

Bogdan: Milestones

by Graydon R. Hilyard

James Hardman



Stan Bogdan stands next to a set of reels he donated to the American Museum of Fly Fishing in June of 2005.

ONCE AGAIN, STAN BOGDAN was hurtling through the night bound for New Hampshire. Once again, he was a maelstrom of emotions, excitement tinged with doubt overrun by hope tarnished by a plague of what-ifs.

Eight years had passed since he boarded the train at Boston's North Station, leaving behind the 1947 New England Sportsmen's Show with one hundred and fifty of Julian Crandall's dollars in his pocket. Without them, he would have doubted that the owner of Ashaway Line and Twine Company of Ashaway, Rhode Island, had actually bought all of his Atlantic salmon reels. Anyone who could afford to hire Ted Williams for his trade-show booth could certainly afford any reel on the market. But he had bought his.

More importantly, they were not bought out of pity, as Mr. Crandall had

scathingly critiqued his efforts two years before. Herbie Welch had been rather gentle in his earlier evaluation, but not so Julian: "Too big, too heavy, poorly finished. The drag looks promising. Keep at it."

For the first time, Stan began to seriously consider commercially producing reels. Until then, he had been compelled by the need to be involved in the fishing process. First it had been fly tying, then it had been reel making, his goal nothing more than a few reels for himself and friends. A few reels after work in the basement at King Street was one thing; gearing up a business was quite another. He was a husband and a father now. Somehow a balance had to be struck. If not careful, his dreams could turn nightmarish in short order.

Now it was 1955 and he had just left New York City, flying on to Boston, once again a maelstrom of conflicting emotions. No money was in his pocket this time. Instead, a contractual handshake from William Shearer and the promise of an Abercrombie & Fitch check for an order of forty reels.

Halfway through that politely intimidating meeting had come a reassuring phone call from John Olin asking, "Are they treating you all right down there?" The answer had been, "Yes sir, they are." Thanks to Abercrombie & Fitch's round-trip tickets, he was in New York City for the first time, visiting the prestigious New York Anglers' Club, and meeting the legendary Joe Brooks and Sparse Gray Hackle. The business meeting was going well, and Stan had agreed to a number of conditions.

Yes, he would create three new models to be called the 100M, 200M, and 300M to be marketed solely by them. They had no interest in his Model 0 and Number 1 as Abercrombie & Fitch was aloofly driven to exclusivity. The 100M would be $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and the 200M and 300M would be $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter. Curiously, they insisted that the 200M be equipped with his smaller $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch brake drum that he considered inadequate for the long haul. Any reel $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches or more in diameter required a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch brake drum for maximum durability, but

Abercrombie & Fitch could not be persuaded. A practical Yankee with a wife, three children, and a twenty-year mortgage, then and there, Stan adopted the classical adage that the customer is always right. Even when he is not. No matter how inane, if a request did not compromise the reel's integrity, Stan would roll his eyes and cash the check.

Yes, he would create a new identification code to be used only on their reels. Stamped on the side of each reel foot would be a three-, four-, or five-digit number. The first two digits denoted the year of manufacture, then a dash, with the remaining digits denoting the number of models made. *AF* and the model number would be stamped within the curvature of the reel foot; 56-57 would mean that the reel was made in 1956 and was the fifty-seventh one made of whatever model number was stamped within the reel foot.

Yes, he had agreed to their use of the letter *M* to indicate that the reels were multipliers. Why this was needed he never knew, as he did not make a single-action reel.

Yes, he had agreed to their need for a color change. His buffed aluminum serpentine handle would be anodized gloss black, as would the reel foot. Lest he forget, they would send along a golden chalice as the color reference to be used exclusively on their line of reels. Maybe it made good marketing sense, but esthetically he despised their burnished gold. This was a battle that he could not win. They were New York City, and he was Nashua.

Yes, the retail price of one hundred dollars per reel seemed reasonable to him, particularly as he received sixty percent of it on their receipt of reel. Early on, his policy was never to accept payment until the reel was delivered. Customers often did not appreciate the time that handwork demanded, and their distracting demands he could do without. By not accepting money, he maintained control of a clientele very much conditioned to instant gratification.

Yes, the unwritten Bogdan warranty of "one turn of the crank" would remain in effect. Abercrombie & Fitch was secure in the fact that compromise was not in the Bogdan vocabulary. He alone would determine fault and fix any problems free of charge for the life of the reel.

Could he supply their orders in a timely fashion? Through a fog, he heard



A letter from Abercrombie & Fitch signifying the beginning of its relationship with Stan Bogdan. Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.

a voice very much like his own saying, "Of course, Mr. Shearer. I see no problem." Now adrenaline was wearing off, exposing the reality that, of course, there were going to be problems. Already he was working long hours after a full day at Highland Tool on Pine Street Extension in Nashua. Realistically, he could not continue making reels on a part-time basis for long. But what if the orders did not come as needed? They had just built a new home at 33 Fifield Street, and King Street had not yet sold. The new neighbors all thought that he was just an avid hunter but, truth be known, he was just trying to put meat on the table.

Meanwhile, Phyllis was already raising their three children essentially by herself, while he worked fourteen-hour days six days a week. True, it was the husband's function to make the money, but shouldn't his kids be able to recognize their own father? Could his dream really generate enough income, or was it just selfishness on his part? No matter the outcome, he feared that there was a price to be paid.

Fortunately, the train to Nashua would take longer than the flight to Boston. He needed time to think. More fortunately, he had married a woman very much like an earlier Bogdan wife. In 1610, it had been Anna Bogdan who had encouraged a reluctant Jan to return to

America where, despite the risks, they achieved success. Some 350 years later, the same would be said of another Bogdan couple. But Stan would not know that then.

From the beginning, Stan had been the anti-Christ of all things business. Since the invention of the wheel, no rational businessperson has ever created a product without first reviewing the competition. Not so Stanley.

Perceiving his reel to be a creative extension of himself, he had been aghast to find his first reel essentially a clone of the Hardy Perfect. A noble reel, but Stan's last name was not Hardy, and so he vowed never again to look internally at another maker's reel. Years later, he would give that first effort to Alec Jackson, in appreciation of his introducing the Bogdans to steelhead waters. In 2003, Alec Jackson would refuse an offer of \$25,000 for that first Bogdan prototype, stating, "I never sell a gift from a friend."

As romantic as the image of the solitary artisan may be, it cost Stan dearly as he spent countless hours fumbling his way

forward. Two more prototypes would be required before he finally purged himself of the Hardy influence. In 1947, satisfied that his concept of the brake drum and single-brake shoe was viable, Julian Crandall would advise a lawyer as Stan may be impinging on Pflueger patent rights. Exit Hardy and enter Pflueger, and a young man's sobering realization that nothing takes place in a vacuum.

No matter, really. His obsessive sense of perfection was already driving him toward the unique concept of the double-brake shoe. Although the single shoe worked well, durability was in question. In Stan's view, the inherent unevenness of pressure by a single force on the spindle would cause early brake and bearing wear, causing spool oscillation and the increased likelihood of snapped tippets.

Hours by the thousand were consumed, but it was time well spent. Designs flowed, problems dissolved, and when the drum-embracing double-brake shoe emerged, the hallmark of the Bogdan reel had been struck.

As unorthodox as Stan's design approach may have been, an economics professor from nearby Rivera College found his business practices even more quixotic. Initially the professor had thought it a sound idea to use S. E. Bogdan—Custombuilt as a model for his course on marketing.

The students enjoyed the process of investigating Stan's business, but not so the professor, as Stan quickly degenerated from role model to a study in Business Failure 101. Gleefully, Stan recalls the day when the good professor held an impromptu lecture on the floor of Stan's oil-soaked, 15-by-15 classroom delicately rimmed in chicken wire:

There is no reason why this man should still be in business, but yet he is. He ignores all the rules of American business. He does not advertise, and he does not take up-front money.

