

# Frank Gray Griswold: A Good Sportsman

by Matthew Franks

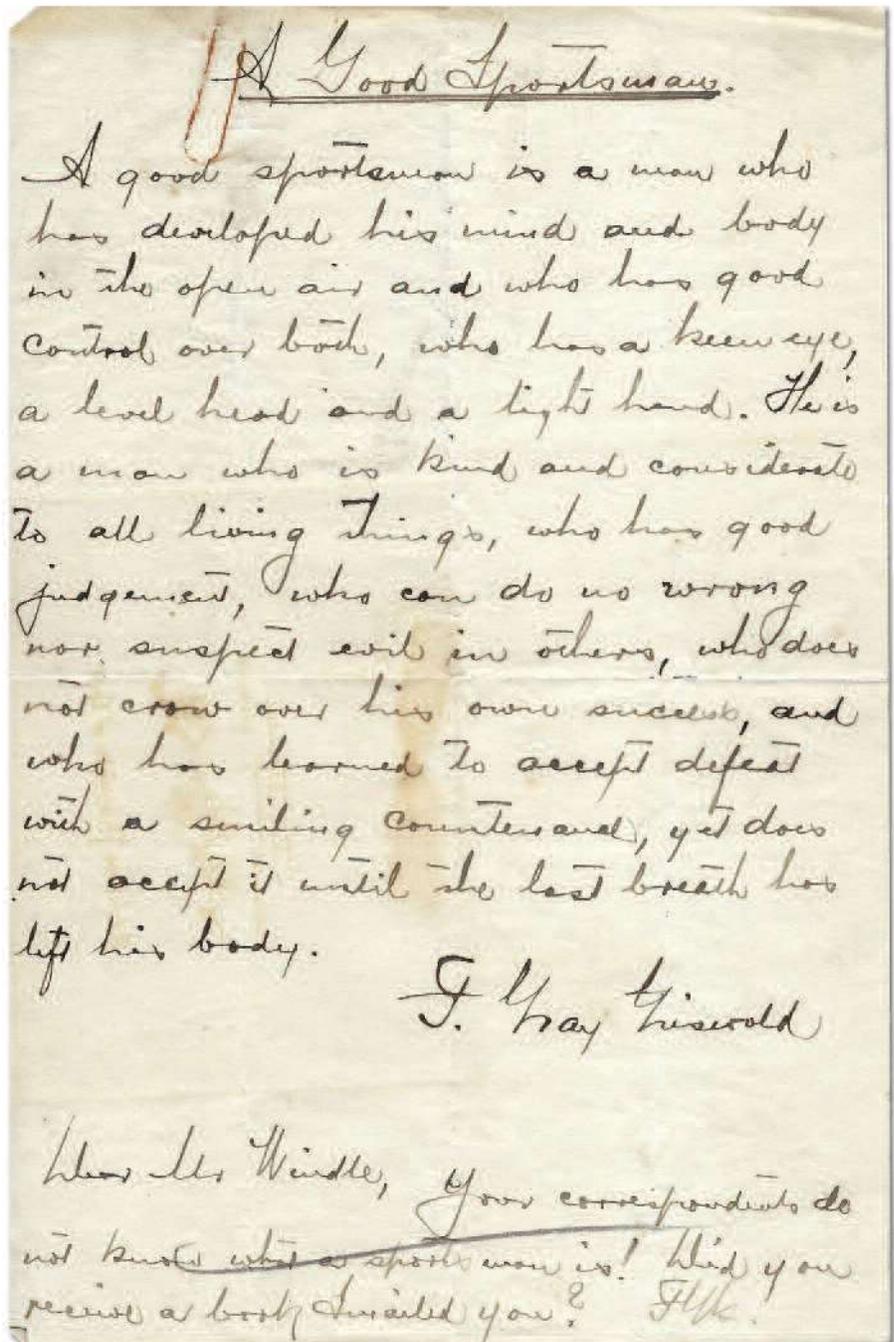
LATELY I HAVE BEEN spending a lot of time thinking about Frank Gray Griswold. Griswold was a respected author, angler, and all-around sportsman until his death in 1937 at age eighty-two, but this pithy description alone doesn't necessarily inspire sharp curiosity. I suppose that my deeper interest in Griswold was piqued when I purchased at auction an original manuscript letter of his from 1920 to Judge Ernest Windle, the then-proprietor of the *Catalina Islander* newspaper,<sup>1</sup> offering Griswold's definition of a good sportsman.<sup>2</sup>

