

# Bibliotheca *Salmo salar*: The Literature of Salmon Clubs, Part I

by Charles B. Wood



An illustration from *The Out of Door Library: Angling* by Leroy M. Yale et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 41.

THE LITERATURE OF FLY FISHING for Atlantic salmon is vast. There are thousands of books on the subject. The majority are how-to or where-to-do-it books and general treatises on the species and the sport. But there are a good many other categories: histories of the lure and lore of salmon fishing; narratives of fishing trips; books on salmon flies, rods, and tackle; books on casting; books about individual rivers; biographies and autobiographies of famous salmon anglers and personalities; fiction featuring salmon fishing; and books about salmon clubs. It is this last category on which I want to concentrate.

The *practical* basis of most salmon clubs is the necessity of sharing the expenses, although the camaraderie shared with fellow members and invited guests is important, too. The *legal* basis for salmon clubs is the private ownership or leasehold of water. This is not a concept that has ever taken hold in the United States, but it is a fundamental principle of British—and hence Canadian—law. In 1882, the British House of Lords, as Supreme Court, ruled in the case of the *Queen v. Robinson* (1882-6 S R C-52) that

the British laws concerning riparian rights applied in Canada. This meant that provincial governments thereafter held such rights only to Crown land, whereas settlers with land grants could lease or sell fishing rights to their water. Salmon clubs to this day either own their water outright or lease it, or sometimes a combination of both.

Salmon club literature is especially appealing to collectors who like a challenge, as it is generally rare, sometimes very rare, and occasionally unique. Salmon clubs by their very nature are small organizations and almost always very private. As a rule, they do not want to publicize themselves. Only one club that I know of has been treated to a commercially published book-length history: Edward Weeks's *The Moisie Salmon Club: A Chronicle* (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1971). There are three other book-length histories, but they were privately printed: Edward Weeks's *The Miramichi Fish and Game Club: A History* (1984), Michael Wigan's *Grimersta: The Story of a Great Fishery* (2000), and H. Al Carter's *The Next Best Place to Heaven: The Ristigouche Salmon Club 1880-1998* (1998).

Most of the rest of the literature, such as it is, is ephemeral, privately printed, and intended for club members and perhaps their guests—not for the general reading public. Hence, the thirty-one entries shown and discussed here are mostly rare books or pamphlets (or, in a few cases, unique manuscripts, typescripts, record or log-books, or photograph albums).

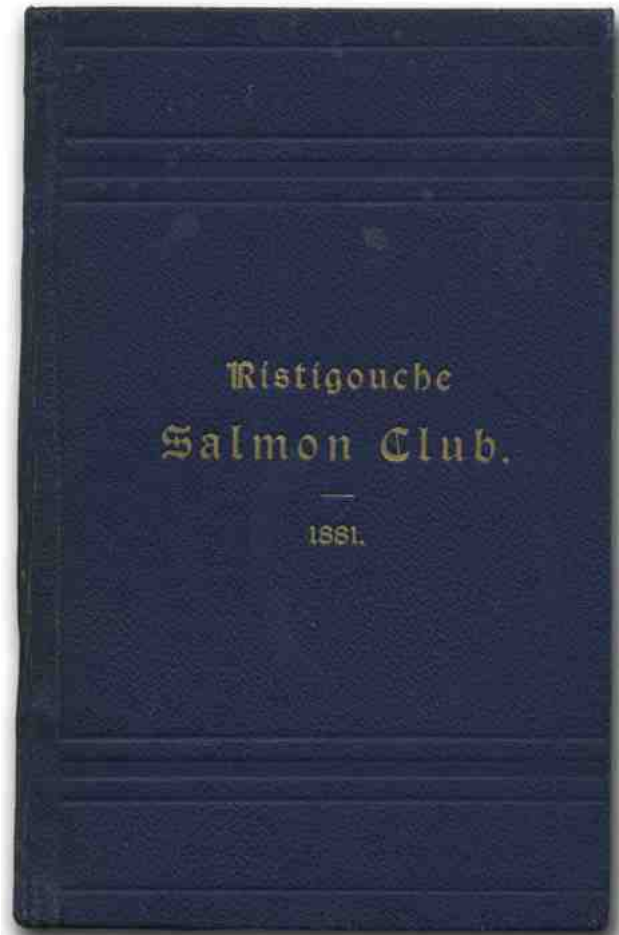
This literature is categorically rare. One index to this is shown by Morris Heller. In his *American Hunting and Fishing Books 1800-1970*, he devotes Part IV to "Sportsmen's Clubs." Of the thirty-seven titles he lists in the section, only two are devoted to salmon clubs: F. G. Griswold's *The Cascapedia Club* and Weeks's *Moisie Salmon Club: A Chronicle*. Searching for most of these items has been fun; finding some of them has been a triumph! There are still others that I know exist but have been unable to acquire. (With the exception of one title listed in Part II of this two-part article, I have managed to add each of these to my own collection.) Indeed, I am sure there are others I am unaware of, and I would be most grateful to hear from any readers who know of salmon club publications not mentioned here.

RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

*Ristigouche Salmon Club*. Charter, by-laws, officers and members of the Ristigouche Salmon Club, 1881. Club House, Matapedia, P.Q., Canada. New York: privately printed by H. J. Hewitt, printer, 1881.