His waiting list is too long, and he risks losing customers. For all the wrong reasons, his inventory is low, but he pays no attention to the economy of scale. He has no business plan, and worse, has no interest in developing one.

The clear message was that what the students were observing was not applicable and that they should never try this stunt at home.

Encouraged by his intrepid wife, Stan resigned from Highland Tool in 1955 and moved his \$440 dollars' worth of archaic equipment into Highland Tool's \$19-a-month basement. Later, the Flather lathe, the Van Norman milling machine, and the drill press powered by a washing machine motor would move across the way to space sublet from Austin-Gordon, a manufacturing company buried deeply in the shadow of a towering smokestack. Without that brickwork spire marked MILLYARD against the Nashua skyline, sherpas would still be searching for Bogdan visitors as Austin-Gordon obscurely sublet from the Nashua Industrial Machine Company. Initially

located in the basement, later Stan gratefully moved into the daylight, where the years passed and his rent slowly increased to \$101.09 a month. Once a millennium, the management would shovel out and paint the environs, giving rise to the legend of the painted post, on which orders had been jotted down. The painted post never lost an order, but for years it became the whipping boy for any unfortunately "delayed" shipments.

By maintaining close relationships with both Highland Tool and Austin-Gordon, sophisticated machinery was made available for developments such as the one-piece spool and the refinement of the double-brake shoe concept. Equally important was the prototype and specialty work fed him by these shops that often sustained him through the grimness of the early years. Fleeing Austin-Gordon's looming bankruptcy, in 1996 the faithful machinery left New Hampshire's largest city for the solitude of its New Ipswich countryside.

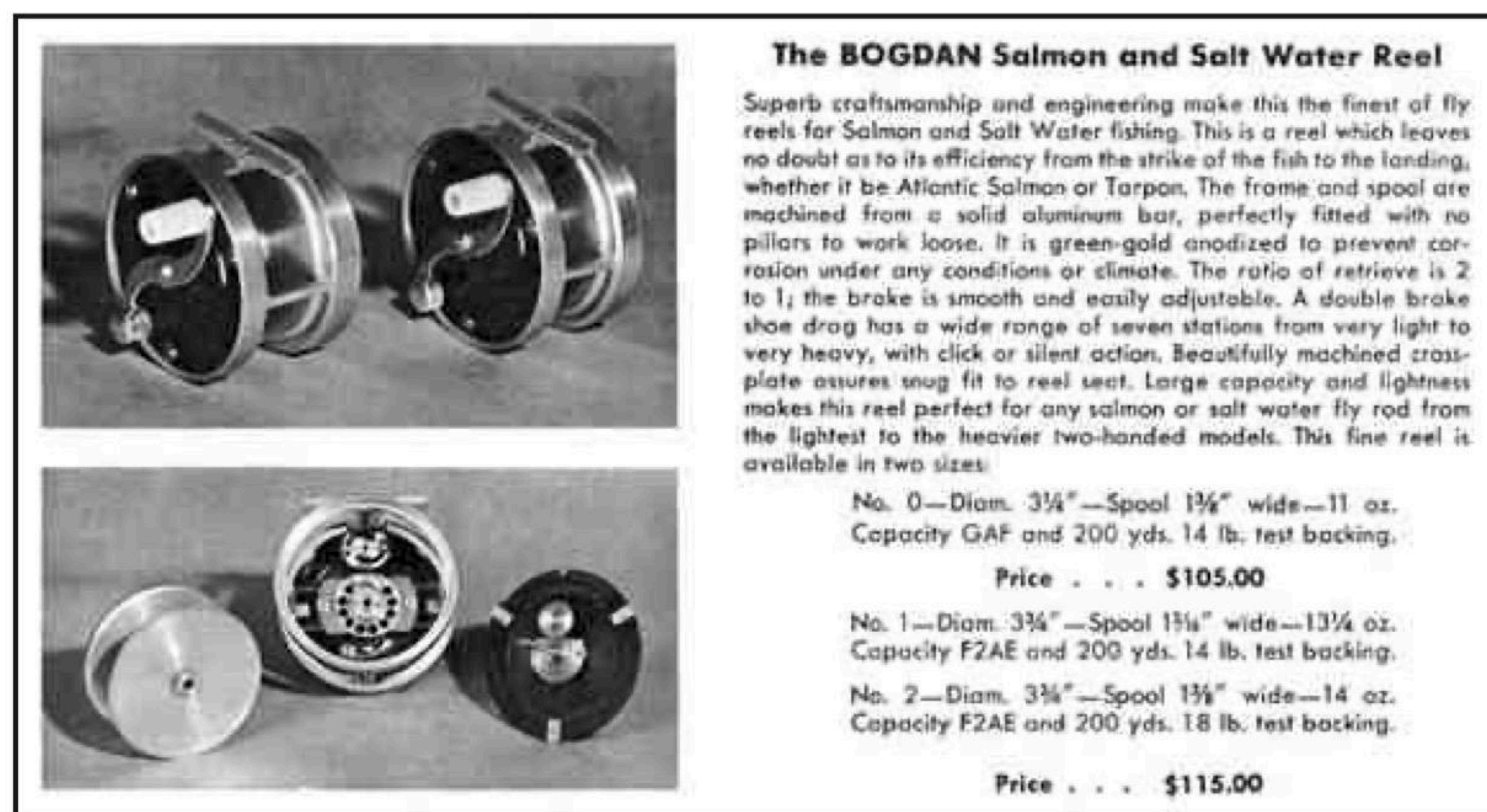
In 1957, the Orvis Company of Manchester, Vermont, finally agreed to market Bogdan reels. Talks had been stalled for some time as Orvis demanded naming rights. Encouraged by their premier rod designer, Wes Jordan, Stan refused, and Orvis management eventually acquiesced. Like Abercrombie & Fitch, a gentleman's handshake confirmed a 60/40 split of retail. Unlike Abercrombie & Fitch, they approved of his anodized colors and his models, asking only that model numbers be stamped on the side of reel feet. As Stan prefers to stamp directly

down into the curvature of the reel foot, side-marked model numbers now serve to identify reels specifically made for Orvis. The relationship ended in 1977 when Stan could no longer supply a sufficient volume without alienating his own customer base.

In time, all the major tackle merchants would add the Bogdan reel to their product line and effectively advertise it in their international catalogs. Attention was guaranteed as the premier rodmakers of Leonard, R. L. Winston, and later Thomas & Thomas advertised Bogdans as companions to their exquisite bamboo. In addition to Abercrombie & Fitch and Orvis, the New York City merchants of Hunting World, Angler's Roost, and William Mills were echoed on the west coast by Norm Thompson and Alec Jackson. The Canadian market was well represented by the Gulline Brothers of Montreal and Streeter & Quarles in Toronto. Prestigious fishing lodges all along the Grand Cascapedia and the Restigouche routinely ordered for their discerning guests and members. In Sweden, the Royal Coachman, owned by the irrepressible Milan Hajer, found itself continually back-ordered. Should a company fail, no matter, as the void would be quickly filled by another anxious to associate with the best.

