presidents had as much influence on pre-war American politics as he did. In the way we revere any historic object, we often wonder, "just think . . . this might be the very rod with which he caught the giant trout from the Carmans River on Long Island in the 1820's" (though accounts differ enough that we still are not certain it was Webster at all). At least we have a tangible link with our dimmest angling past; for certain the hands that cast this rod shook the hands of the likes of James Madison, and maybe even of Jefferson and Washington. With the acquisition of the Webster rod we have obtained the physical embodiment of early American angling, and we approach, perhaps as closely as we can hope to, a spiritual kinship with our angling origins.

We must also thank Trustee Alvan Macauley for making this purchase possible. Our operating budget does not permit such things, and Al has generously provided us with adequate revenue by donating two collector-quality firearms which we will sell.

It will be noted in the exhibit of the rod that it appears as a memorial to Sally Appleton Mitchell.

This Currier and Ives print is said to show Daniel Webster landing his famous brook trout, but the fish in the picture is much too small to be the record size mentioned in the story. Do any of our readers know more about the print?

George Paddock's Amateur Angler's Outfit

Pulitzer Prize–winning author Jon Franklin once observed, "Simplicity, carried to an extreme, becomes elegance."[1] Most seasoned anglers would agree that George Paddock's patented reel epitomizes this notion of simplicity, but calling the combined rod and reel elegant might be a stretch. Paddock's reel, composed of a "single piece of spring metal or another suitable material,"[2] is a basic step up from simply wrapping fishing line around a soda can or a large stick. In his patent submission dated 11 February 1889, Paddock asserted that he had enhanced the fishing reel for angling.

He described his invention as "of a peculiarly simple construction,"[3] and indeed it is. The patent details a modification involving a horizontal bar along the top of the reel, which Paddock claimed improved "uniformity of action" and could be added at "but a slight advance in price."[4] The rudimentary reel attaches to the butt section of a three-piece wooden rod with a small screw. It operates on a bearing plate and feeds the line through a single screw-eye guide, leading to a tip-top at the rod's end for directing the line toward the water.

Interestingly, Paddock opted to include a wooden ferrule plug for the rod's butt section, a manufacturing cost that would have been better spent adding more guides along the rod's 10½-foot length. His "improvement"[5] was granted patent number 401,849 on 23 April 1889—a notably swift turnaround, likely because of the invention's simplicity. The original two-piece cardboard box for this kit is labeled "Paddock's Amateur Anglers' Outfit, No. 1½" and included 30 feet of linen line, three fishhooks, one float, and one sinker, but those items are missing from this example. Although it may lack elegance, this simple reel remains a rare find, especially with its original box, and it was easily capable of landing trout and bass more than a century ago.

Jim Schottenham
Curator

Photos by Jim Schottenham

George Paddock's patent reel and rod combination, circa 1889. Gift of Bill Ballan. AMFF permanent collection. 1992.003.001.

ENDNOTES

1. Jon Franklin, *Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner* (New York: Plume, 1994), 72.
2. George Paddock. G. Paddock fishing reel. U.S. Patent 401,849, filed 11 February 1889 and issued 23 April 1889. See https://ppubs.uspto.gov/dirsearch-public/print/downloadPdf/0401849. Accessed 15 August 2024.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

AMFF Honors the Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation with the 2024 Heritage Award

Sarah Foster

Val Kropiwnicki once again designed and tied this year's Heritage Award: You Only Get One.724.GFSSP.

The Model Room of the New York Yacht Club provided a stunning backdrop for the celebration of the 2024 Heritage Award honoring the extraordinary Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation (JHOFF). On April 18, we were thrilled to welcome guests both from out West and closer to home for an inspiring evening filled with warmth, humor, and generosity. After a wonderful reception during which One Fly Founder Jack Dennis tied flies and chatted with guests, the evening continued with a showing of the recently released *Tension* by filmmaker Hilton Graham. The film captures the spirit of the iconic One Fly Tournament told from a unique point of view. The event culminated in a fascinating panel discussion moderated by JHOFF President John Holland and featuring JHOFF Chair Greg Case, emeritus JHOFF board member Jack Dennis, filmmaker/director Hilton Graham, and Trout Unlimited President Chris Wood.

As always, we would like to thank our donors who helped make the evening such a success. Thanks to live auction donors Antrim Streamside, Catskill Outfitters, Shawn Combs, Jack Dennis, Chico Fernandez, the Inn at Manchester, Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation, Orvis, Scott Smith/Grand Teton Fly Fishing, South Holston River Lodge, Andrew Tucker/The Delphi Club, Joan Wulff, and Nancy Zakon. Thanks also to silent auction donors Battenkill Preserve, Jim Beattie, Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing, Scott Biron, Alan Bourgault, Bromley Mountain, Catskill Outfitters, Frank Conroy, Costa, Capt. John Curry, DeYoung Studio, Capt. Paul Dixon, Emerald Water Anglers, Rachel Finn, Capt. Sarah Gardner in memory of Cathy Beck, Julie Goetz, Grundéns, James Heckman, Peter Kaminsky, Jon Larrabee, Liberty Skis, AD Maddox, Walter Matia, Chris and Amanda Miller, John Mundt, Rob Oden, Orvis, Fred Polhemus, Al Quattrocchi, Mike Rice, Allen Rupp, Scientific Anglers, John Swan, Richard Tisch, Jess Westbrook, and Nancy and Alan Zakon.

Photos by Joe Klementovich except where noted

The Model Room at the New York Yacht Club.

Adam Raleigh, Michael Sudal, and John Holland enjoying the reception.

Jack Dennis ties flies during the cocktail hour.

Guests chat in the beautiful Model Room.

Bob Williamson, AMFF Trustee Salvatore Campofranco, and Charlie Thacher were all smiles at the event.

AMFF President Fred Polhemus and AMFF Anglers' Circle member Parker Corbin.

The evening's panel discussion featured (from left) Jack Dennis, Chris Wood, Greg Case, Hilton Graham, and John Holland.

AMFF at the One Fly

Photos by Neal Henderson except where noted

One Fly Chair Greg Case (center) and Board President John Holland (right) happily accept the 2024 Heritage Award from AMFF President Fred Polhemus (left).

The One Fly Tournament has a long and rich history: a tradition of community, camaraderie, and conservation that began with Paul Bruun and Jack Dennis in 1986. It has become one of the most prestigious (and quirky!) of fishing tournaments, raising millions of dollars for trout and water conservation. The Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation—the driving force behind the tournament—remains committed to the sport of fly fishing and the conservation of our natural resources. It sets standards to which we all should aspire, making it a wholly worthy recipient of the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Heritage Award.