The Ristigouche Salmon Club is one of the oldest clubs of its kind in North America. It was incorporated in the province of Québec on 4 July 1880 and in New Brunswick on 1 April 1884. The present item, the very first charter and membership book, lists the forty charter members as of May 1881; all were Americans from New York. It further explains that the founding president, Locke W. Winchester, had himself personally bought lands and property (i.e., the farmhouse and hotel) in Matapedia from Daniel Fraser; he, in turn, sold this property to the Ristigouche Salmon Club. The initial forty shares, one per member, were one thousand dollars each. These beginnings are well explained by Dean Sage: “. . . a club of forty gentlemen was formed in New York, which, under the name of the Ristigouche Salmon Club, acquired possession from Fraser of his farm and hotel, and a lease of the Matapedia Pool, which yields steady fishing all the season for six or eight rods. The club changed the old tavern into a very comfortable house, and by tearing down, adding on, and a thorough cleansing altered the appearance of the place from its ancient one of dirt and shiftlessness to one of thrift and neatness” (*The Ristigouche and Its Salmon Fishing*, 1888, page 5). The charter further explains the details of capital stock, the assignment and transfer of same, the matter of votes, and the board of directors. The by-laws cover officers, executive committee, superintendent, election of members, rights and duties of members, meetings, and visitors.

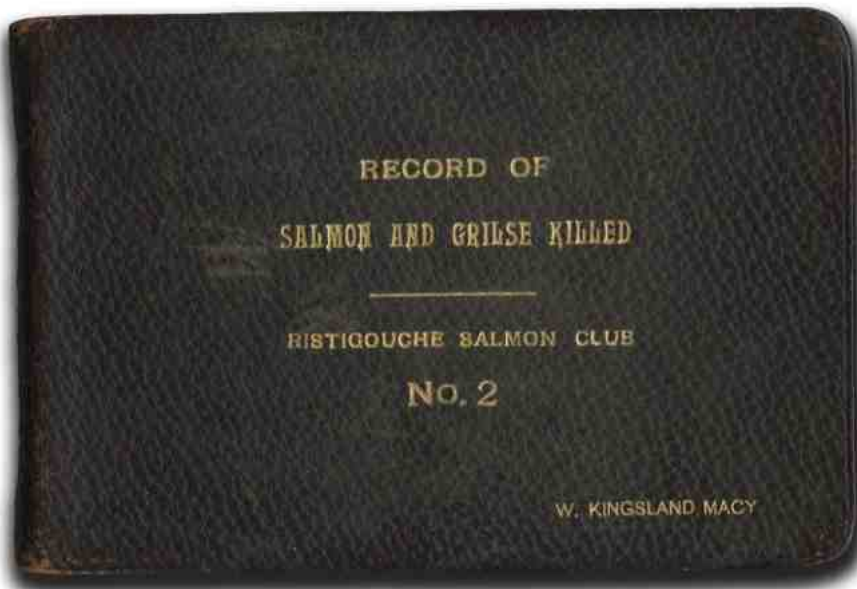
This copy belonged to the well-known collector of angling books Henry A. Sherwin and carries his bookplate.

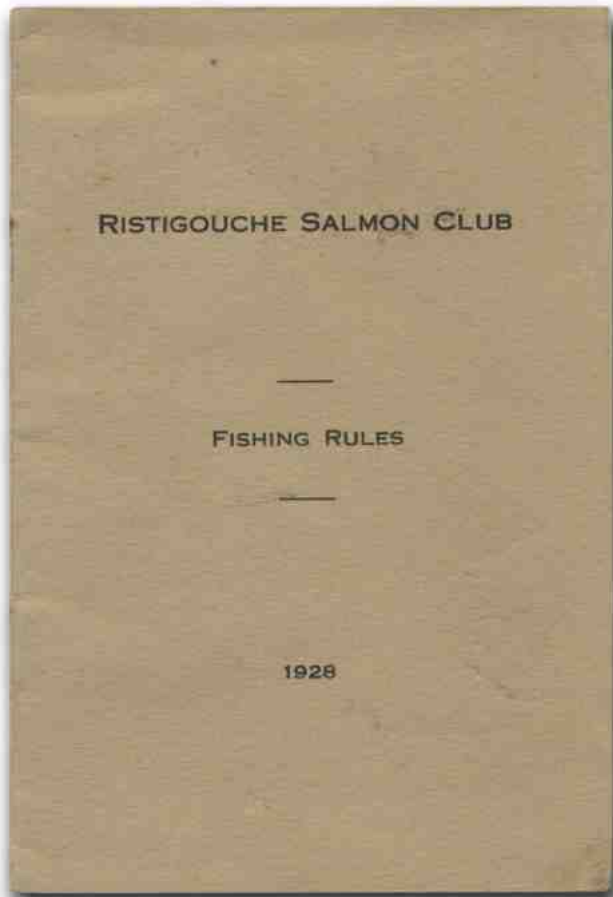


RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

W. Kingsland Macy. *Record of Salmon and Grilse Killed*. *Ristigouche Salmon Club*. No. 2. 1920s–1930s.

This is a personal blank book with lined pages meant to be filled out by the angler. There are columns for the date, where killed (i.e., pool), fish (i.e., salmon or grilse), fly, weight, and “sent to.” In those days, it was the custom to pack the individual salmon in snow-filled wooden boxes and ship them by rail to friends back home, usually in the States. Among those to whom salmon were sent were Endicott Peabody (Northeast Harbor, Maine; also Groton, Massachusetts) and Horace Havemeyer of Islip, Long Island. The largest salmon recorded in the present book is 36 pounds, taken in Lower Adams, 6 July 1922. W. Kingsland Macy was a member of the RSC from 1921 to 1937; he lived in Islip. The record book itself was made and sold by Barwick Ltd., Printers and Stationers, Montreal.