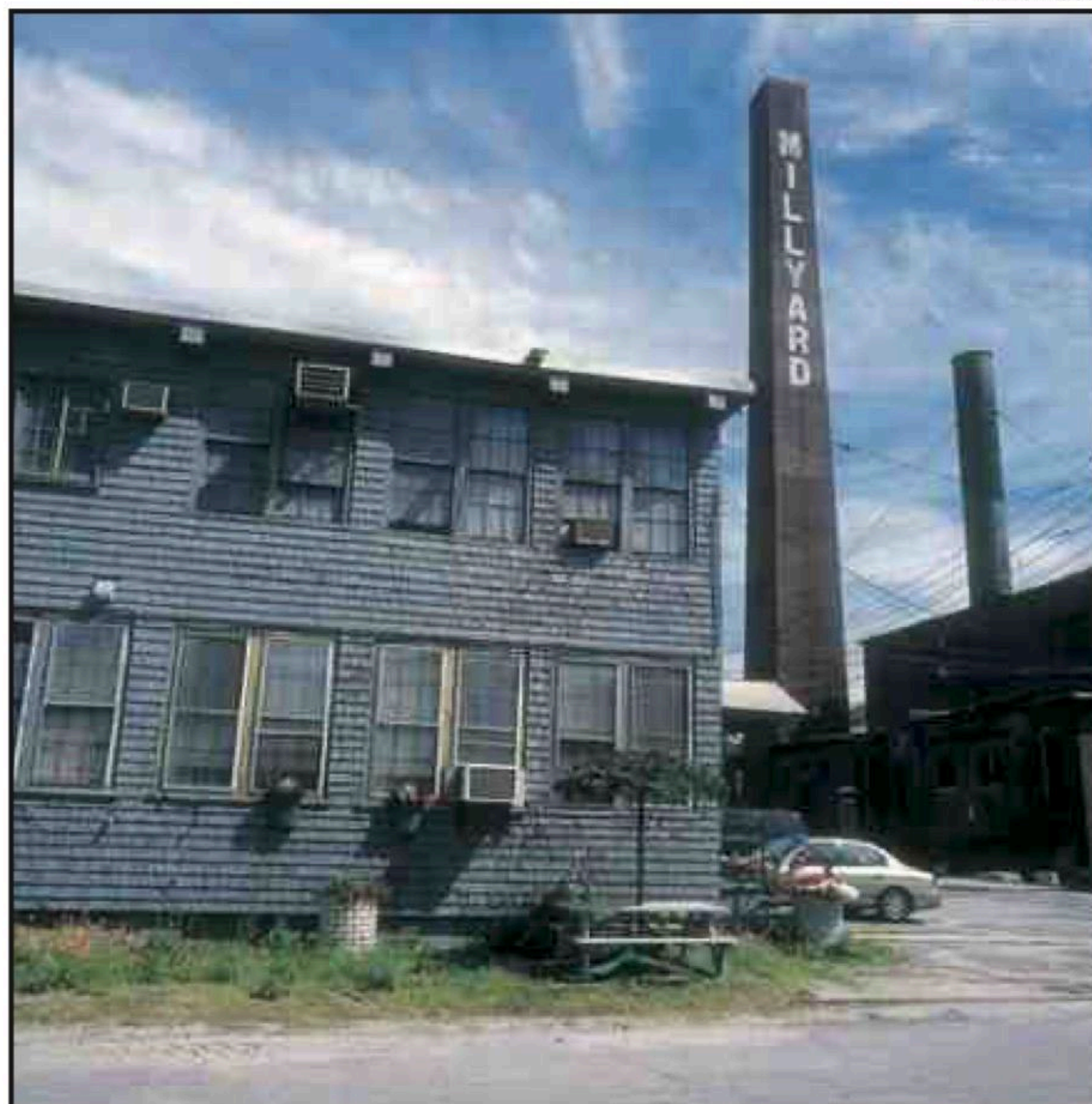
Additional recognition came through sporting literature. Once Joe Brooks's *Salt Water Fishing* established the pattern in 1950, no serious writing on the tools of fishing Atlantic salmon could fail to mention Bogdan. "S.E. Bogdan of Nashua, N.H., manufactures custom-built salt water fly reels that sell for \$30.00. Tough and with just about the best brake I've ever seen, they perform in masterly style and have capacity for all the line you could possibly need."

A fundamental ingredient in the Bogdan success was his ability to engage the leading sportsmen of the day in his



Stan Bogdan's reels were separated from the rest of the field in the 1961 Orvis catalog. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Dave Rust



The Bogdans' base of operations until 1996.

Dave Rust



*Stan Bogdan's engineering drawings.
Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.*

quest. It would be difficult to name another person capable of simultaneously focusing the attention of a John Olin, Stanley Gildersleeve, Ted Bates, B. E. Bessinger, and Julian Crandall—experienced salmon fishers and influential millionaires all. If they were not enough, then there was Joe Brooks, A. J. McClane, and Lee Wulff field-testing in the salt, while R. L. Haig-Brown did the same in British Columbian waters. Their combined input was essential as Stan had never fished for Atlantic salmon—until 1957, when he was invited to the Matane by Wes Jordan. Today, when asked why he chose to build Atlantic salmon reels, he bemusedly answers that his reels were expensive, and only Atlantic salmon fishers could afford them. That, and he hoped someday to fish for Atlantic salmon himself and would need a reel.

Professor: For a company to survive long term, it must make repeated sales to a large customer base . . .

Student: But Mr. Bogdan says not many people can afford to fish for Atlantic salmon, and that his reels never wear out.

Gathering often-conflicting advice and mixing it with untold hours of perseverance, the Number 1 emerged in 1951 to be followed by the archetypal Model 0 in 1953. A variety of cranks had given way to the classically counterbalanced serpentine. Per Stanley Guildersleeve, the brake lever position plate was increased from 7 holes to 11 to guarantee accurate drag tensions in the heat of battle. Three captive screws driven by a Canadian dime prevented chaos during disassembly in the field. Extra spools were available on request, but beware. Because of close tolerances, that spool would only fit the specific reel that it was made for. A “poacher button” was installed for any heathen unable to abide the song of a salmon rushing to the sea. Anodizing and corro-

ate the patina of aging nickel silver.

Awaiting the development of production techniques, aluminum alloys were not readily available until the late 1930s. Then came World War II, and, like Delrin, they were unavailable to the civilian sector. Postwar, Stan would use the aluminum-magnesium-silicon alloy, 6061, for the Bogdan frame and the 2024 alloy for the spool and side plates. Having great strength and excellent machining and anodizing properties, there has been no reason to ever change alloys. Initially, the S. E. Bogdan nameplate had been attached to the crank side, but was moved to the reverse side to avoid potential line entanglement. After some experimentation, the Orvis reel foot became the model for the Bogdan reel foot, as it was the nearest thing to universal. At Everett Garrison's request, he made a die to better fit the Garrison seat to the Bogdan foot. Although he will modify on request, Stan much prefers that owners do their own reel foot file work.

Respecting the power of the adversary, a 1.91:1 retrieve ratio (rounded up to the familiar 2:1) was combined with his peerless cam-driven two-shoe braking system. Although immediately hailed as the best drag system ever designed, it would need no patent protection as its expensive complexity effectively discouraged interlopers. All this was corralled by a one-piece frame hewn from aluminum alloy tubing, another first by Stan in his continual effort to

sive-resistant materials neutralized the devastating effects of salt, but flushing after use would always be advised. Side plates of hard rubber had been only briefly flirted with and only in the prototype stage. The use of nickel silver was never considered, as it was perceived as being too heavy and too expensive. Quite coincidentally, the pale gold anodizing on the frame would accurately imperson-

maximize strength while eliminating problems. With the Bogdan, there was no need to fear a meltdown. Years of analytical thought and the eighteen hours of handmade manufacture and assembly required for each salmon reel would be the guarantee of that.

Thirteen years of challenges had been met and mastered. But as gratifying as the critical acclaim was, as encouraging as the Abercrombie & Fitch and Orvis contracts were, the question still remained: would he sell enough to survive? Overshadowing his constant business concerns, a war was looming, and he had two young sons.