The award was presented during the event's closing ceremonies on September 8. Hundreds of anglers, guides, conservationists, writers, artists, philanthropists, nonprofit partners, and friends gathered under a tent at the base of Snow King Mountain in Jackson, Wyoming, to eagerly await the results of the two-day competition. But before the winners (and losers) were announced, the crowd celebrated as AMFF Board President Fred Polhemus presented the 2024 Heritage Award to JHOFF. One Fly Chair Greg Case and Board President John Holland accepted the artfully framed award—a VK Steelworks fly symbolizing the thirty-eight-year-old tourney—but quickly directed the spotlight toward One Fly founders Jack Dennis and Paul Bruun. "This award is for them," Holland said. "It is for all the anglers; it is for all the guides. It is for everyone's children and their children. Let it be forever."

The 2024 Heritage celebration was unlike any other, but the icing on the cake got even sweeter when sporting artists Mike Sudal and Paul Puckett offered to participate. Sudal and Puckett are regular contributors to the One Fly auction, and their sought-after works of art do some heavy lifting in the fundraising game. This year, they each offered to create two pieces: one for a winning bidder and one for the permanent collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, adding to the breadth of the museum's art collection and securing their places in fly-fishing history. Puckett's piece, *The Storm after the Calm* (a 22 x 30–inch oil on wood) depicts the chaos and energy generated when a 100-pound fish eats a 3-inch fly on a 9-foot fly rod. The water almost runs off this piece, putting the viewer right into the tarpon's world. With *Land of Rivers Blue and Gold* (a 24 x 36–inch ink and watercolor on paper), Sudal pushed himself to new heights. This original contains more than 2,600 individual flies, each representing a top-quality trout river in the United States. Larger flies in color signify each state's blue-ribbon or gold-medal streams organized by region. Gray secondary flies represent Class A systems, high-quality trout streams that haven't achieved gold or blue classification. This masterpiece highlights the vast number of amazing trout rivers we have access to in the U.S. and the variety (and similarities) of patterns used. It celebrates both the places and wild trout we need to protect.

On September 6, the day before the official tournament kickoff, AMFF hosted a Bamboo Derby, during which twenty-two participants competed in their own One Fly with bamboo rods dating as far back as 1950. The event recognized both the museum and the traditions of our great sport. The top three anglers put more than 300 points on their respective score sheets. Congratulations to Jim Klug on winning the derby and taking home the top prize: a Thomas & Thomas classic bamboo rod. We'd also like to recognize winning guide Kris Dancs and his passion for and knowledge of the Snake River. Gary Grant and Margie Kaat landed second and third place. Thanks to T&T for their donation, to Scott Sanchez for providing the flies, and to REC Components for supplying the Wheatley boxes. It was a pleasure working with Snake River Outfitters and Grand Teton Fly Fishing and their teams of great guides. Special thanks to John Holland and Greg Case for their tireless efforts, open minds, and open arms.

The elegant auction display included Land of Rivers Blue and Gold *by Mike Sudal,* The Storm after the Calm *by Paul Puckett, and the Yellowstone Display Fly Chest complete with all JHOF winning flies (tied by Jack Dennis, Scott Sanchez, Will Dornan, Jay Buchner, and others). All of these items are now part of AMFF's permanent collection.*

Neville Orsmond

AMFF Trustee Pat Watson makes a cast during the Bamboo Derby.

Scott Sanchez (left) and Jack Dennis enjoy the Friday night banquet.

From left to right: AMFF's Gardner L. Grant Jr., Tyler Thompson, Margie Kaat, Pat Watson, Richard Tisch, Sarah Foster, and Brendan Truscott.

One of the forty boats floating the magnificent stretch from Pacific Creek to Deadman's Bar during Saturday's round of the One Fly.

From left to right: AMFF President Fred Polhemus, Bamboo Derby winner Jim Klug with his prize, Thomas & Thomas CEO Neville Orsmond, and One Fly Chair Greg Case.

Green Despair

by Christopher Pibus

In my early years of fly fishing, I often hitchhiked south from Montreal to the Adirondacks in upstate New York. Sticking to secondary roads, my favorite border crossing was called Trout River, just west of Huntingdon, Quebec. It remains the most auspiciously named place from which to begin a fishing trip I have ever found.

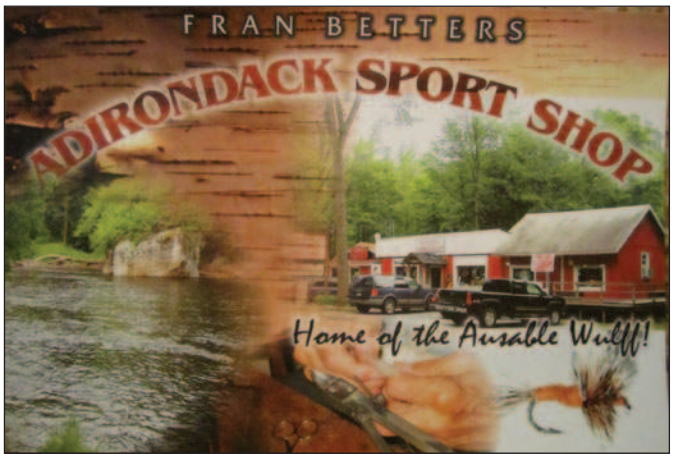
In late May 1979, I headed for the Ausable River with my camping gear and Hardy Palakona fly rod tucked inside a mismatched aluminum tube. I loved that rod beyond all measure. At 7 feet, 6 inches, it was a thing of beauty made of slender bamboo with a cork reel seat and ruby-red wraps. Surprisingly powerful, it was built for a 6-weight line. In search of brown trout—a fish rarely found in my home province—I planned a week of solo camping in the North Country woods.

What drew me to the West Branch of the Ausable was the trophy section, a marvelous early example of catch-and-release regulations that covered more than 2 miles of prime water west of Wilmington right up to Monument Falls. This stretch of pure pocket water was home territory for the big dry flies designed by the legendary Fran Betters to bounce down the rapids and trigger a slashing rise. These waters were full of memories for me, including my first fly-caught trout.

I first met Mr. Betters in 1970. My friend Ted and I were teenaged neophytes who spent two epic weeks camped in the woods near Shadow Rock, fishing the Ausable for countless hours as we struggled to learn the basics of fly fishing. Every second day we made a pilgrimage to the Adirondack Sport Shop, mostly to watch and learn. Betters held court from behind his fly-tying desk, surrounded by patches of woodchuck fur, calf tails, and hackle capes from India. He was a short barrel-chested man, already stooped from years bending over a vise. He spoke in the clipped sentences of the North Country, leaving no doubt he was proud of his flies and his river.

Christopher Pibus

Special regulations for the West Branch Ausable River, New York State Conservation Department signage, circa 1970. Author's collection.



Postcard of Fran Betters's fly shop, Wilmington, New York. Courtesy of the Wilmington Historical Society, Betters Family Collection.