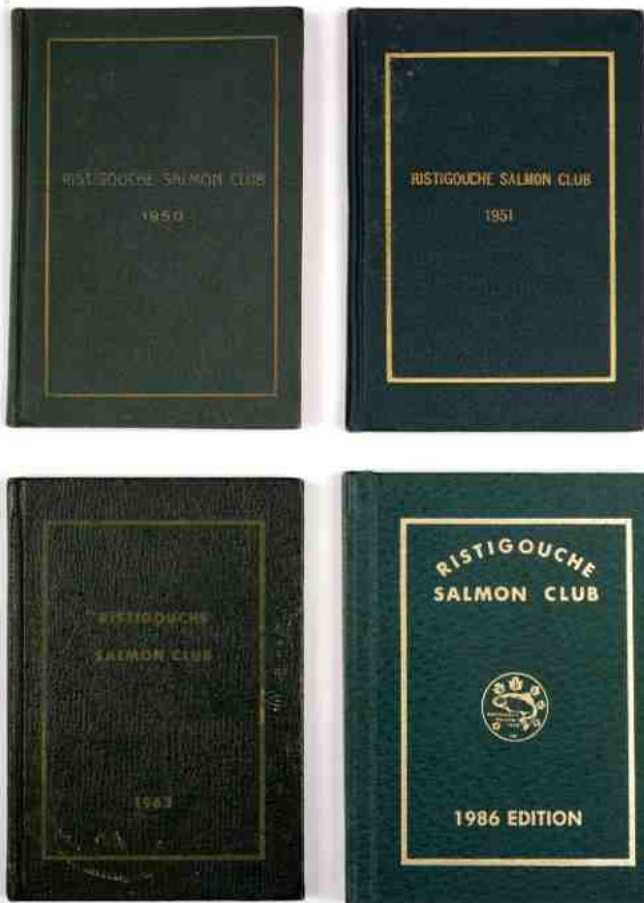


RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

*Ristigouche Salmon Club: Fishing Rules.* N.p., 1928.

A rare and ephemeral little pamphlet; very few copies would have survived. In 1928, the limit in club waters was eight salmon per day, with a maximum of one hundred per season. Rules state that ladies were allowed only after July 31; garbage shall not be thrown into the river; private servants may not sleep or eat in the clubhouse or in any of the upriver lodges. The most interesting information is the list of salmon pools, with the number of salmon killed in each. They are listed from down-river to upriver, in eight groupings or stations (we would call them *beats* today). Some of the best known are Cheator's Brook, Red Pine Mountain, Pine Island, Indian House, and Down's Gulch. From the clubhouse to Down's Gulch was 50 miles. It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows this river that the largest producer by far was Lower Patapedia (more recently known as Million Dollar Pool).

Rule books are given their own entry in Maurice Rickards's *Encyclopedia of Ephemera*: "Rule books, leaflets and notices proliferate wherever communities and organizations are formed. They are among the most significant, if sometimes the most transient, of ephemera" (p. 276).



FOUR RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB membership books, 1950, 1951, 1963, and 1986.

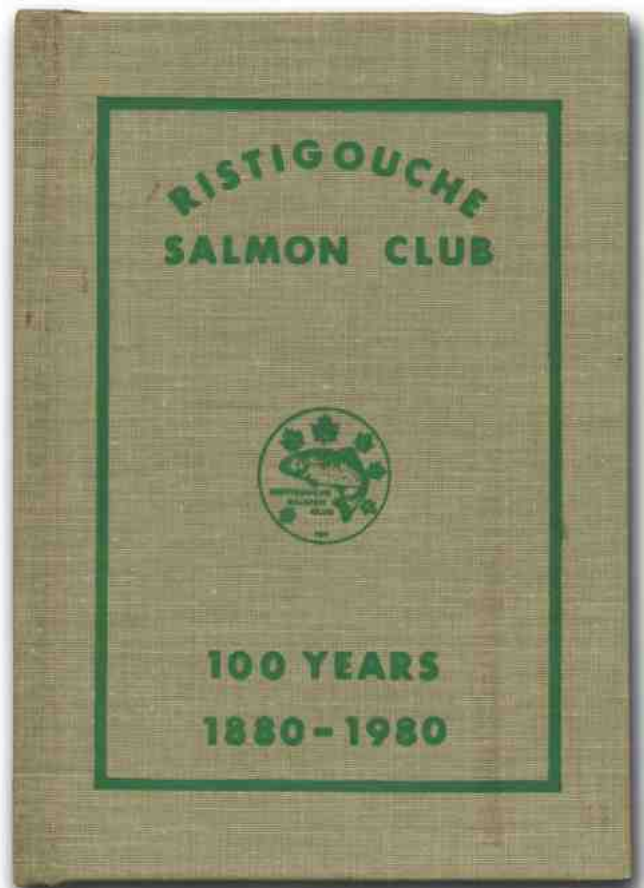
These little membership books were and still are published annually by clubs of all sorts. Those for the RSC are extremely hard to find in the marketplace. Tom Callahan, the current manager, told me he thought that the books were printed in editions of about forty-five copies. In 1950 and 1951, there were twenty-two members, of which two were Canadian; in 1963, the membership still stood at twenty-two; by 1986, there were twenty-nine members. The annual meetings of the club were held in New York City. Some famous people were (and are) members, but in keeping with the club's request for anonymity, I will not list any names. Members were permitted guests (one at a time), but the member must share his rod with the guest and fish from the same canoe. The first three of these little books were presumably printed in New York; the one for 1986 was printed in Fredericton, New Brunswick, by Unipress Ltd. In recent years, printing for the club has been done by presses in both Fredericton and Campbellton, New Brunswick.

RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

*Ristigouche Salmon Club: 100 Years, 1880–1980.* Charter, by-laws, officers, and members of the RSC, 1980. Club House, Matapedia, P.Q., Canada. Frederickton: privately printed, 1980.

This 100th anniversary yearbook is of more interest than the others as it is generously illustrated with reproductions of old photographs from the collections of the club. The photos are from the 1920s and 1930s and show the main clubhouse, the Matapedia railway station, guides and salmon, nattily dressed members on various porches, interiors of the main clubhouse and Pine Island, a river scow and an early photographer with a large glass-plate view camera, salmon iced and boxed for shipping, and more. In this year, there were twenty-nine members, of which thirteen were Canadian and sixteen American. The president was a Torontonian.

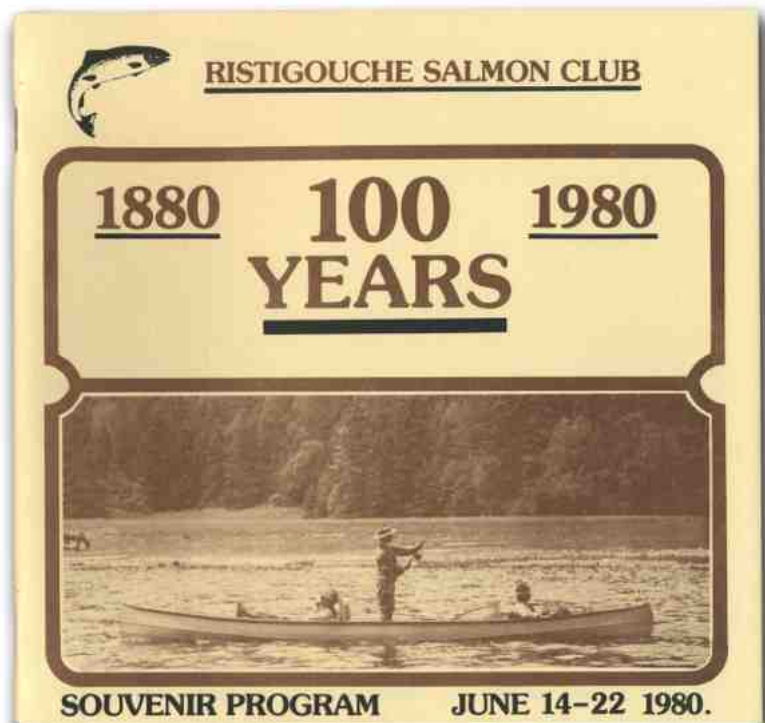
I own two copies of this yearbook; one is marked up and revised for a later printing, probably the next year.

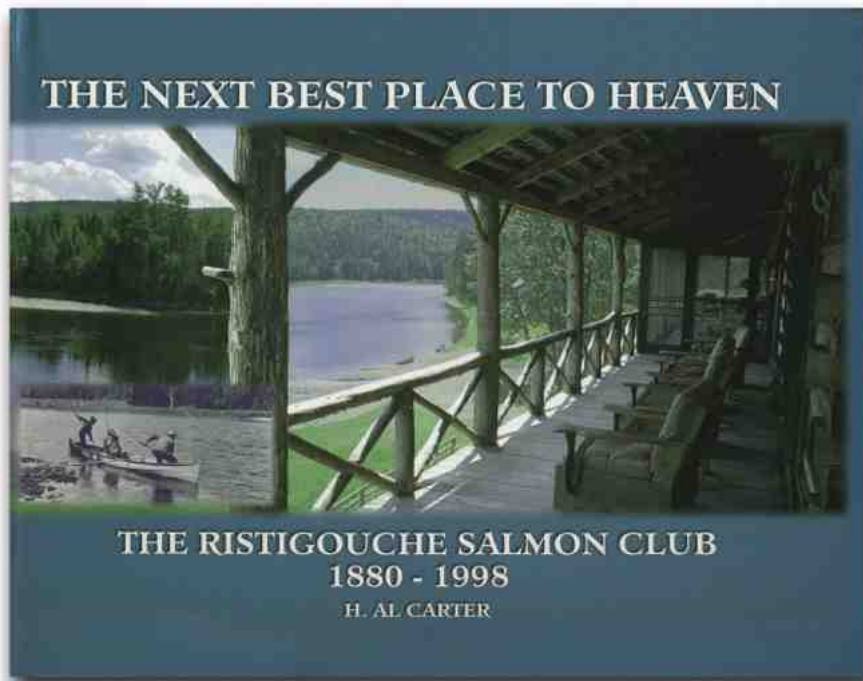


RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

*Ristigouche Salmon Club: 100 Years, 1880–1980.* Souvenir Program. June 14–22, 1980.

A charming and appealing booklet published on the occasion of the centennial of the RSC. It has a brief introduction, a schedule of events and draw schedule for the centennial week, dinner menus, a recipe for gravlax, and a map of the river—but much the best part is the wonderful series of reproductions of old photographs from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. They include a fine view of the old clubhouse in Matapedia, a good view of Indian House, large salmon being landed and netted, two canoes being drawn upriver by a horse, a great view of long (16-foot) logs being floated down the river, guides on the river at work and at leisure, and a snow scene. These images are almost all different from those reproduced in the 1980 yearbook (see previous item). An account of this centennial event is given in Al Carter's history of the club (see next item): "A souvenir book was printed, circulated, and closely guarded by all members as a record of this event" (p. 55). The fact that it was "closely guarded" indicates that the edition was not large and that copies were not available outside the club. I would be surprised if more than one hundred copies were printed, and probably some of these were lost when the clubhouse burned down in 1983. This copy came to me in the original printed envelope together with an embroidered RSC patch and RSC window decal—undoubtedly they were issued to the members in this form.