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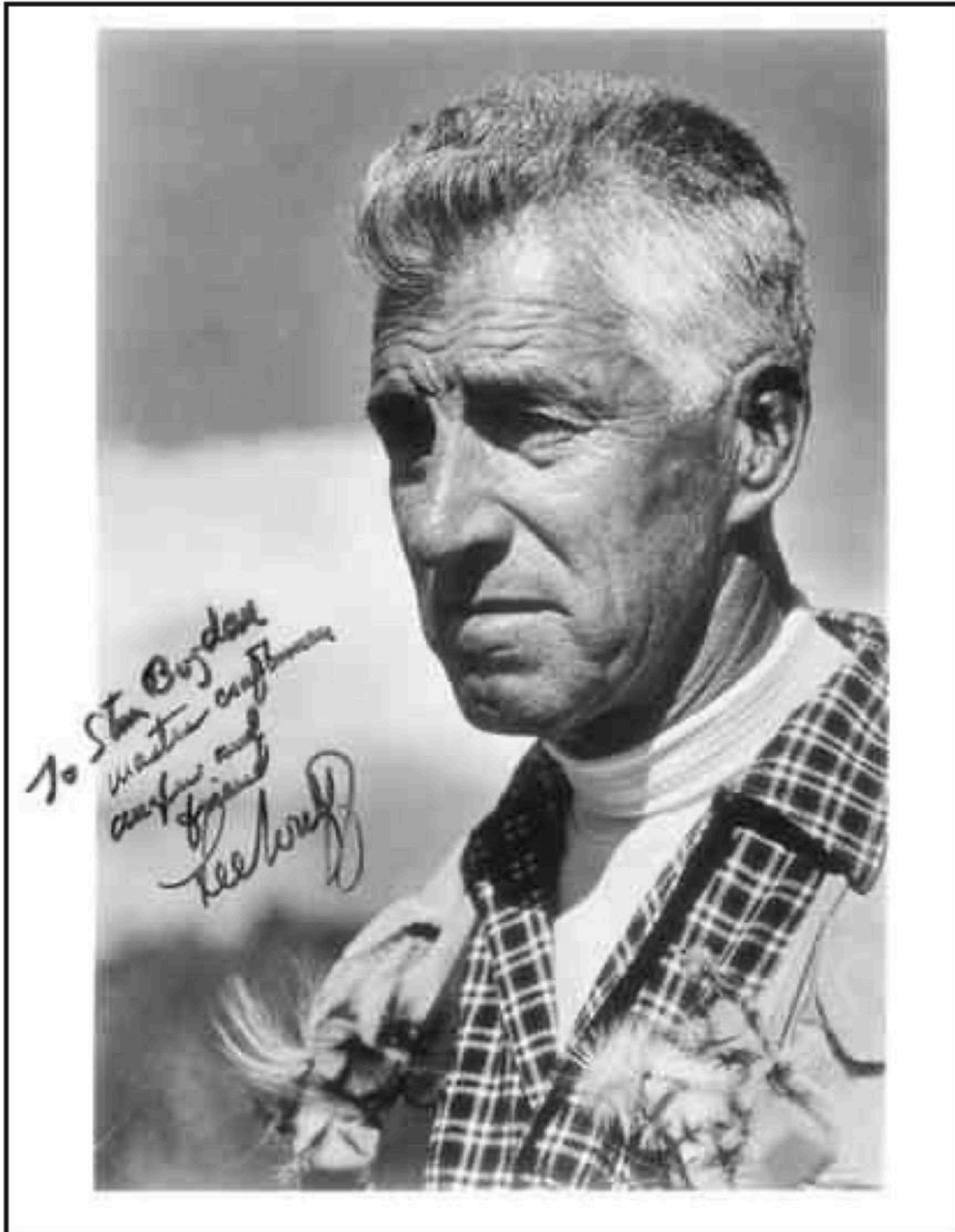
Mercifully, the decade of the 1960s was survived on all fronts, and the 1970s dawned brightly with laughter in the wind. By joining the Montreal-based Atlantic Salmon Association in 1961 and by becoming a trustee of the American Museum of Fly Fishing in 1973, Stan had put a face to his reels, and sales were slowly but steadily increasing.

On joining the precursor to the Atlantic Salmon Federation, he immediately became embroiled in a passionate argument that gives fishing lodges their late-night charm. To wit, in playing the salmon, should the reel be up or down? For most of the world, that question had been settled as far back as 1808 when, in his *Complete Angler's Vade-Mecum*, Captain T. Williamson cogently argued for the reel beneath the rod. In 1881, Dr. James Henshall reinforced the captain's view in his widely acclaimed book that sold so well. Then again, perhaps it is unreasonable to assume that a proper salmon fisher

Dave Rust



*Bogdan reel parts made by the master himself.
Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.*



Lee Wulff was one of the many prominent anglers impressed by Stan Bogdan's work. Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.

would sully his library shelves with the title *The Book of Black Bass*.

Besieged by requests spawned by the controversy, Stan bemusedly made and repositioned line guards and rollers, grateful for the work. Diplomatically, his first publication would be an open letter in the *Atlantic Salmon Journal* requesting input on this baffling state of affairs. Diplomacy paid off when B. E. Bensinger invited him to his Brunswick Lodge on the Flatlands of the Restigouche, ostensibly to discuss the problem in its natural setting. Despite many subsequent visits, history does not record the resolution of this great debate.

If sales were marginal in the 1960s, respect for his design abilities was not. Obsessed with lightness in tackle, Lee Wulff, who was living in nearby Keene, New Hampshire, asked Stan to design a reel capable of handling large fish, but without the bulk. Inspired by the ancient wooden Nottingham reel, Stan eliminated the outer frame, cut off the connecting bars, designed an exposed rim in lieu of a heavier braking system, and drilled the spool into oblivion. Line retrieval proved to be a bit sloppy, and Lee suggested reinstating the bottom crossbar in the shape of the letter T. Problem solved, Lee

immediately field-tested the reel in Ecuador, catching a 146-pound black marlin.

In 1967, one hundred such reels were made by Farlow & Company of London and marketed by Norm Thompson Outfitters as the Lee Wulff Ultimate Reel.

Shortly thereafter, Orvis approached Stan with similar needs. Again, using the concept of the Nottingham reel, for a fee of two hundred dollars, Stan designed the CFO, named for their founder, Charles Frederick Orvis. A landmark reel, it remains in production, having sold more than 200,000 units as of 2003.

In September of 1973, Steve arrived at the shop sardonically carrying a sign reading S. BOGDAN AND FATHER. Although blessed by many things, nothing could ever equal the father's joy that day when his son arrived to work beside him. And work he did. Any hopes harbored by the

faithful that reel production would soon increase were quickly dashed. When recently asked how long he had apprenticed, Steve's response was, "Thirty-one years, so far." More arduous than that of any medieval guild, his apprenticeship officially ended in 1996 when he completely assembled a Bogdan reel for the

first time—one year after he and wife Sandy had bought the company.

Although a twenty-three-year training period may be a bit protracted, there is some justification for it given the complexity of the Bogdan operation. Do not imagine that the Bogdans are eagerly waiting by the phone to cheerily say hello-goodbye and immediately get to work on your order. Instead, individual reel models are systematically made one batch at a time. The size of batches range from one to three hundred depending on inventory stock and anticipated orders. If you should order the best-selling reel of all, the Model o, and that batch is recently finished, then you will quickly receive your reel. Dream on. There are fifteen models. The odds are not with you. Some years, no reels are shipped at all.