Customers came and went as we watched, the anglers anxious to buy the fabled Ausable Wulff patterns. Betters tied flies constantly as he talked. Small wonders materialized in his fingers, tiny feathered bits of genius, identically matched to the previous iterations one after another. Sometimes he would be tested with an obscure request. I remember he was once asked for a half dozen Green Despairs, an historic Ontario pattern championed by Canadian angler and writer Gord Deval, who could bring the stonefly nymph to life by rhythmically pulsing it through a quiet pool. Betters grumbled when he heard the request, digging through his materials to find the right feathers to make the unique flat wings and knotted legs. Obscure or not, he knew immediately what the pattern required.

Betters tolerated our presence and usually didn't waste his time trying to sell us flies. Ted and I had a routine for each visit. When it was time to go, we would each buy two Ausable Wulffs at 75 cents apiece. A few times he did try to tempt us with another pattern.

"Look at this fly, my own Haystack," he would say, holding up a big unhackled dry fly made with deer hair that looked like nothing we had ever seen before. And then he would shake his head in amazement at the qualities of the fly.

"Take it up to the Flume Pool right at dusk," he would say. "Big trout, big browns, they'll come up and grab it, right from the deep water." The words tumbled out and his voice rose as he imagined and mimed a violent take. With pure performance art like that, who could fail to make a purchase?

Thereafter the storied river drew me back again and again.

Heading south from Montreal on that May morning, I made it across the border on the first day—no troubling questions from customs—and stopped near the bridge at Mooers Forks. I knew a few spots on the North Branch of the Chazy River, a good early-season fishery. It offered the enduring attraction of a graveyard pool. In fact, there were two cemeteries upstream, and each had a reliable nearby run. No outright hauntings occurred, although one night I pitched my tent too close to the cemetery, and it was flattened by a blast of wind and driving rain. Camping evidently prohibited.

My preferred site downstream provided a better refuge, and that's where I chose to settle for the first night. The woods were quiet until the wind came up, and then I was awakened by twigs bouncing off the canvas. First-night jitters. I fished shortly after sunrise, hooking and losing a small rainbow on a nymph, before packing up for an early start to the Ausable.

Just east of the bridge, there were a few scattered buildings on a straightaway where drivers could see me from a distance. I built a roadside display by the ditch, my backpack and rod case visible to oncoming traffic, along with a cardboard sign for Lake Placid. It took hours before a small truck slowed and stopped about 30 yards down the road in front of a house. I grabbed my gear and ran down my ride, fumbling the pack and rod case as I climbed into the cab. "C'mon bud," said the driver, "Haven't got all day." I retrieved the tube, screwed the makeshift cap back in place, and tossed everything behind the seats.

The trucker drove me along Route 11, then south and right down the interstate. By late afternoon, after a few more rides, I found myself at the river and campground near Wilmington Notch, ready to resume my quest for the big browns at the Flume Pool. I set up the tent and started to assemble my gear in preparation for the evening rise. It was a little early for Green Drakes, but some Hendricksons might still be on the water. Maybe it was time to bust out the Haystacks. I picked up my rod case, and the cap came away in my hand. When I tipped the tube forward, expecting the blue cloth bag to slide right out, nothing happened. The tube was empty. And the rod was gone. Every sweet piece of it down to the tiny cork-tipped ferrule plug. Gone.

I searched the perimeter of the campsite without much hope. Then I began to replay the events of the day until I stopped myself, unwilling to admit I knew where it all went wrong.

I had a terrible tendency to lose things. Always did. Even as a child I was the master of misplacing. It got so bad I once lost my father's green corduroy cap, leaving it on a bus to downtown Montreal. Remarkably, I retrieved it two days later at the transit lost and found. It was a true miracle—the first I ever experienced. Then inexplicably on the way home I left the cap on the bus again. This time it was gone for good, leading my mother to say, "You would lose your head if it wasn't tied on."

The best I could do was return to Betters's fly shop in Wilmington to see if he had a spare rod for a mendicant angler. Out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a box of Green Despairs. *Perfect*, I thought. Fran was not impressed. He looked up from his tying bench and said, "Ten bucks a day for the rod, and leave me your driver's license." He rummaged around behind the counter and handed over an irredeemably ugly fiberglass rod that looked like it would support a hydroelectric line.

Back at the camp, I rigged up the mismatched kit with my little Hardy Viscount reel and hiked down to a nearby stretch of pocket water. But there was no point. I couldn't bear to cast the thing. I was rodless in paradise—and fishless too.

In the morning, I knew I had to return to Mooers Forks, so I hitched a ride down to the fly shop again, ready to retrace my steps northward.

Toward evening, my last ride brought me to the bridge at Mooers Forks, and I began a methodical search along the shoulder of the highway and down into the ditch. I found the place where my backpack had rested, near the scuff marks in the gravel where I had paced away the hours. But nothing else.

The Despair Nymph. The history of the Despair nymph is set out in Gordon Deval's Fishing for Brookies, Browns and 'Bows: The Old Guy's Complete Guide to Catching Trout *(Vancouver: Graystone Books, 2001). The original Peacock Despair (shown here) was tied with a peacock herl body, but that was replaced with pale green seal dubbing for the Green Despair variation. Full tying instructions can be found in Deval's book (pages 83–85). For many years, Deval fished the remote rivers of northern Canada, using his Despair nymphs to hook trophy brook trout, including a 29-inch fish from Quebec's Broadback River. Photograph by Simon Cheung.*

A house stood back from the road, with a concrete path leading across the yard, more pasture than grass. I took a chance and knocked on the door, which was opened immediately by a woman who turned her back and bellowed, "Ronnie! Get down here right now!"

She looked me over and said, "We saw you yesterday standing there, and the boy said you dropped something. At first, I didn't believe him, not for a minute."

A young boy appeared, maybe six or seven years old, looking like it wasn't the only time he had been accused of some great crime. Without a word, he retreated up the stairs.

"He's got that pole under his bed. I told him you'd be back."

She was both bitter and exultant to watch everything unravel as she had predicted.

"I'm just grateful," I said. "Eternally grateful. Your son didn't do anything wrong."

Ronnie handed over the rod, never looking up.

"You saved the day," I told him. "I didn't think I'd ever see it again."

I gave him all the American money I had, seven or eight dollars in small bills, along with a funny-looking purple ten-dollar Canadian note. Ronnie stayed on the steps clutching the money and watching me slide the rod bag into the perfidious tube.

I walked back across the bridge. A few small rainbows were holding in the usual spot just downstream of the abutment. As luck would have it, I picked up a ride right away. The driver pulled over near the house, and Ronnie stood by the ditch watching me scramble once again into a car. He still had a tight grip on the money—at least for the moment. As we pulled away, he raised a small fist against the heedless sky and began to howl.