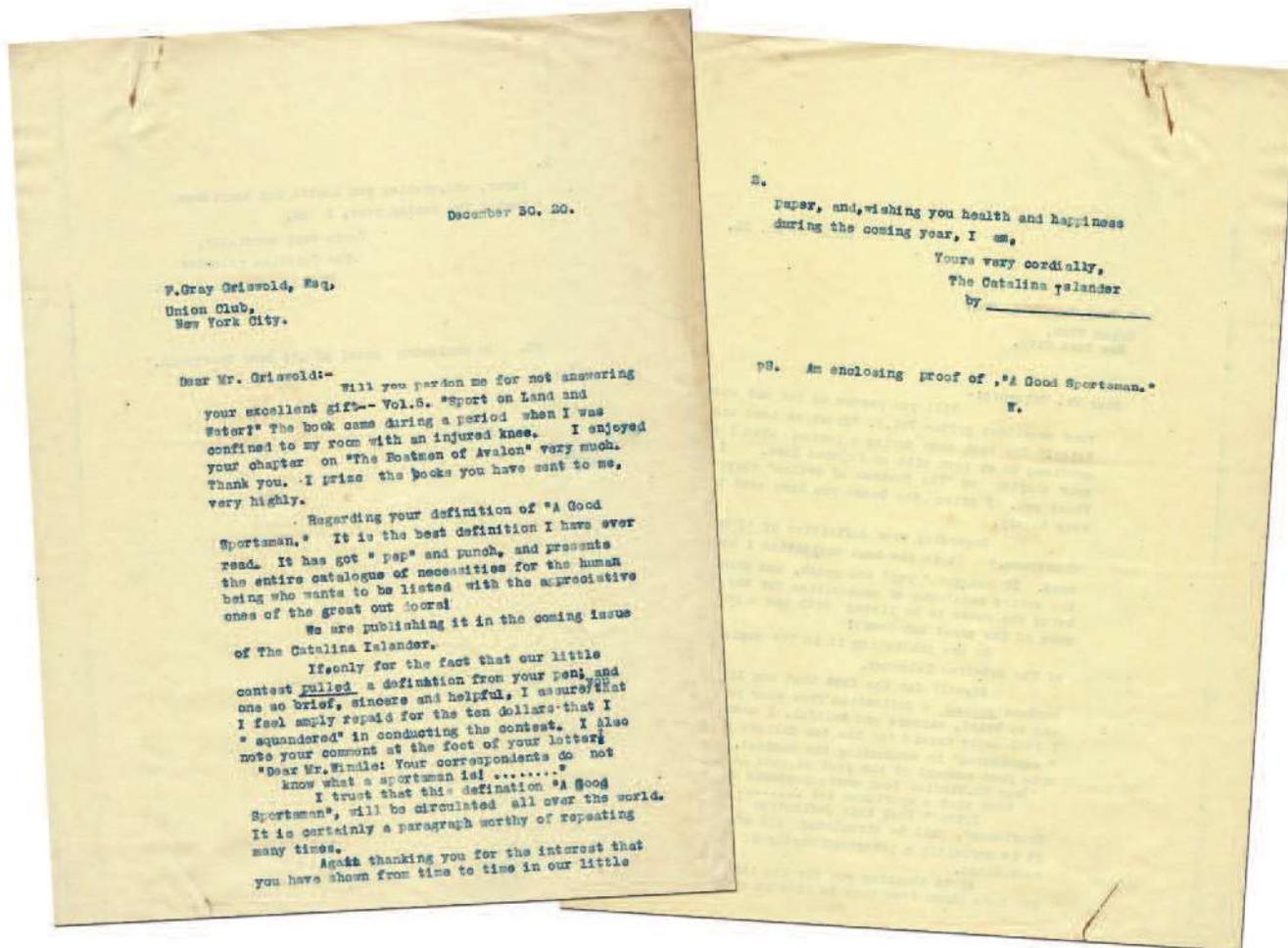
A good sportsman is a man who has developed his mind and body in the open air and who has good control over both, who has a keen eye, a level head and a light hand. He is a man who is kind and considerate to all living things, who has good judgment, who can do no wrong nor suspects evil in others, who does not crow over his own success, and who has learned to accept defeat with a smiling countenance and, yet does not accept it until the last breath has left his body.