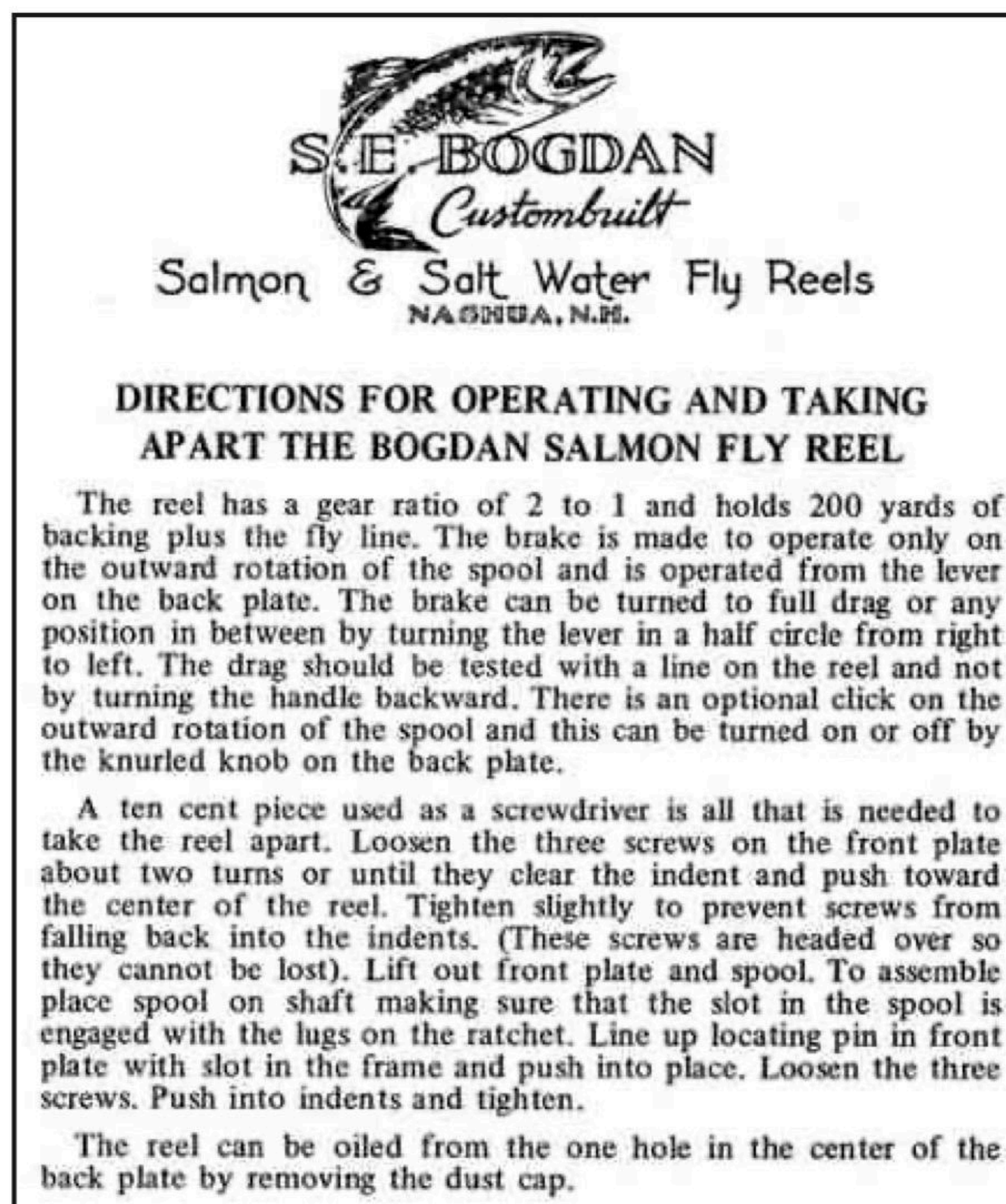
Pretend you are Steve. First you must learn to identify every part in the widely differing trout and salmon reels. You must learn to make these parts on machinery that dates to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. When machinery goes down, you call the Smithsonian for parts. You are grateful that there is a set of springs that you do not have to make. You are grateful that there are two gears you do not have to cut.

Measurements and assembly sequences are known only to a man whose body may be in Nashua, but whose head is on the Alta. Your father is the only instructor in the galaxy who answers every question with, "Well, you know . . ." No, you don't.

Why else ask the question? You learn that answers are only clues. You are Sherlock Holmes. He is Professor Moriarty. Finally, all the parts for the Model o are made. Hallelujah! Now you must learn to assemble it. Uh-oh. No blueprints. Just oil-soaked sketches mapping a road to . . . nowhere. Turns out that it really doesn't matter that you can't decipher them. "Well, you know, I haven't used those for years. Here, let me do that." At last, a completed reel. Then you get to do it all over again—fourteen times. Years go by before you ever say hello again to that Model o. Care to remember how much you forgot? Waiting for a Bogdan or making one, patience is a virtue. Just ask Steve.

Professor: He puts his company at risk as he has only one employee and no blueprints.

Student: But Mr. Bogdan says he has no idea how many parts are in his reels, and it would slow his production if he trained a staff.



An early instruction sheet for Bogdan Custombuilt reels. Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.

In 1972, Stan attended a meeting of the Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers held at the Essex Hotel in New York City, an evening made memorable by John McDonald's remarks on his recently published *Quill Gordon*. After the dinner auction, Stan was approached by Harry Darbee, Ron Kusse, and Sid Neff, suggesting that he make a reel for trout fishers. His initial response was the oft-quoted, "Save your money, boys. Keep your line in your pocket."

Fortunately, they persevered and in 1976, ten 5-weight, single-action, nonadjustable pawl-drag reels were shipped to Harry Darbee for distribution to the members. Happy to be free of the boring perforations and thinking that was the end of it, Stan returned to the serious work of making salmon reels.

Despite an initial reluctance to accept the nonadjustable drag, orders started pouring in for the 5-weights. Hard on their heels came requests for a larger 6-weight, a smaller 4-weight, and finally, the diminutive 3-weight. (Not overly fond of the "baby" image, Stan much prefers that trout reels be identified by line weight.)

Spare spools were never an option as the drive shaft was held to the spool by a tapered pin connection. This was the strongest means of assembly and was required by the use of the two bearings that gave the drive shaft maximum support. Despite Stan's lectures on thrift, by 1976, an entire line of trout reels was in place and would account for nearly half of all future sales. Thanks to them, in 1977, he was able to jettison all subcontract work and focus entirely on reel production.

Whatever his perceived business shortcomings were, Stan always listened to his customer base. The "how" of the reel was always his, but the "why" of the reel was often theirs. Although the reels were market generated, they would not quickly come to market. Undue haste has never been a Bogdan characteristic.

Professor: To meet demand, Bogdan must take advantage of new computerized machining methods and subcontract out work.

Student: But Mr. Bogdan says that if he does, his reels will no longer be Bogdans made by Bogdan.

In 1975, John Olin received the first Model 150 with its wider spool designed to better accommodate the newer and thicker polymer lines that had turned silk antique. That same year also marked the

end of line guards and rollers, perhaps a sign that the Great Up-Down Reel Debate was winding down on Québec waters.

In 1976, Alec Jackson called asking about the feasibility of creating a reel for steelheaders, something lighter than a salmon reel but with more line capacity than a trout reel. Encouraged by Stan's response, he gathered input from the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishers. In 1977, they received their uniquely tailored, single-action, nonadjustable pawl-drag reels housed in either a 3¼- or 3½-inch frame containing a 1½-inch diameter spool.

In 1980, Christopher Russell of England and Warren Duncan of Canada received the first of the Model 50s. This

fully promises to complete his 5½-inch, 2-pound version of the Alta reel by this book's deadline, but one wonders. Most likely, the writer will make discovery not long before the reader.

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Hindsight makes us smarter than we are. From its vantage point with everything explained, all things seem quite simple. So surely we must be forgiving of the professor and his standard business-school advice. Business plans are based on probabilities supported by the law of averages. The professor's only failing was not understanding that there was nothing average about a man named Bogdan, a reel named Bogdan, or the market for which it was intended.

Only someone intimately aware of the nature of the Atlantic salmon fisher could discern Stan's marketing genius. Having crafted the best for Atlantic salmon, he made obtaining it as difficult as obtaining the fish itself. Although the Atlantic salmon may or may not be the King of Fishes, it certainly takes a king's ransom to fish for them. But money alone will not get you on the Bogdan waiting list, and power will not vault you to the head of it. There are other criteria that must be met. Consider what that does to an individual so competitive that he will fish to anorexic fish. The professor need not have worried about losing clients. At a certain level, fly fishers are conditioned to the best, presuming that it makes them better. They must have it. For those who cannot wait, there is the secondary market, at twice the price. Created by

delay, this fascinating tool allows Stan to safely observe the market, then raise his prices, with no danger of choking it. Every price increase lessens his need for volume, which only stimulates the cycle of supply and demand. Fifty-five years later, and prices continue to spiral. When asked if all of this was orchestrated with malice aforethought, Stan sparkles and moves on, quite content to let the mystery be.