Norman Maclean and Izaak Walton: "Brothers of the Angle"

by Timothy P. Schilling

Norman Maclean believed that most novels are "mostly wind."[1] Perhaps that's why he never wrote one. He thought every word should count, and, if it didn't, it should be excluded. Shakespeare and Hemingway were his great examples. When Maclean taught *Hamlet* at the University of Chicago, he spent the entire first lecture on the two words that open the play: "Who's there?"[2] Shakespeare's writing, Maclean knew, was loaded. One willing to dig beneath the surface could find plenty of treasure.

Wallace Stegner found the same was true of Maclean. After reading *A River Runs Through It*, he said: "All three of these stories . . . grow on re-reading. . . . Things missed or only half seen edge out into the open. Things that looked only reported turn out to have been *rendered*. Throwaway lines reveal unexpected pertinence, discursiveness that we first forgave as naivete has to be reappraised as deep cunning."[3]

In short, when reading Maclean we should be aware that as clear and comprehensible as his prose may seem, we have a complex text before us. If we are willing to delve further into it, and even do some homework at times, it will reward the effort. A case in point arises early in *A River Runs Through It*. We may pass over Maclean's slam of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* in silence (as Stegner does[4]), seeing it merely as a humorous aside, but a close reading of Walton's book suggests that Maclean in fact slyly pays homage to his seventeenth-century brother angler. What follows is a glimpse of how he goes about this.

The scene in question appears on page 5 of *A River Runs Through It*. Just before, the Reverend Maclean has taught his sons Norman and Paul how to cast.

> Eventually [Maclean writes of his father], he introduced us to literature on the subject. He tried always to say something stylish as he buttoned the glove on his casting hand. "Izaak Walton," he told us when my brother was thirteen or fourteen, "is not a respectable writer. He was an Episcopalian and a bait fisherman." Although Paul was three years younger than I was, he was already far ahead of me in anything related to fishing and it was he who first found a copy of *The Compleat Angler* and reported back to me, "The bastard doesn't even know how to spell 'complete.' Besides, he has songs to sing to dairymaids." I borrowed his copy, and reported back to him, "Some of those songs are pretty good." He said, "Whoever saw a dairymaid on the Big Blackfoot River?"[5]

From Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton, The Complete Angler *(London: D. Bogue, 1844), facing page 78.*

The causes for amusement here are multiple. First we have the father's cool dismissal of Walton's writing on the basis of personal prejudice: Walton belongs to the wrong Christian denomination and fishes in the wrong way. Then we have the hotheaded derision of the son, who, equally dogmatically, rejects Walton for reasons of poor spelling and off-topic subject matter. Paul's conclusion, that the famed writer is a "bastard," is not what one would expect to hear from a minister's son. As for Norman, he adopts a neutral position, noting simply that some of the dairymaid songs are pretty good.

But what happens if we go to the source? What if we read the *Angler* and learn more about Walton himself?

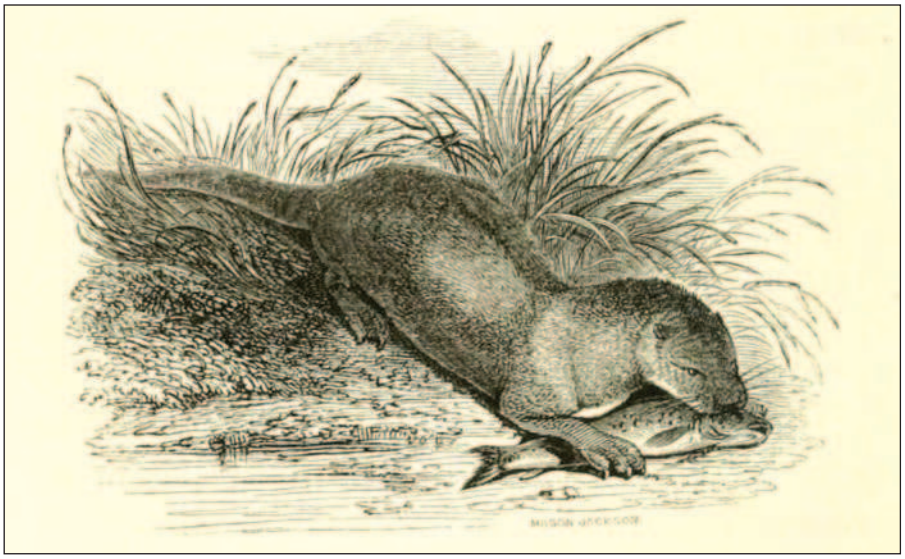
I believe that Maclean (who took pride in the teaching component of his stories[6]) hopes that we will indeed do this. For what we find, as we read *The Compleat Angler*, is that Walton has a retort waiting for Reverend Maclean and his son.

> You know, Gentlemen, 't is an easy thing to scoff at any art or recreation; a little wit, mixt with ill nature, confidence, and malice will do it; but though they often venture boldly, yet they are often caught even in their own trap, according to that of Lucian, the father of the family of Scoffers.
>
> "Lucian well skilled in scoffing, this hath writ:
> Friend, that's your folly which you think your wit;
> This you vent oft, void both of wit and fear,
> Meaning another, when you yourself you jeer."[7]

To top it off, Walton disses the dissers, citing no less an authority than the biblical Solomon to proclaim scoffers an "abomination to mankind."[8]

What Maclean readers will also quickly discover in *The Compleat Angler* is that Maclean has made further use of Walton's book when we come to the tale of the otter hunt, which serves as the source text for Neal's absurd braggadocio in Black Jack's bar. In Walton's *Angler*, the hunt for the trout-eating otter is mentioned early in the book as the fisher, hunter, and falconer come together.[9] Later we see the hunt transpire, by way of an exchange between the hunter and Piscator, our fisherman narrator.

> Look, 't is a Bitch-Otter, and she has lately whelped: let's go to the place where she was put down, and not far from it you will find all her young ones, I dare warrant you, and kill them all too.
>
> HUNT[ER]. Come, Gentlemen! come all, let's go to the place where we put down the Otter. Look you, hereabout it was that she kennelled; look you, here it was indeed, for here's her young ones, no less than five; come let's kill them all.
>
> PISC[ATOR]. No, I pray Sir, save me one, and I'll try if I can make her tame, as I know an ingenious gentleman in Leicestershire, Mr. Nich. Seagrave, has done; who hath not only made her tame, but to catch fish, and do many other things of much pleasure.[10]



From Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton,
The Complete Angler *(London: D. Bogue, 1844), 48.*

In *A River Runs Through It,* Norman's brother-in-law Neal, to impress his barmates, holds forth about tracking an otter all the way to Rogers Pass, a story that includes his mercifully taking the otter's pups into his shirt.[11] If we don't know the original text and its author, we miss out on some fun.