Dear Mr. Windle, Your correspondents do not know what a sportsman is!<sup>3</sup>

In response, Judge Windle writes, "[r]egarding your definition of a Good Sportsman. It is the best definition I have ever read. It has got pep and punch, and presents the entire catalogue of necessities for the human being who wants to be listed with the appreciative ones of the great outdoors! We are publishing it in the coming issue of the *Catalina Islander*." He then coyly acknowledges, "I also note your comment at the foot of your letter 'Dear Mr. Windle: Your correspondents do not know what a sportsman is! . . .'"<sup>4</sup>

"A Good Sportsman," letter from F. Gray Griswold to Judge Ernest Windle, undated (likely 1920). Author's collection.





Response from Judge Ernest Windle to Frank Gray Griswold, 30 December 1920. Author's collection.

## FRANK GRAY GRISWOLD

Frank Griswold was born in New York City on 21 December 1854 into an established shipping family who primarily imported teas and silks from China. In 1868, following some legal changes to the regulation of the shipping industry in the aftermath of the Civil War, his father sold the business and moved Frank, along with his six siblings, abroad, finally settling in Germany. By age twenty, in the spring of 1875, Griswold graduated from the Handelsschule, or commercial college, in Dresden and promptly moved back to New York City.<sup>5</sup> It is there that Frank began what would be a long path of life experiences that culminated in an unmatched ability to define a good sportsman.

His financial success began in 1879 when, at the request of a friend, the son of the president of Western Union Telegraph Company (Western Union had recently purchased Thomas Edison's quadruplex telegraph for \$10,000), Griswold made an early investment in Thomas Edison's parent company. The company controlled most of Edison's

telegraph and electric light bulb patents, and after meeting with Mr. Edison in Edison's Menlo Park, New Jersey, workshop for a demonstration of both the newly invented light bulb and first phonograph, Griswold found this was an investment he couldn't resist. In the same year, he became an executive at the Lorillard Tobacco Company, where he served for fourteen years. Unlike most of his corporate contemporaries, however, Griswold would often take in a foxhunt on Long Island before getting the train to work by 8:30; it was a passion he picked up on holidays taken in England during his youth.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Griswold was one of the first to introduce the sport of fox-hunting to the suburbs of New York. In time, he would become master of hounds of the Meadowbrook, Rockaway, and Newport Hunts.<sup>7</sup>

Griswold lived the life of a gentleman in the Gilded Age. He moved in New York's highest social echelons, being named one of the 400, a list of "who's who" in New York society published in the *New York Times* in 1892.<sup>8</sup> A year before, in 1891, he had been granted membership to The Kittens, an exclusive din-

ing club that met regularly in and around New York City from 1891 to 1916. The club commonly dined on highly coveted items such as turtle soup, foie gras, and canvas-backed ducks washed down with copious glasses of Chateau D'Yquem.<sup>9</sup> It likely was Griswold's experience in The Kittens that later qualified him to write and publish several short dissertations on the merits of good food, wine, and cigars appropriately titled *French Wines and Havana Cigars* (1929), *Old Madeiras* (1929), and *The Gourmet* (1933).