We do not know where the professor and his students are today. We trust that like the Bogdans, their ledger sheets are balanced, and friendships are the order of the day.

We do, however, know where the Bogdans are. Like the steadfast Flather Lathe, midwife to some 9,338 Bogdan reels, they are working late into the New Hampshire night.

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Three fly patterns honoring the Bogdans. Top left: 33 Fifeld, originated and tied by Leslie Hilyard. Top right: Bogdan's Black and Gold, originated and tied by Dave Rust. Bottom: Lady Bogdan, originated and tied by Dave Rust. Image courtesy of Frank Amato Publications.

unique hybrid designed for Atlantic salmon dry-fly fishing consists of a single-action reel outfitted with double-brake shoes within a 3½-inch frame.

In 1992, W. Thorpe MacKenzie of Tennessee received the first Model 400. The official party line is that it was created to handle the increased line required by the renewed interest in two-handed rods. The reality is that it never would have happened but for a shipping error. Four-inch pipe was sent instead of the 4-inch tubing required for the Model 300 frame, a problem as one takes its measurement off the outside diameter, whereas the other uses the inside diameter. With thrift outranking godliness in Nashua, some way had to be found to use the stock the distributor refused to take back.

Since 1997, another model has been languishing in New Ipswich. Stan faith-



Bogdan Prototype 1

*"Oh God, I've made a
Hardy Perfect."
~ S.E.B.*

Photos by Alec Jackson

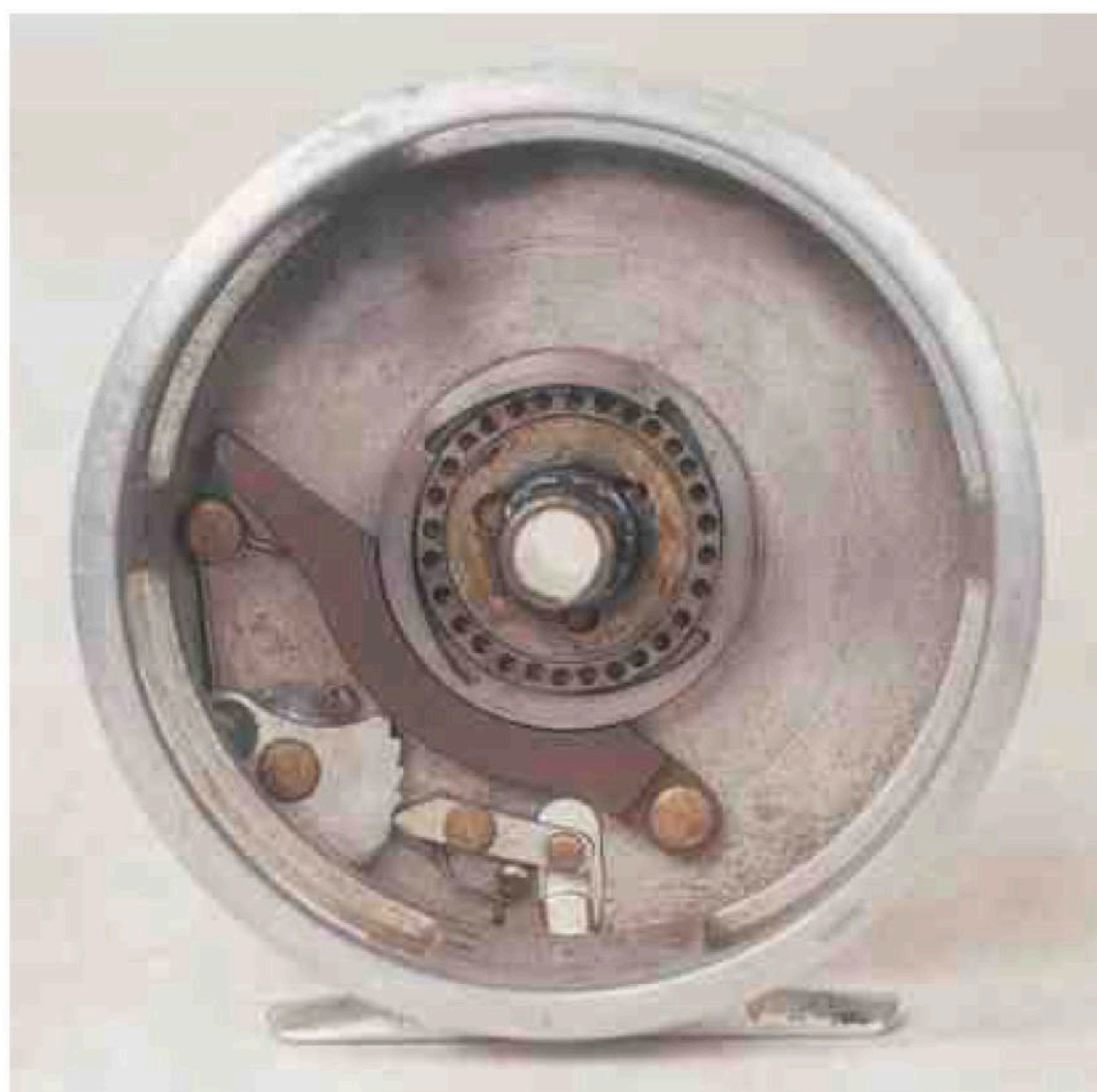


- Number made: One
- Date of origin: 1940
- Frame: One-piece, sand-cast aluminum, no finish, OD = 3.5 inches
- Spool: Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction, no finish
- Width: 1 inch
- Weight: 9.2 ounces
- Direct drive: 1:1
- Brake system: Click and pawl
- Brake adjuster: Screw, brass
- Handle: Post on plate, aluminum
- Reel foot: Aluminum, one-piece, nontapered, four-screw attachment
- Observations: Trout engraving is the same as found on letterheads and business cards. Ball bearings were obtained by breaking up a larger used one. World War II restrictions on materials limited experimentation from 1940 until 1945.
- Crank: Positive 1149; Outside: Positive 1144; Internal: Positive 1147