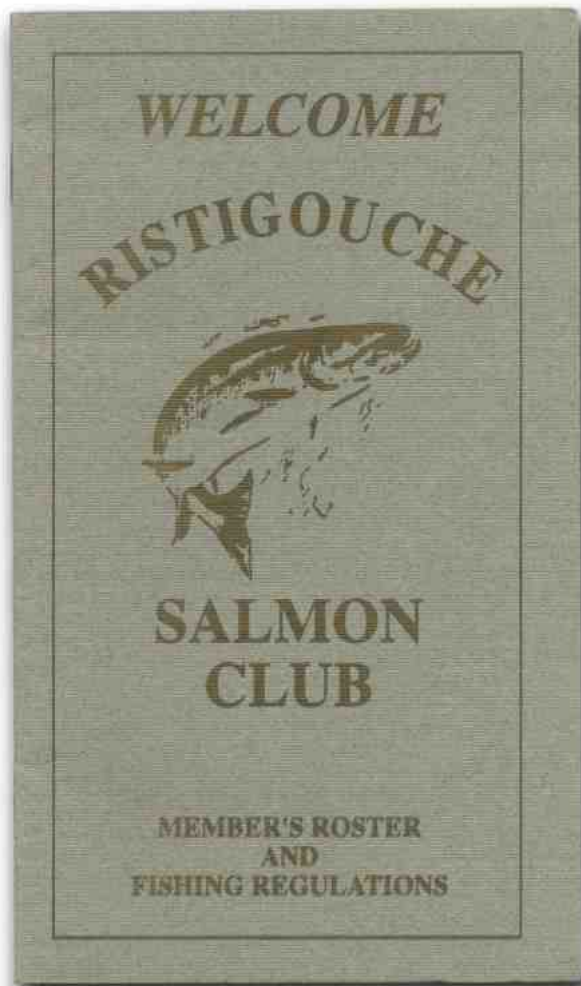




RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

H. Al Carter. *The Next Best Place to Heaven: The Ristigouche Salmon Club, 1880–1898*. Campbellton, N.B.: privately printed, 1998.

A lovely book with an inspired title. The author, born in Gaspé, Québec, was for twenty-one years (1978–1999) manager of the club. His book is divided into brief and well-illustrated chapters and covers the birth of the club in 1880, the founding members, travel to the club in the early days, club facilities, transportation of supplies by scow, the canoes, and the Matapedia clubhouse (including a good account of the 1983 fire there and the rebuilding in 1984). Interesting appendices include an RSC catch record from 1880 to 1997, including the number of fish bigger than 25 pounds, the Ristigouche ice-out record from 1894 to 1998, and a list of members and former members of the club. Many of the halftones are reproduced from old and historic photographs in the club’s possession. It is disappointing only in that the author does not reveal his sources (i.e., there are no footnotes, bibliographical or otherwise). The edition was limited to 300 copies, of which this is number 226.



RISTIGOUCHE SALMON CLUB.

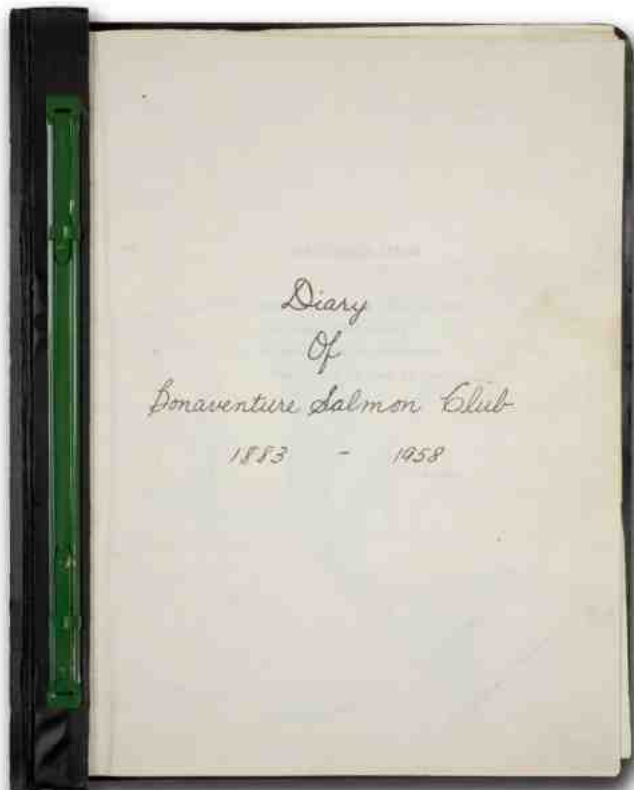
*Welcome: Ristigouche Salmon Club: Member’s Roster and Fishing Regulations*. Campbellton, N.B.: Privately printed by Hatchey Impression, 1999.

A charming little booklet for members and guests. The membership at this time was thirty: fifteen Canadian, fifteen American, and one honorary member, H. Al Carter, who had been the club manager for twenty-one years and was author of the club history (see previous item). Thomas M. Callahan succeeded Mr. Carter as manager. It is interesting to note that when the club was founded in 1880, its membership was entirely American; gradually more Canadians joined, and by the date of this pamphlet, it was exactly half and half. The board was equally divided between Canadian and American members. One interesting rule is the following: “Guides are not permitted to fish for you or for themselves alone in the canoe without written permission from the Club Manager” (p. 6). The final leaf gives a recipe for white wine court bouillon. This pamphlet was given to me by my friend Nick Lyons, who had fished there as a guest.

BONAVENTURE SALMON CLUB.