As for angling—the topic for which Griswold is most widely known as an author—ironically, it wasn't until he was almost forty years old in the early 1890s that he took up fishing with his father, beginning with redfish in the Indian River in Florida.<sup>10</sup> Like many of us, this initial foray into fishing bit deep into Griswold's being and awoke a love of angling that stayed with him for the rest of his life. For the next thirty years, Griswold spent the majority of his time sailing far and wide in search of big-game fishing, mostly tarpon and marlin. He fished for tarpon as far north as Nova Scotia, all along the Gulf of Mexico, from

Key West around the coast of Cuba, and in the Panuco River at Tampico, Mexico.<sup>11</sup> In Cuba alone, over several seasons, Griswold landed 254 tarpon weighing in excess of 50 pounds each.<sup>12</sup>

In 1900, Griswold tried fishing for tuna at Catalina Island, California, for the first time, but did not care for the sport or the fish, referring to it as “simply hard work.”<sup>13</sup> He did not return to Catalina until 1909 when news of the first marlin having been landed reached him. This launched his own decade-long love affair with marlin, which he called the “greatest of all game fish” given its acrobatics and “ability to out-travel and out-jump [all other fish].”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, in 1920, almost thirty years after the first fishing expedition with his father, Griswold said goodbye to big-game fishing altogether, sold his ketch yacht, and never looked back.<sup>15</sup> As Griswold recalls, “[w]hen I approached old age, I took up the more gentle art of fly fishing for salmon.”<sup>16</sup> It was then at the youthful age of sixty-six that Griswold moved on to fly fishing for salmon in the Cascapedia and published his take in *Salmon Score of F. Gray Griswold for Ten Seasons 1920–1929*.<sup>17</sup> These seasons on Canada’s premier salmon river resulted in Griswold landing 595 fish (415 taken on a fly of his own design, the Griswold Gray) that weighed an average of 23 pounds: 4 in the 40-pound range, 61 in the 30-pound range, and the heaviest at 43 pounds. Admittedly, this experience was primarily a result of his gaining membership to the exclusive Cascapedia Club in 1920, along with the likes of several other prominent figures, such as Childs Frick (son of former Cascapedia member and noted steel magnate Henry Clay Frick) and W. Emlen Roosevelt (cousin to our twenty-sixth president).<sup>18</sup> In 1893, the club obtained the fishing rights and three chains of woodland on each side of the river for its ten members (reduced to seven in 1915). In this water, Griswold had much experience angling for salmon and wrote several works on the subject, including *The Cascapedia Club* (1920), *Observations on a Salmon River* (1922), *A Salmon River* (1928), and *Salmo Salar* (1929).

Having authored almost forty books, the bulk of which were privately printed in limited editions, Griswold is arguably the most prolific of any angling writer before or after him (see the Bibliography, page 7). Of course, this must be stated with the caveat that Griswold had a shrewd skill for repetition. For example, he

*Memoirs of a Salmon* (1931), a charming novella following the challenging life of a salmon in the Grand Cascapedia from the salmon’s point of view. Likewise, *The Memoirs of Diana Grisdale, M.F.H.* (1932), also written in the first person, centered on the master of foxhounds at Grisdale, her ancestral home on the left bank of Ireland’s Shannon River. Perhaps his most inimitable books, however, center on the lives of two unrelated Renaissance artists: *El Greco* (1929) and *Fra Filippo Lippi* (1934), the former being one of the few nonsporting titles published by Eugene Connett at the Derrydale Press.

## A GOOD SPORTSMAN

Given Griswold’s prolific résumé and the depth of his literary contribution, there is no doubt that his life experience qualified him to craft a definition of “a good sportsman.” It would be difficult for anyone to disagree with Judge Windle’s characterization, including his choice of adjectives, “pep and punch.” Like the honorable Mr. Windle, however, I admittedly found it impossible to ignore Griswold’s apparent contempt for the poor unsuspecting *Catalina Islander* readers who “wouldn’t know what a good sportsman is!”