Both the Reverend Maclean and his son Paul misrepresent Walton in ways that are self-serving. To a degree, every charge they make against him is unfair. Was Walton an Episcopalian? No, in fact the Episcopal Church (the American offshoot of the Anglican Church) did not exist when Walton lived (in England, from 1593 to 1683). The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States was established after the American Revolution. Walton was an Anglican, a merchant[12] devoted to the English monarchy, who lived in London but later retired to the countryside after the Royalist defeat, in 1644, at Marston Moor. (Five years later the army of Cromwell, a Puritan, seized power and executed King Charles I.) Walton spent his remaining years writing, primarily about fishing and the lives of prominent Anglican clergymen he knew. He published the first edition of *The Compleat Angler* in 1653 and wrote biographies, including those of the poet-clergymen John Donne and George Herbert.

I am inclined to accept the Reverend Maclean's dismissal of Walton as an Episcopalian as a forgivable half-truth. The Episcopal Church was indeed the closest thing to the Anglican Church in the United States, and *Episcopalian* would be a term his sons were familiar with. Reverend Maclean, a Presbyterian (a Calvinist denomination with roots in Scotland that repudiated Anglican and Roman Catholic religiosity), was known for his religious chauvinism. Norman Maclean cited an example of this in his essay "Retrievers Good and Bad," where he wrote, "My father . . . was an intellectual and somewhat poetical and referred to Methodists as Baptists who could read."[13] Reverend Maclean gives the lie to Walton's statement (another forgivable half-truth): "We Anglers all love one another."[14] For that matter, the Reverend Maclean also undercuts his own claim to Christian discipleship when referring to fellow Christian Walton. For Christ said, "All men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

But calling Walton an Episcopalian is not the only unfair dig the Reverend Maclean takes. Another is his calling Walton a "bait fisherman." This is too simple, and at minimum ungenerous, for Walton in *The Compleat Angler* does justice to his claim to completeness by discussing fly fishing as well as fishing with grasshoppers, worms, and frogs. In their *Izaak Walton: The Compleat Angler and His Turbulent Times*, Lawrence Pool and Angeline Pool offer a more nuanced view.

> Charles Cotton added material to the fifth edition (1676) of *The Angler*, much of which was information on fishing

> with the fly. Although Walton, as we have seen, mentions flies, *fished with them, contrary to what some commentators have said*, [emphasis mine] and urges one to tie them at streamside, most of the material in his section of *The Angler* deals with bait fishing. There was considerable controversy between fishermen in Walton's time as to which was fairer to the fish, fly-fishing or bait-fishing, and to modern fishermen it seems strange that fly-fishing was then more suspect. We must remember that bait to a seventeenth-century angler was natural bait, such as a worm or minnow, whereas a fly was an *imitation* of nature. William Bailey's Bottom Fisher says, "I can fly fish as well as you, or any other, but I do not like it; there is something so cowardly about it—it is the worst deception an Angler can make use of."[15]

How amusing in our time, when the slamming of bait fishermen (thanks to Norman Maclean) has become a cliché, to read that fly fishermen were once on the defensive.

Walton's evenhandedness in fishing matters is evident in his treatment of religion as well. Both *The Compleat Angler* and *A River Runs Through It* are saturated with religious references. See, for example, the *Angler*'s reference to Christ's disciples being fishermen, which we also find in *River*.[16] Both refer, in addition, to the significance of water in the biblical account of creation.[17] In this regard, Maclean and Walton are kindred spirits. Both combine gentle humor, spiritual insight, and practical instruction in a compelling narrative. Walton, despite his strong Royalist/Anglican leanings, was no extremist. The theological asides in *The Compleat Angler* match the warm intelligence and balance displayed by Walton's kindred spirit and fellow angler, George Herbert—and by Norman Maclean as well.

In general, Walton, as Maclean did, believed in balancing action and contemplation, and in that sense the Reverend Maclean, too, could be counted as a disciple.[18] He sought refreshment between sermons in the hills, and in a late scene of *A River Runs Through It* we find him sitting at riverside reading his Greek New Testament.[19] Walton, in *The Compleat Angler*, calls fishing a recreation that invites clergymen to "contemplation and quietness" and says rivers are "the quietest and finest place for contemplation."[20] The Reverend Maclean (and his son Norman) surely agreed.

As for that other scoffer, Paul: presumably the reader gets the joke that *Compleat* is actually spelled correctly; that it simply reflected the standard spelling at the time the book was written. Without reading *The Compleat Angler*, however, one will not realize that the songs in the book are not sung *to* dairymaids (this mistake perhaps reflecting young ladies'-man Paul's interest in wooing women), but rather *by* them, for the entertainment of Piscator and his hunter-companion. The error shows that Paul had not really understood the work and should signal the reader that *The Compleat Angler* may have more to offer than Paul presumes. Norman shows brotherly forbearance in response to this judgment, suggesting his own greater awareness of and appreciation for Walton's work.

The greatest tribute Maclean pays Walton, however, is the more fundamental one of adopting his literary form, the piscatory eclogue, giving us, in his own way, a lighthearted, theologically rich discourse on the art of fishing.[21] I can only conclude that in *A River Runs Through It*, Norman Maclean is, whether we realize it or not, warmly praising his fellow writer and "brother of the Angle,"[22] Izaak Walton.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A special thanks to John N. Maclean and James R. Hepworth, who offered clarifications and helpful suggestions in response to an early draft of this article. Any errors in this article are my own.

ENDNOTES

1. Norman Maclean, "Teaching and Storytelling: Talk at University of Chicago and Montana State University," in Ron McFarland and Hugh Nichols, eds., *Norman Maclean* (Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence Press, 1988), 88–99, 90. "Teaching and Storytelling" is reprinted from the text of the speech Maclean gave at the University of Chicago on 19 February 1978 and at Montana State University in Bozeman on 20 April 1978.

2. Norman Maclean to Pete Dexter, as quoted in Pete Dexter, "The Old Man and the River," in McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 140–50, 148. "The Old Man and the River" was reprinted from *Esquire* (June 1981, vol. 95, no. 6), 86–91.

3. Wallace Stegner, "Haunted by Waters," in McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 153–60, 155.

4. Ibid., 158. Stegner says only, "Witness Paul's response to Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler:* not only is Walton a bait fisherman but the sonofabitch can't even spell 'complete.'"

5. Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 5.

6. "Make no mistake," Maclean said, "my stories are loaded with teaching." Maclean, "Teaching and Storytelling," in McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 89.

7. Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler or, The Contemplative Man's Recreation* (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), 6. The text of this Modern Library paperback edition is from the fifth edition of *The Compleat Angler* as presented in the work compiled by James Russell Lowell in 1889.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 4–5. The story of the otter hunt resumes on pages 47–51.

10. Ibid., 49–50.

11. Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*, 33.

12. J. Lawrence Pool and Angeline J. Pool argue Walton earned his living both as an ironmonger and as a haberdasher. See Pool and Pool, *Izaak Walton: The Compleat Angler and His Turbulent Times* (Lunenberg, Vt.: The Stinehour Press, 1976), 3–6.