Bogdan Prototype 2

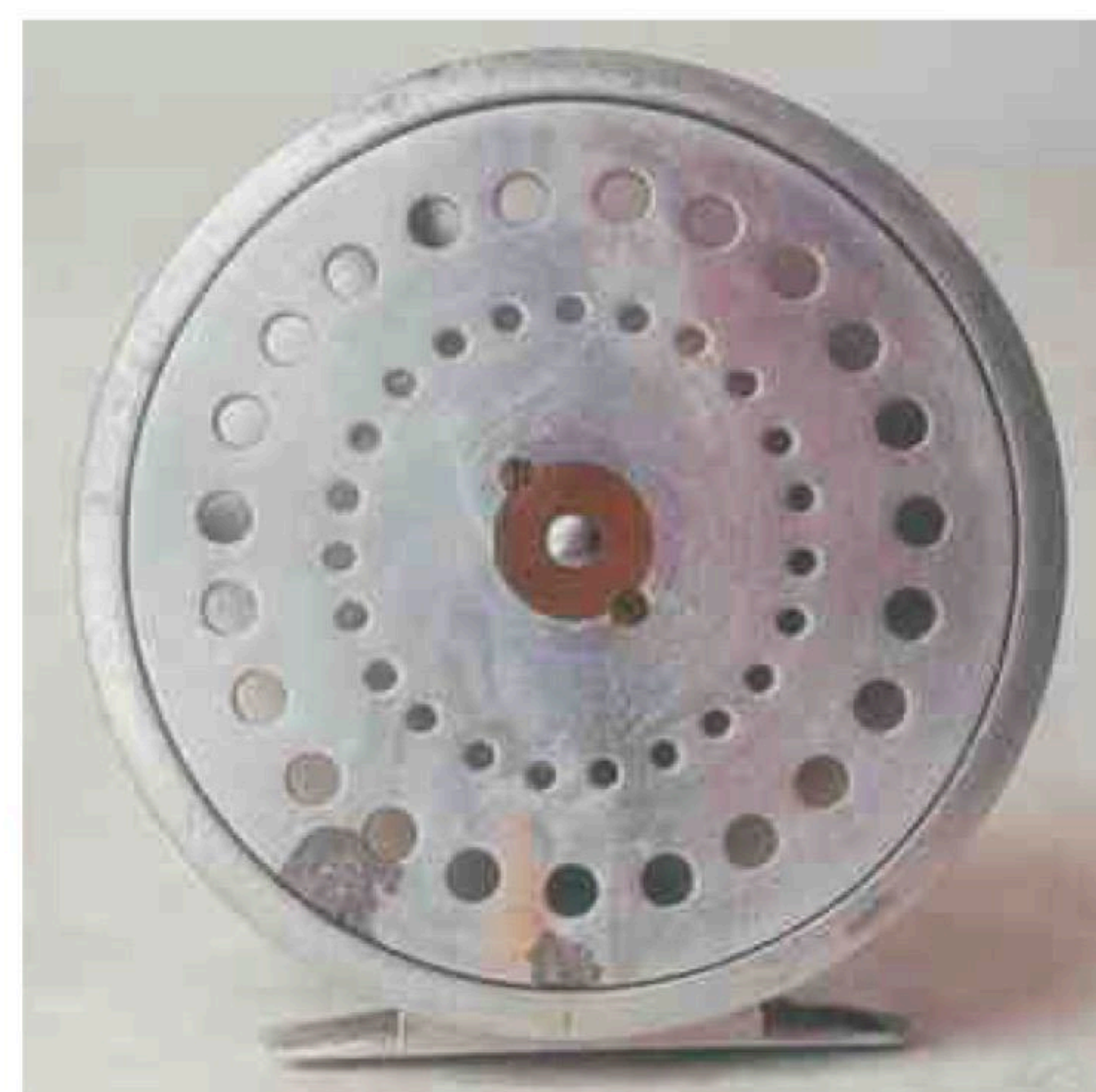
"I can't get the damn drag to smooth out."

~ S.E.B.



- Number made: One
- Date of origin: 1945
- Frame: One-piece, sand-cast aluminum, no finish
- Spool: Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction, one side perforated, no finish
- Width: 4.25 inches
- Weight: 17.2 ounces
- Direct drive: 1:1
- Brake system: Single Micarta brake shoe activated by a round spring engaging a two-piece, 0.25-inch-high brake drum perforated for weight reduction
- Brake adjuster: Rocker button
- Handle: Post on plate, aluminum
- Reel foot: Aluminum, one-piece, nontapered, four-screw attachment
- Line guard: 1/8-inch soldered round wire attached to frame by brass screws
- Observations: Hardy influence continues with the use of a threaded drive shaft to join the front plate and spool allowing for RH wind only. Brake worked poorly as it was essentially on or off. Incoming click created by a dog mounted on the spool with four clicks per revolution. Front, short handle front, long handle back, perforated.

Photos by Dave Rust





Bogdan Prototype 3

"I'm still making Hardys."
~ S.E.B.

Photos by Dave Rust



- Number made: Three
- Date of origin: ca. 1945
- Frame: One-piece, sand-cast aluminum, no finish
- Diameter: 4.75 inches
- Spool: Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction, one side perforated, no finish
- Weight: 16.2 ounces
- Gear ratio: 3:1 and 4:1
- Brake system: Single Micarta brake shoe activated by a flat spring engaging a two-piece, $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch drum perforated for weight reduction
- Brake adjuster: Push bar, elongated and ribbed
- Line guard: $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch soldered round wire attached to frame by brass screws
- Handle: Post on plate, aluminum, offset
- Reel foot: Aluminum, one-piece, nontapered, four-screw attachment
- Observations: Hardy influence continues in the offset handle that resulted in poor leverage. To regain it, a slotted handle was sleeved over the shorter. Reel is joined by a conventional Hardy mechanism consisting of a spring-release locking into the drive shaft causing a sloppy fit. First evidence of multiplier.



Bogdan Prototype 4

“I sold them all!”
 ~ S.E.B.



- Number made: Ten
- Date of origin: ca. 1946
- Frame: One-piece, sand-cast aluminum, no finish, back plate part of frame
- Width: 3.75 inches
- Spool: Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction, one side perforated, no finish
- Spool width: 3.25 inches, diamond-shaped spool release cover
- Direct drive: 1:1
- Brake system: Single Micarta brake shoe activated by two coil springs engaging a two-piece, ¼-inch-high brake drum perforated for weight reduction
- Brake adjuster: Stepless lever on back plate
- Handle: Post on plate, aluminum
- Reel foot: Aluminum, one-piece, nontapered, two-screw attachment
- Observations: All ten reels were bought in 1947 by Julian Crandall, who gave one to Ted Williams.

Photos by Stan Bogdan



Allen Dorrill



Bogdan Prototype 5

*“Am I nuts using
hard rubber?”*

~ S.E.B.

Bill Young



Stan in his workshop, ca. 1975.

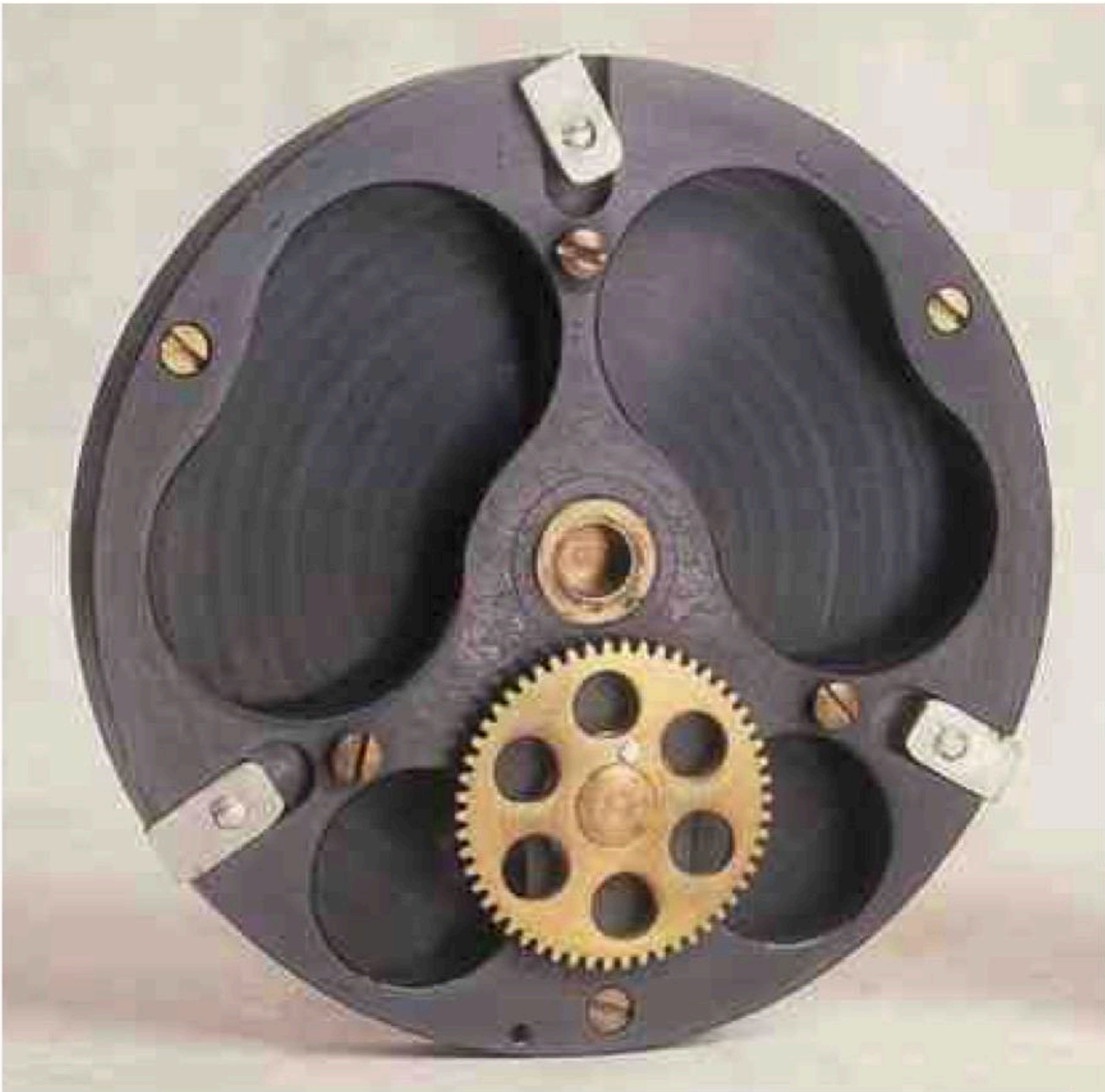
- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Number made: | Six |
| Date of origin: | ca. 1949 |
| Frame: | OD = $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches |
| Construction: | One-piece, sand-cast aluminum; finish oven-baked, crinkle-finish black paint |
| Side plates: | Hard rubber |
| Spool: | Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction |
| Weight: | 14.4 ounces |
| Gear ratio: | 1:1 and 2:1 |
| Brake: | Single Micarta brake shoe activated by two coil springs engaging a two-piece, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-high drum perforated for weight reduction |
| Brake adjuster: | Lever on back plate |
| Handle: | Atypical serpentine crank with counterweight; knob of black nylon |
| Reel foot: | Aluminum, ribbed for weight reduction, one-piece, nontapered, two-screw attachment |
| Observations: | Only use of hard-rubber side plates, because it expands and contracts, destabilizing the reel. Centering of crank handle requires four gears to engage, whereas an off-center placement requires three gears to engage. |