In thinking it over, I do not believe it to be malice or animosity toward any *Catalina Islanders* who may have been less refined than he in the art of angling. Rather, Griswold seemed to possess an attitude that commonly characterized many sporting gentlemen of the Gilded Age with a slight penchant for haughtiness. Moreover, is it a mere coincidence that his snobbish comment was written in the same year he took up fly fishing for salmon? Griswold perhaps summed it up best himself when he commented in *Stolen Kisses* on the distasteful practice of betting in the then-burgeoning sport of horse racing:

Racing is a sport; there is no money to be made out of it. It is a game of pleasure for the rich; once commercialized it is doomed. It can never be revived unless started all over again by the respectable element and kept in their hands, for it is a sport and not a medium for personal gain.<sup>19</sup>



TARPON, 187 POUNDS  
St. Lucie River, Florida, January 23

*Griswold with tarpon, 187 pounds, St. Lucie River, Florida. From F. Gray Griswold, Sport on Land and Water, Volume I (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1913), facing page 92.*

wrote *Sport on Land and Water* as a staggered work of seven volumes (1913–1931), the first four of which comprise his earliest publications, such as *The Tarpon* (1922; the rarest of Griswold’s books according to Henry Bruns, the noted angling bibliographer), *Fish Facts and Fancies* (1923), *The International Polo Cup* (1928), and *Big and Little Fishes* (1927). Other works of redundancy include *The Life History of the Atlantic and Pacific Salmon of Canada* (1930), which contains much of the same material as his previous work, *The Life History of the Canadian Salmon* (1929). Finally, *A Salmon River* (1928) contains selections from his previously published books, *The Cascapedia Club* (1920), *Observations on a Salmon River* (1922), and *Big and Little Fishes* (1927).

In contrast, some of Griswold’s more unique literary contributions include

Now, more than 100 years later, although I'd like to think that Griswold would be pleased with this little biographic tribute in his honor, it is safe to say that he would be rather disappointed in the news of my winning a trifecta at the Kentucky Derby. I can only offer my sincerest apologies, Frank. But the plain truth of it is that the ponies are just more fun when a wager is placed. And, to the rest of you who may share his sentiments, a rising trout on a dry fly beats taking a salmon on a swinging wet fly every time.



## ENDNOTES

1. The *Catalina Islander* is a weekly community newspaper serving Avalon, Catalina Island (California). The *Islander* has been continuously published since 1914.
2. This definition was later formally printed as a preface to both Griswold's *Race Horses and Racing* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1925) and *Sport on Land and Water, Volume II* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1915).
3. Letter from Frank Gray Griswold to Judge Ernest Windle, undated (likely 1920), author's collection.
4. Letter from Judge Ernest Windle to Frank Gray Griswold, 30 December 1920, author's collection.
5. Frank Gray Griswold, *After Thoughts: Recollections of Frank Gray Griswold* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1936), 11–20.
6. *Ibid.*, 26, 40–41.
7. The obituary of Frank Gray Griswold, *Anglers' Club Bulletin* (June 1937), 7.
8. Social arbiter Ward McAllister is credited with coining the term, having stated that New York society consisted of about "400." "The Only Four Hundred: Ward M'Allister Gives Out the Official List," *The New York Times* (16 February 1892), 5. See also Griswold's *Horse and Buggy Days* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1936), 45.
9. Frank Gray Griswold, *The Kittens* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1916), 13–16.
10. Griswold, *After Thoughts*, 75.
11. Frank Gray Griswold, *Some Fish and Some Fishing* (New York: John Lane Company, 1921), 15.
12. Frank Gray Griswold, *The Tarpon* (New York: The Gilliss Press, 1922), 14.
13. Griswold, *After Thoughts*, 80.
14. *Ibid.*, 81.
15. Griswold, *Horse and Buggy Days*, 18.
16. Griswold, *After Thoughts*, 82.
17. Frank Gray Griswold, *Salmon Score of F. Gray Griswold for Ten Seasons 1920–1929* (Canada: Grand Cascapedia River, 1930).
18. Frank Gray Griswold, *The Cascapedia Club* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1920), 6.
19. Frank Gray Griswold, *Stolen Kisses* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1914), 98.