*Diary of Bonaventure Salmon Club, 1883–1958.* Montreal: Privately mimeographed, 1958.

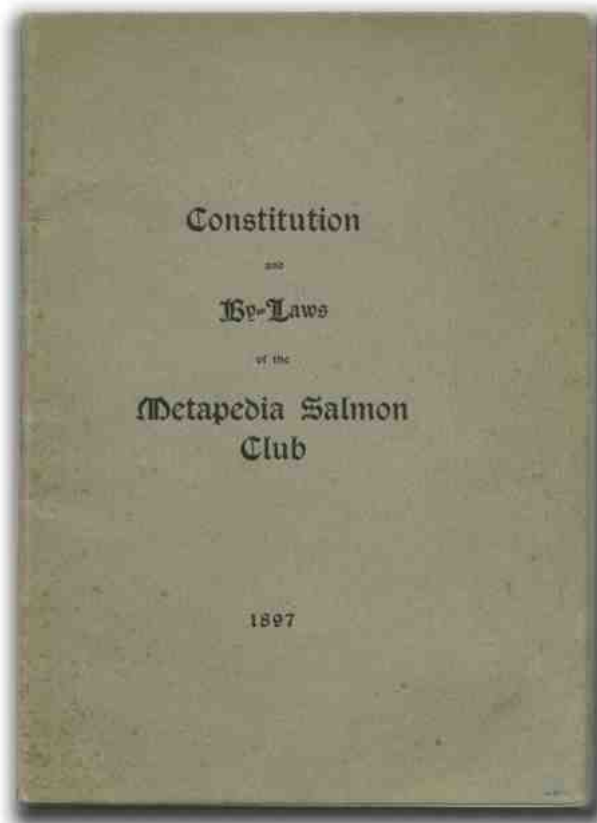
The Bonaventure River, located almost at the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula, flows south into the Bay of Chaleurs. The BSC was founded in 1883 by four anglers from St. John, New Brunswick. This rare diary is not printed but rather mimeographed; except for the title page, which is handwritten, the 276-page text is a carefully typed transcription of the club logbook from 1883 to 1958. It was typed by Miss A. Taylor, secretary to Senator Hartland Molson (a member) in Montreal in 1958. The entries give the names and scores of the anglers of each party each season. The accounts differ according to the writing styles of the various parties; some are extensive and rich with anecdotes, others strictly facts and figures. For 26 June 1897, there is a long and fascinating account of Her Majesty's Jubilee (Victoria's sixtieth anniversary as queen). Various interesting names pop up from year to year, for example H. G. Pickering (1904), author of several Derrydale Press books of the 1930s; T. Roosevelt Jr. (1906); Frank C. Roberts Jr. (1931), author of a wonderful book titled *Pleasant Places*; and the Canadian attorney, writer, and salmon angler John Hall Kelly, who represented many salmon clubs. The record Bonaventure salmon, 48 pounds, was caught by Walter Molson on 25 June 1951; there is a long account of this important event. Another remarkable catch occurred in July 1956: Mr. Arthur Gwynne of Huntington, New York, on his first day on the river, his first time salmon fishing, on his third cast hooked and eventually landed a 40-pounder! The diary reproduces a blow-by-blow letter—which the president of the club, Ross H. McMaster, had asked Gwynne to write—of this once-in-a-lifetime catch.

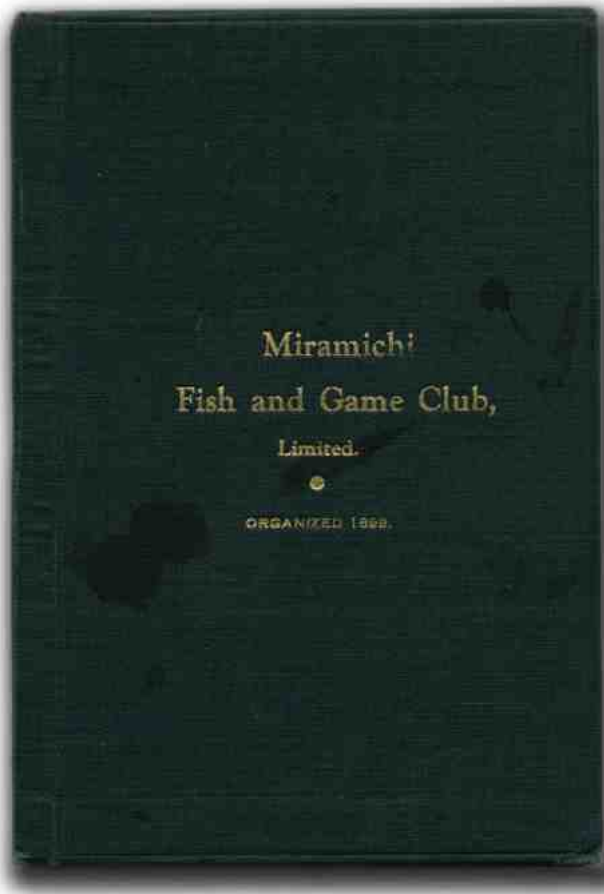


METAPEDIA SALMON CLUB.

*Constitution and By-laws of the Metapedia Salmon Club.* New York: Privately printed, 1897.