13. Norman Maclean, "Retrievers Good and Bad," in McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 14–22, 14. The essay is reprinted from *Esquire* (October 1977, vol. 88, no. 4), 22–36. Screenwriter Richard Friedenberg included this line in his script for Robert Redford's film adaptation of *A River Runs Through It*.

14. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, 5.

15. Pool and Pool, *Izaak Walton*, 34. Pool and Pool do not cite the source for the William Bailey quote, but it comes from Bailey's *The Angler's Instructor: A Treatise on the Best Modes of Angling in English Rivers, Lakes, and Ponds, and on the Habits of the Fish* (London: Longman & Co; Nottingham: T. Forman & Sons, 1857, 1866, 1879). Available at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwanr2&view=1up&seq=97&q1=Bottom%20Fisher, page 81. Accessed 21 July 2023.

16. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, 37–38; Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*, 1.

17. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, 19; Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*, 84, 95.

18. See Maclean's comment to interviewers William Kittredge and Annick Smith in "The Two Worlds of Norman Maclean: Interviews in Montana and Chicago," in McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 115–39, 118: "Very early I got the sense that this was a complete life—terrific intellectual discipline half the day, and freedom, nature, doing what I wanted to do, the world of baseball and sports, hunting and fishing, the other half."

19. Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*, 1, 94–95.

20. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, 27, 39.

21. In "Teaching and Story Telling" (McFarland and Nichols, *Norman Maclean*, 95), Maclean said: "I had hoped [*A River Runs Through It*] would be . . . a manual of an art, that is, a poetics of an art, all the main elements of the art of fly fishing would have to be presented together with insights into what constitutes excellence in each element."

22. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, 81, 82.

The Gray Ghost

by Scott Biron

Scott Biron

A range of Gray Ghost wing colors tied by the author.

Every region has its own fly patterns. Many are forgotten, but many carry on as part of a fly angler's arsenal. In New England, the Gray Ghost is one of those patterns that has survived. Created by Carrie Stevens in 1924, this fly pattern is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary. Graydon and Leslie Hilyard's excellent book, *Carrie Stevens: Maker of Rangeley Favorite Trout and Salmon Flies*, speaks to how she elevated the eastern streamer fly and wrote an important chapter in our sporting heritage.[1]

New England has always been a very popular place to fish streamer flies. For the most part, streamers imitate baitfish, a staple food source for landlocked salmon and trout. The Gray Ghost imitates a smelt. There have been mysteries surrounding the Gray Ghost and alterations to its original recipe. It has inspired many other successful fly patterns.

As both an angler and a fly tier, I am often asked about the Gray Ghost, especially the wing color of the rooster saddle feathers used to tie the pattern. The documented color range includes blue dun,[2] olive gray,[3] and a range of dark to light gray and even ginger darkening to a reddish brown.[4]

Many people struggle with gray. Stevens did as well. George Fletcher, who owned the Rangeley Region Sports Shop and supplied Stevens with materials, wrote to the Hilyards while they were researching their book and said that Carrie was very fussy about the Gray Ghost's wing color.[5] Fletcher dyed Stevens's feathers and described the Gray Ghost color as light.[6] However, the color range is vast in a photo of fourteen Gray Ghosts tied by Stevens.[7]

What adds to the color variations is how other tiers interpreted Stevens's Gray Ghost wing. I have a few samples of Gray Ghosts tied by other historic New England fly tiers, and they all have a different shade wing. Some are almost silver, and others are as dark as a submarine's hull.

There was one shade described as bronze blue dun; to my eye, it is gray with an overriding bronze. New Hampshire fly tier Jim Warner describes this shade in his pattern notes: "This particular color was extremely popular in the tying of the Gray Ghost as regular blue dun . . . faded from use in water and sun."[8] He went on to explain that many feather dyers would list this shade, but none of them matched, which resulted in him having a box of different shades of bronze blue dun.[9]

Dying the feathers is a challenge. There have been advancements in dyes since George Fletcher was dying saddles for Carrie Stevens. I imagine she used the shades that were not her

Gray Ghost color for other patterns. Yet even today feather companies have many shades of Gray Ghost.

As important as the Gray Ghost's wing color was Stevens's method of constructing the fly. Tying without a vise; assembling the wing, shoulder, and cheek as one unit per side; and the mounting of the wings made this fly very effective.

Stevens's Gray Ghost materials were tied in, with each one slightly in front of the previous material—much like a roofer would shingle a house. Materials were securely tied to the hook, adding to the flies' durability. The wings were individually tied in slightly on the sides of the hook (at 10 and 2 o'clock). Today this is referred to as the Rangeley style of streamer wings.

Very few fly tiers take the time to construct the Gray Ghost the way Stevens did. Wendell Folkins, who purchased her business, wrote to Joseph D. Bates that Stevens's method of dressing cost too much in time and labor, and described it as a painstaking assembly job.[10]

Folkins was right. It does take time to tie a Gray Ghost like Stevens did. However, with her method, the wings sit lower and cover the body of the fly. This construction allows the fly to very closely imitate a smelt when trolled or hand retrieved.

The Gray Ghost is not a bright or a dark fly. It's in between, and this adds to its effectiveness. The old adage of dark day/dark fly and bright day/bright fly allows the Gray Ghost to fit nicely right in the middle.

When I tie a Gray Ghost for myself, I choose the bronze blue dun color. My annual angler analytics tell me that I catch more fish with it. In Bates's eulogy for Stevens in 1970, he wrote that the Gray Ghost is, in his mind, the world's most famous streamer.[11] Anglers all have their personal or regional favorites, but here is one fly that has been fished extensively for one hundred years. That is not a bad run. I imagine that in another hundred years, someone will still be fishing, writing, respecting, and debating on the wing color of Carrie Stevens's Gray Ghost.

Scott Biron is an AMFF ambassador, a master artist in the New Hampshire Heritage & Traditional Arts Program, and a national and international fly-tying instructor. He is on the ambassador pro teams of HMH Vises and Partridge of Redditch. Ewing has a signature series line of feathers that bear Scott's name.

ENDNOTES

1. Graydon R. Hilyard and Leslie K. Hilyard, *Carrie Stevens: Maker of Rangeley Favorite Trout and Salmon Flies* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2000), xvii.
2. J. Edson Leonard, *Flies* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1950), 263.
3. Joseph D. Bates, *Streamer Fly Tying and Fishing* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1950, 1966), 279.
4. Hilyard and Hilyard, *Carrie Stevens*, 134.
5. Ibid., 101.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 103.
8. Jim Warner, *Original Fly Patterns*, unpublished manuscript with dates, histories, and notes, 1957, n.p. Author's collection.
9. Ibid.
10. Hilyard and Hilyard, *Carrie Stevens*, 95.
11. Ibid., 27.

Sara Wilcox

A Gray Ghost tied by Carrie Stevens. AMFF permanent collection. 2014.045.001.