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- Other Griswold works not cited:
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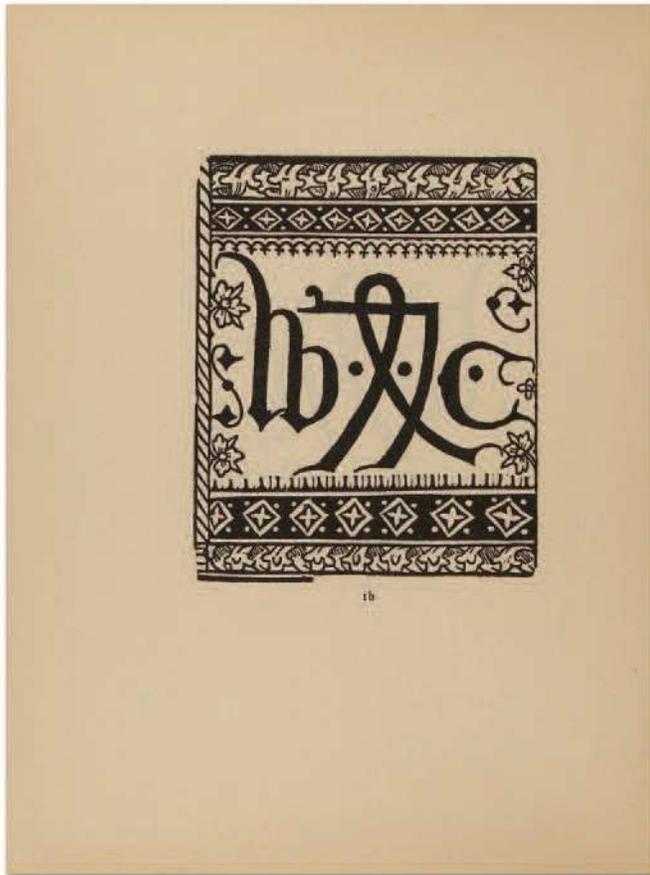
Matthew Franks



The author's Griswold collection.

# Caxton, de Worde, and a Speculation on the *Treatyse*

by Alan R. Diodore



Wynkyn de Worde's second printer's device (a trademark illustration that identifies the printer's work). From Ronald B. McKerrow, *Printers' & Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland, 1485-1640* (London: *The Biographical Society*, 1913), 257.

WYNKYN DE WORDE, an unknown Alsatian immigrant, arrived in England with his employer, master, and benefactor William Caxton in 1476. In 1535, at the end of his life, he was “by far the most important and prolific of all the early English printers.”<sup>1</sup>

William Caxton was born circa 1422 and in 1441 went to Bruges. While there, in 1463, during the reign of Edward IV, he was appointed governor of the English nation in the Low Countries and held that office until 1469.<sup>2</sup> He was then employed by Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV. One of his duties was to translate a popular romance, *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, from French to English.<sup>3</sup> The translation proved so popular that he had it printed; and there is evidence that Caxton himself printed—or assisted in printing—a book titled *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (*On the Nature of Things*) in Cologne in 1471 or 1472. Between 1471/1472 and 1475,

he printed his translation of the *Recuyell*, the first book that he printed in English.<sup>4</sup>

Significant social, religious, and economic events were occurring when Caxton returned to England with de Worde in 1476 and established his printing office, the Red Pale. London was growing, the church was losing its effectiveness, and monks and scribes could no longer keep up with the demand for reading material. “In these circumstances, the setting up under Edward IV’s patronage of Caxton’s printing press at Westminster was perhaps the greatest English event of the century,” notes British historian G. M. Trevelyan.<sup>5</sup> Another historian, H. A. L. Fisher, quotes a Venetian visitor’s perspective on the English social situation: “There is no country in the world where there are so many thieves and robbers as in England; in so much as few venture to go alone in the country excepting in the middle of the day and fewer still in the towns at night, and least of all in London.”<sup>6</sup>