The Metapedia Salmon Club was located on the Matepedia (present-day spelling) River in Québec, at the junction with the Causapscal River, about 30 miles above the village of Matepedia. As it was founded by a group of New Yorkers, I suspect these were men who could not afford, or, more likely, could not gain entrance to the more prestigious Ristigouche Salmon Club. This little pamphlet is extremely rare (it is not in OCLC [Online Computer Library Center]). There were nine members in 1897, and I would be surprised if more than twenty or so copies were printed. As of June of that year, the members were Charles T. Barney (president), Jos. A. Auerbach, W. Bayard Cutting, Julien T. Davies (who, in fact, was a member of the Ristigouche Club from 1899 to 1909), Robert D. Evans, James N. Jarvie, Robert Maclay, and George P. Slade, all of New York City, and Henry L. Hotchkiss of New Haven. The clubhouse was at Causapscal. The *Constitution* does not state the price of shares, but the dues were five hundred dollars on each share, each member to own one share. I do not think the club lasted very long. By 1905, the Matamajaw Salmon Club came into being, also at Causapscal, and I suspect (but I cannot prove) that they took over the water that had previously been leased by the Metapedia Club. For a good account of the Matamajaw Club, see Sylvain Gingras, *A Century of Sport* (1994), pp. 85–88. In 1974, the Québec government terminated the lease on this water and opened it to the public on a permit basis. It remains so today.



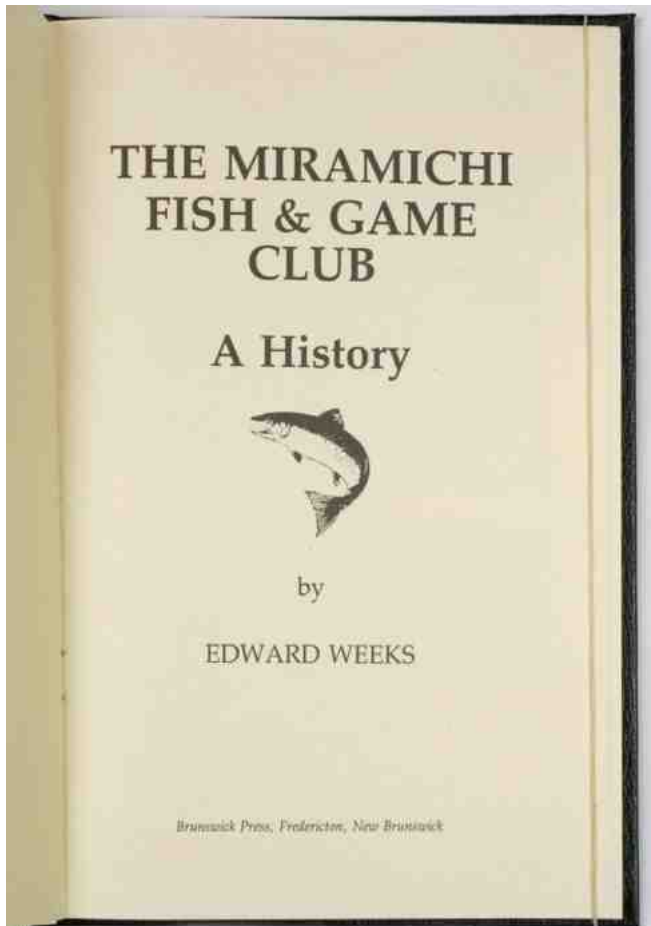


MIRAMICHI FISH AND GAME CLUB.

*Miramichi Fish and Game Club, Limited.* Charter, by-laws, officers, and members of the Miramichi Fish and Game Club. Ltd. N.p.: 1925.

This club, located on the Northwest Miramichi, was founded in 1899 with seventeen charter members, almost all from New York City. Its origins, however, go back to the 1880s, to a New York lawyer named William Crawford and a New Brunswick politician named Michael Adams. Camp Adams is named after him. In 1925, they were down to twelve members, all of whom are listed here. Although originally a club for both hunting and fishing, today it is purely a salmon club and is known especially for its wild and remote location. The club published its first handbook in 1899, but I have never seen a copy (this reference is taken from Charles M. Wetzel, *American Fishing Books*, p. 183). There may have been further handbooks published since 1925, but I have not seen any. The club is fortunate to have a published history by a distinguished member and writer, the late Edward Weeks (see next item).

This copy has an interesting provenance. On the front fly-leaf, it bears the sticker of "Lillian A. Copp, R. R. 1, Red Bank, N.B." Lillian was the granddaughter of Robert Armstrong, the first club manager, and as this copy has several manuscript deletions and additions to the printed list of members as of 1925, I suspect it originally belonged to Armstrong himself. It was later the property of Edward Weeks, who was the author of the club history, published in 1984. It passed from Mr. Weeks to his widow Phoebe, who gave it, along with other books, to the Boston Athenaeum; it was later deaccessioned and ended up as part of the stock of the Boston Book Company, from whom I bought it.



MIRAMICHI FISH AND GAME CLUB.

Edward Weeks. *The Miramichi Fish and Game Club: A History*. Fredericton, N.B.: privately printed by the Brunswick Press, 1984.

One of the oldest salmon clubs on the Miramichi, founded in 1899, this is the only one to have a published history. Weeks himself was a member, and his book is written with the affection and intimate knowledge of the river and its pools that could only come from the long experience of actually staying and fishing there. What is unusual about this book, at least to me, is that it is not well edited—it is not, shall we say, *polished*. This would be one thing from just any writer, but Weeks was the consummate professional; he was for decades editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and author of numerous beautifully written books. My guess is that he wrote it hastily and handed it over to the printers without much revision. It is not explicitly privately printed (i.e., it lacks that statement in the imprint), but it seems to me in all other respects to fit the mold of a privately printed book. It certainly was not the sort of book to appeal to a wide readership. For what it's worth, the work is listed by Richard A. Hand in his *A Bookman's Guide to Hunting, Shooting, Angling and Related Subjects* (1991) as privately printed. Kevin Sheets, in his *American Fishing Books 1743 to 1997* (1997), also lists it as privately printed. Like many such privately printed books, it has a very personal feel. It goes without saying that it is most meaningful to those who have actually stayed at this club and fished this lovely river.