Gray Ghost
Tag: Flat silver tinsel
Body: Orange floss
Rib: Flat silver tinsel
Underbelly: Four to six strands of peacock herl, then white bucktail
Throat: Golden pheasant crest
Wing: Golden pheasant crest, then four gray hackles; chest and hackles are of equal length
Shoulders: Silver pheasant body feathers
Cheeks: Jungle cock
Head: Black with orange band

Sara Wilcox

A Gray Ghost saddle hackle from the stock of Carrie Stevens. AMFF Austin S. Hogan Collection. 2011.005.024.

Museum News

New in the Members Forum

AMFF's online Members Forum recently featured bonus content for the Spring 2024 issue. Two Hemingway-centric articles were featured: Robert Reid's "Big Two-Hearted Reader: Notes from an Armchair Angler" and William F. Grover's "A Big Two-Hearted River Runs through It: Fly Fishing with Hemingway and Maclean." After the issue dropped, Director of Membership Brendan Truscott recorded a follow-up interview with Rob and Bill. "We thought it would be fun to give readers a behind-the-scenes look at how these essays came to be and hear the authors react to each other's work for the first time," he said.

To hear this fascinating conversation, visit our website at amff. org. Click on the "Member Portal" pull-down menu, and choose "Members Forum." Next, click on "The American Fly Fisher — Notes & Comment," then scroll down the thread to find "an interview with Robert Reid and William Grover (vol. 50, no. 2)." It's a great listen.

Fishy Find

In July, the museum joined with twenty-nine Manchester businesses for Find Waldo Local 2024. *Where's Waldo?* is the creation of Martin Handford, whose entertaining drawings of crowd scenes swept the world in the late eighties. In celebration of Waldo's longevity and popularity, his American publisher, Candlewick Press, teamed up with the American Booksellers Association and 250 independent bookstores across the country (including Manchester's own Northshire Bookstore) for some scavenger hunt fun and to encourage communities to patronize their local businesses. (Local Waldo seekers could discover Waldo hanging out in our own library.)

Recent Donations to the Collection

Bob Popovics (Bayville, New Jersey) donated an important collection of objects documenting the Salt Water Fly Rodders of America. **An anonymous donor** gave us Austin S. Hogan's angling library; Hogan was AMFF's first curator and was also the founder of this publication, the *American Fly Fisher*.

Dave Hatch (Rochester, New Hampshire) shared a selection of trout flies tied by Ellis Hatch. **Sandy Bogdan** passed along a selection of objects from Stan Bogdan's workshop, including reel parts, dies, cutouts, prototype packaging boxes, and some personal notebooks and papers. **James Heckman** (San Antonio, Texas) sent us a copy of the May 1933 *Motor Magazine*; its cover features the Robert Robinson painting now in our collection and on view at the museum.

Jim Becker (Pawlet, Vermont) donated one of his custom fly rods and **Fred Kretchman** (Kittery Point, Maine) gave us a custom bamboo fly rod made in 2014; we are thrilled to be adding examples of these rod makers' work to the permanent collection. **Joan Wulff** (Lew Beach, New York) continues to contribute objects she comes across, most recently a wet-fly accuracy trophy she won in 1941.

Upcoming Events

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

October 24
Reel Talk with Jim Schottenham
Via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

November 14
Izaak Walton Award honoring Guido Rahr
Log Cabin at the Presidio
San Francisco, California

November 21
Streamer Fly Tying with Scott Biron
Via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

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

Sara Wilcox

During the month of July, AMFF was again delighted to welcome children of all ages to our Kids Clinics offerings. Fly tying, bug hunting, arts and crafts, and casting were all on the activity menu over the course of the month. Many thanks to the participants, parents, and volunteers who made our 2024 Kids Clinics a success.

Fly-Fishing Festival

The American Museum of Fly Fishing hosted its seventeenth Annual Fly-Fishing Festival on August 10. The festival brought together artisans, angling professionals, and nonprofits for a day of learning and entertainment. More than 400 visitors enjoyed our growing community of new and returning vendors.

The fly tiers' tent was a retinue of talent offering a full day of demonstrations. This year we were joined by Bill Newcomb, Paul Sinicki, Kelly Bedford, Dave Flint, Mike Stewart, George Butts, Lisa Weiner, and Scott Biron. In the afternoon, AMFF Ambassador Scott Biron and AMFF Curator Jim Schottenham led a joint demonstration on streamer tying for the crowd, which was also livestreamed for angling fans at large. Bob Selb and Fred Kretchman were on hand again this year offering complimentary appraisals, and AMFF Ambassador Kyle Schaefer returned for a saltwater casting seminar. Writer Matt Smythe, author of *Revision of a Man*, signed books and read from his novella in progress, *Letters to Trout Fishing in America*, at the Pond Gazebo. This beautifully secluded spot created a peaceful backdrop to Matt's reading, and we look forward to more gazebo programming.

The casting competition, hosted by Orvis, was reinvented this year to allow for greater participation. Three divisions (youth, open, and veterans) brought together a unique cross section of the angling community. Two heats were created for all three divisions, the first running in the morning and the second in the afternoon. Inside the museum, sporting artist C. D. Clarke was in attendance for the opening of a new exhibit featuring his work. In the afternoon, AMFF Ambassador Rachel Finn hosted an art workshop upstairs in the library. Downstairs, in the Selch-Bakwin Fly Room, author Peter Kaminsky discussed his collection of fishing stories by artists, authors, guides, and poets, *The Catch of a Lifetime: Moments of Flyfishing Glory*.

As always, special appreciation goes to our sponsors and raffle donors: Alan Bourgault, Costa, Groomingdale's of Arlington, Kimpton-Taconic Hotel, Mulligans, Northshire Bookstore, Northshire Networks, Orvis, Pets Etc., Rockwall Property Maintenance, Smuggler's Notch Distillery, W5 of Fly Fishing, Wagatha's, and The Works Bakery. Additional thanks to Shannon Roy for the gift of her music and to our delicious food and beverage vendors: Ben & Jerry's, Cut the Pie, Mount Holly Brewing, Sexy Llama, Smuggler's Notch Distillery, and Watson Wheeler Cider.

Thank you to those who supported the event and made this year's festival a success. Approximately 380 raffle tickets were sold, the weather was beautiful, and the museum grounds were full. We look forward to seeing you again next year on August 9. Be sure to save the date!

Sara Wilcox

Some young explorers check out the Yoshi Akiyama Nature Trail and pond during the festival.

Kathleen Achor

Matt Smythe reads from his novella in progress, Letters to Trout Fishing in America*, at the Pond Gazebo.*

Sara Wilcox

A contestant tries their hand at the casting competition.

Kathleen Achor

Rod maker Fred Kretchman chats with visitors.

Sara Wilcox

AMFF Ambassador Rachel Finn conducts an art workshop upstairs in the library.