Allen Dorrill

Bogdan Prototype 6

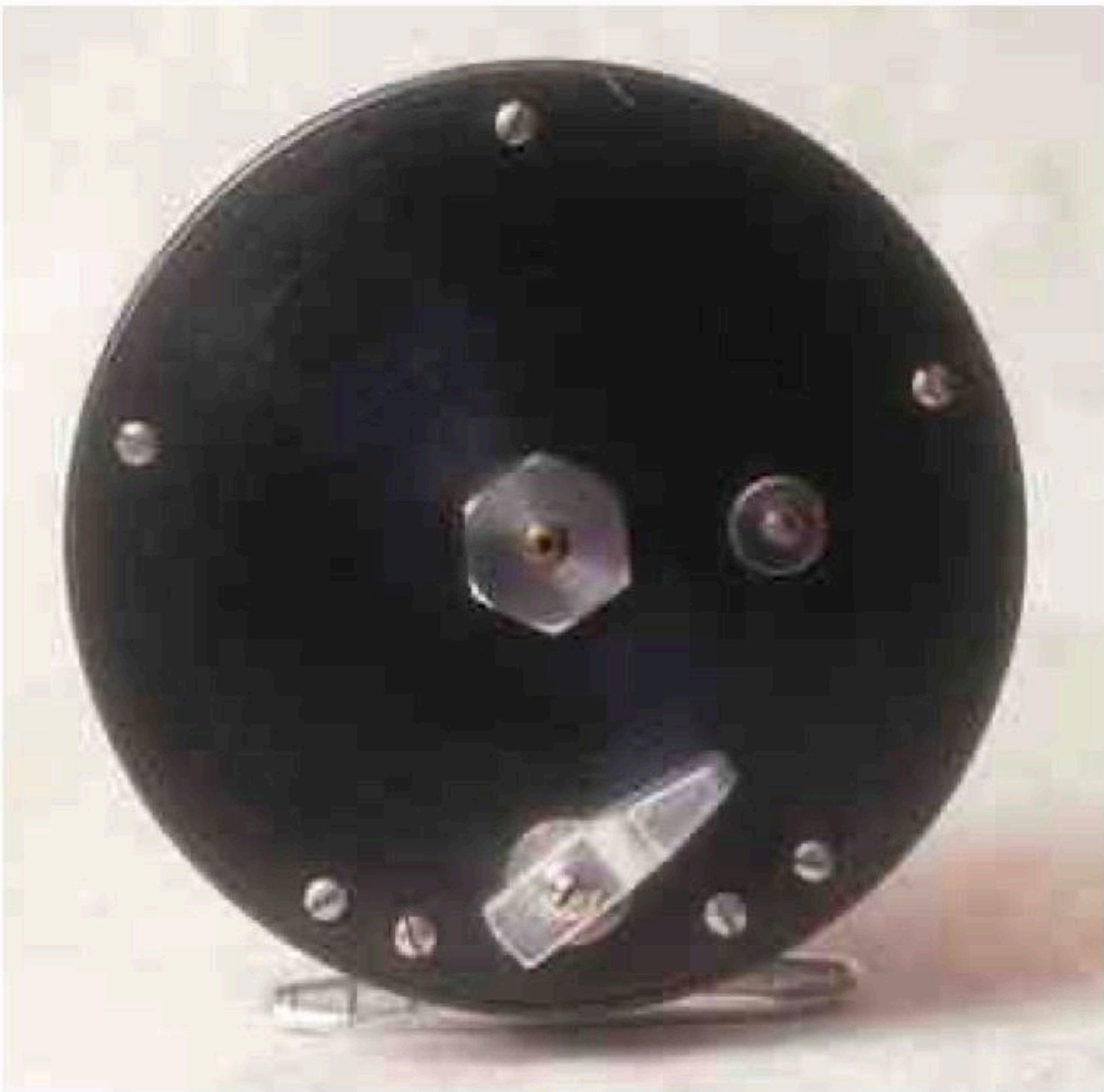
*“This anodizing
looks promising.”*
~ S.E.B.



Photos by Dave Rust



- Number made: Unknown
Date of origin: ca. 1950
Frame: One-piece, sand-cast aluminum, anodized black finish
Diameter: 3.75 inches
Side plates: Center shaft attached to back plate
Spool: Three-piece, sand-cast aluminum, screwed construction
Weight: 14.8 ounces
Gear ratio: 2:1
Brake: Single Micarta brake shoes activated by two coil springs engaging a two-piece, ¼-inch-high drum perforated for weight reduction
Brake adjuster: Stepless lever on back plate
Handle: Stainless steel, straight, counterbalanced; Delrin knob
Reel foot: Aluminum, one-piece, tapered, ribbed for weight reduction, two-screw attachment
Observations: First use of anodizing and stainless in response to complaints of rusting and seizing in salt water.



The Final Product

By 1951, the prototypes had coalesced into the archetypal Bogdan Number 1, employing the iconic cam-driven double-brake shoe made of Delrin. Although the collections of Wells, Dorrill, and Jackson are revealing, as is the Bogdan memory, some sixty-five years have passed since the onset of this grand experiment. Should other prototypes exist, the Bogdans would be most anxious to hear of them.

Stan Bogdan



Dave Rust

Above: The final Bogdan prototype.

Right: The Bogdan canon.
Reels from the collection of Joseph Wells.
Top row (left to right): 00, 100, 1, 2, 300, 400.
Center row (left to right): 0, 50, 150.
Bottom row (left to right): 5-weight, 6-weight, 3-weight, 4-weight, Steelhead, Steelhead (large).