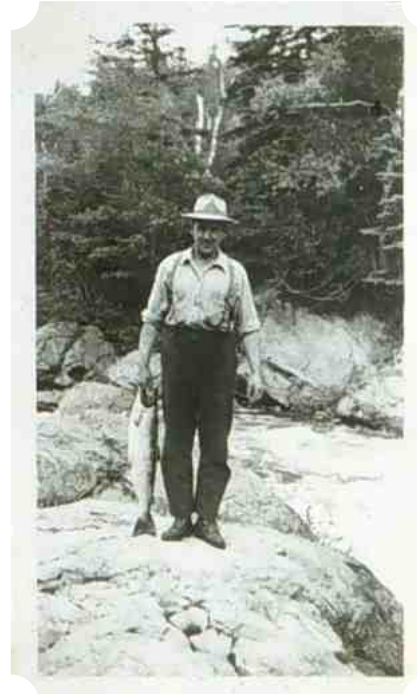
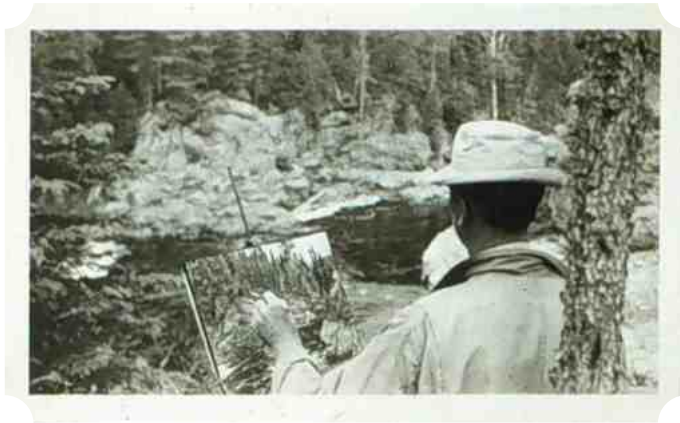
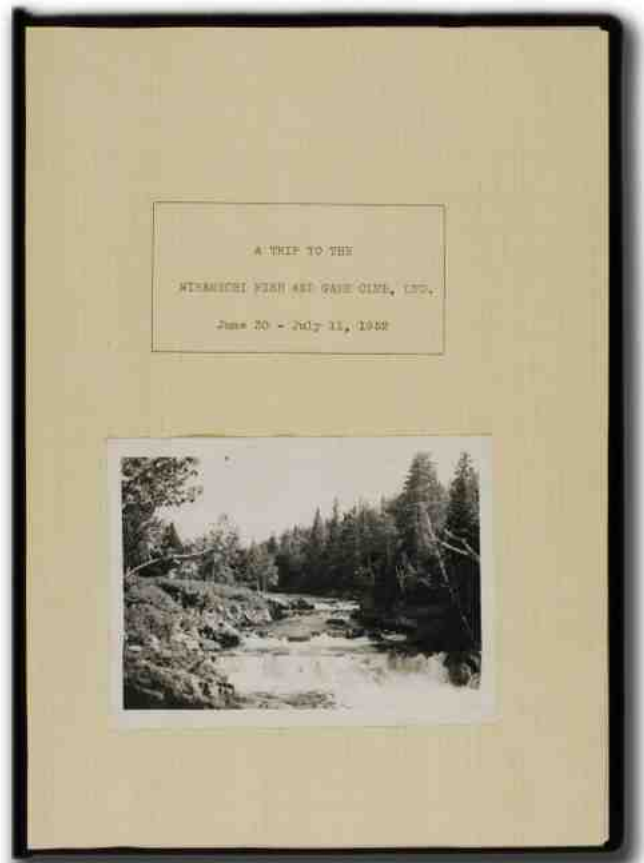
Mr. Weeks was a friend of mine; he gave me this copy and inscribed it "To Charles Wood, affectionally, Ted Weeks, October, 1985."

MIRAMICHI FISH AND GAME CLUB.

H. De Forest Lockwood Jr. Group of thirteen unpublished typescript histories of salmon fishing trips to this club. Boston: 1951–1969.

These little histories record the annual salmon fishing trips of a group of Bostonians to the Miramichi Fish and Game Club. The anglers were always the same group: Aiden Lassell Ripley and his wife Doris; John S. DuMont and his wife Mary; Guido Perera and his wife Faith; and H. De Forest (“Ham”) Lockwood Jr. Each account also names the guides, the cook, and the cook’s helper. The fishing results for each trip, grilse and salmon, are also given. These are quite interesting to anyone with any knowledge of the fishing statistics and the salmon-to-grilse ratio on the Miramichi; grilse outnumbered the salmon by perhaps ten to one, if not more. It is statistics such as these that caused the Miramichi system to be considered primarily a grilse river in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. In more recent years, as a result of the removal of the nets and mandatory catch and release, the number of salmon—and large salmon—has substantially increased.

Four of these thirteen manuscripts are illustrated with pasted-in photos. They were all originally the property of the artist Aiden Ripley (1896–1969). They passed to his widow and from her to a friend and neighbor in Harvard, Massachusetts. That friend is a friend of mine, and I had a book he wanted, so we traded.



*These photographs are all from a page in A Trip to the Miramichi Fish and Game Club, Ltd., June 30–July 11, 1952. At the top left is a photo of artist Aiden Ripley at his watercolor easel.*