Kathleen Achor

Peter Kaminsky discusses The Catch of a Lifetime: Moments of Flyfishing Glory, *his collection of fishing stories.*

Sara Wilcox

Fly tier Bill Newcomb (seated, wearing hat) is always happy to share his expertise with curious passersby.

Sara Wilcox

Scott Biron and AMFF Curator Jim Schottenham livestream a demonstration on streamer tying.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dee Chatani

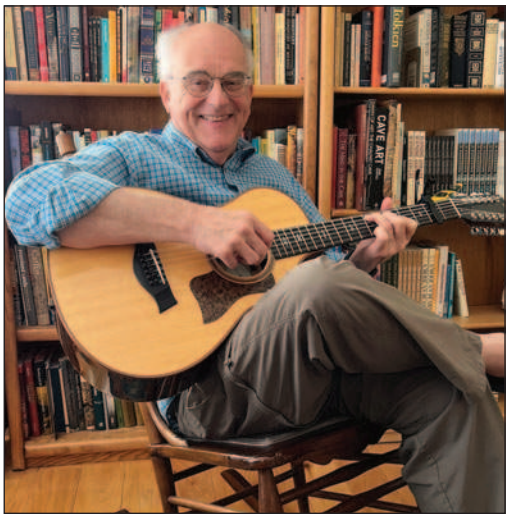
Christopher Pibus grew up near the shores of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, and he has been inspired and sustained by moving waters ever since. He is a writer and retired lawyer now living in Dundas, Ontario. His fly-fishing life began in 1970 when he spent two weeks camping in the woods near Wilmington Notch, fishing his beloved West Branch of the Ausable. After more than fifty years of fishing in North American rivers and farther afield, he still grins like a six-year-old when he catches a trout.

Chris studied English and American literature at McGill University, then completed a graduate degree in English and a law degree at the University of Toronto. He practiced intellectual property law for forty years before resurfacing to begin writing the fishing stories he has been waiting all his life to do. He published his first piece in *Fly Fisherman* magazine in February 2023, and his story "Downstream from Wisdom" is included in a collection called *Wisdom River: Meditations on Fly Fishing and Life Midstream* (UpRoute, 2023). "Finding the Light: Adirondack Art and Angling with John Walsh" appeared in the Summer 2024 issue of this journal. Special thanks to his literary mentors Robert Reid and Jim McLennan for their unfailing guidance and encouragement.

Timothy P. Schilling a theologian and student of literature, is brother to many an angler without feeling compelled to practice that art himself (though he is tempted by Christ's suggestion that it can be a good way to pay one's taxes; see Matt. 17:27). Instead, he focuses on how well certain anglers can write, most notably Norman Maclean. Schilling's book *The Writings of Norman Maclean: Seeking Truth amid Tragedy* (with a foreword by John Maclean) was published in August by the University of Nevada Press. He is also the author of *Lonesome Road: A Memoir of Faith* (Wipf & Stock, 2024).

Annegien Schilling

Marsha Karle



Paul Schullery (aka "The Editors") was the first executive director of the museum (1977–1982) and second editor of the *American Fly Fisher* (1978–1983), to which he has contributed more than thirty articles since 1976. During his museum tenure, some of these articles were published without a byline, including the three reprinted here. He is the author, coauthor, or compiling editor of more than fifty books, including twenty about fish and fishing, and contributing author to thirty other books. He is a recipient of the Roderick Haig-Brown Award (2006) and an inductee into the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame (2014). In his parallel existence as a naturalist and scholar of the national parks, he was founding editor of *Yellowstone Science* (1993–1996), the research journal of Yellowstone National Park. He is recipient of honorary doctorates from Montana State University (1997) and Ohio University (2013); the Wallace Stegner Award from the University of Colorado Center of the American West (1998); and the Panda Award (2002) from Wildscreen International for the script of the PBS documentary *Yellowstone: America's Sacred Wilderness*, which he also narrated. He was an advisor and frequent on-screen interviewee for Ken Burns's *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* (2009), and was scholar-in-residence at the Montana State University Library (2009–2020). Paul is married to the artist Marsha Karle, whose art has appeared in many of his books. His most recent books include *The Bear Doesn't Know: Life and Wonder in Bear Country* (2021) and, with Steve Raymond, *This Artful Sport: A Guide to Writing about Fly Fishing* (2024).

Leadership in Motion

A screenshot from Fred Polhemus's 2021 video tour of Reflections: The Angler and Nature in Art.

As the green Vermont landscape changes to warm shades of red, orange, and yellow, the museum leadership prepares for changes as well. Fred Polhemus has served as president of the board for four years, and as we near the end of his term, I'm left in awe. All that we have accomplished as an organization would not have been possible without his measured, insightful, creative, compassionate, inspired leadership. Here's a look back at some of the museum's milestones during his tenure:

2021. Opened *Reflections: The Angler and Nature in Art*, featuring works from a gift by Michael Monier (a gift shepherded by Fred's supreme knowledge of sporting art); wrote articles for the *American Fly Fisher*, including "Mark Susinno: A Sense of Light and Space" and "Fishing Cousins: The Story of Picket Pin"; partnered on the *Mighty Waters* film, our Fly Fishing Film Tour entry; honored Paul Dixon with the Izaak Walton Award; and created Yoshi's Trail on the museum grounds.

2022. Rebranded the museum with a new logo; elevated our collections team with Curator Jim Schottenham and Collections Manager Kirsti Edwards; opened our state-of-the-art exhibit gallery at Wonders of Wildlife in Springfield, Missouri, and honored Johnny Morris with the Heritage Award; remembered Lefty Kreh with a permanent exhibit in the museum; recognized Paul Bruun with the Izaak Walton Award; acquired Charles Thacher's collection of rare angling books; celebrated the opening of the Joan and Lee Wulff Gallery with our *Tied Together* exhibit; and showcased the work of the creative fly tier Val Kropiwnicki.

2023. Honored Nancy Zakon with the Izaak Walton Award; highlighted the life of Jose Wejebe with a new exhibit and added his *Spanish Fly* series to the screening room (a digital archive that provides access to AMFF's complete film collection); celebrated Andy Mill with the Heritage Award; and released, with Rachel Finn, *After You've Gone*, a film delving into her life after loss.

2024. Launched our most ambitious growth initiative, led by Director of Membership Bren Truscott; honored the Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation with the Heritage Award in New York City and Wyoming; opened an exhibit featuring the art of C. D. Clarke; and recognized Dave Whitlock's vast contributions to our sport.

Of course, Fred was supported by our fantastic board of trustees, who lent their specific areas of expertise to many of these projects. But in a time when some small museums did not survive the economic upheavals of the pandemic, we were able not only to weather the storm but emerge stronger and more prolific than ever. As we turn this chapter's last page and pass the gavel to Gardner (Gary) L. Grant Jr., I'm grateful that Fred will remain on the board and for his extraordinary and continued dedication to AMFF.

Sarah Foster
Executive Director

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