



# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

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July 2019

## **CFTG at Summerfest**

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be at Summerfest this year! The event is held at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, New York, on August 3 and 4, 2019. Catskill Kids on the Fly will also be there all day Saturday, so bring the kids for some fly tying.

## **Guild Online Store Now Open**

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Store is now open for annual memberships and renewals and CFTG merchandise. Payment can be by credit card or PayPal—finally a convenience for our overseas members. Currently, in addition to an memberships, the store is offering the new mesh-crown summer hat at \$20.00 for members or \$30.00 for nonmembers with a year's membership.

We are asking that all renewals and purchases be made through the store to streamline the process. Go to <https://cftg.limitedrun.com> and check it out, then save the link to your Web browser's Favorites.

## **CFTG Meeting Programs, Now Livestreamed on Facebook**

**There are no Catskill Fly Tyers Guild meetings in July and August.** Here's what you missed at the May 18 and June 15 meetings. Both meeting programs were livestreamed on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Catskillflytyersguild>. If you can't make it to meetings at the Catskill fly Fishing Center and Museum, check out more of the guild's livestreams of meeting programs in the future.



On May 19, John Shaner presented a version of his well-received talk on North Country spiders and soft-hackle flies adapted to an audience of Catskill fly tyers and also demonstrated tying techniques and answered numerous questions.



On June 15, Matt Supinsky presented an enlightening talk about brown trout and Atlantic salmon, based on his recent book, *The Brown Trout-Atlantic Salmon Nexus: Tactics, Fly Patterns, and the Passion for Catching Salmon, Our Most Prized Gamefish* (Skyhorse, 2018).

In addition, Paul Dolbec and Joe Ceballos previewed at PowerPoint presentation, “Catskill Fly Tyers Guild: Past, Present, and Future,” that we hope to take to the fly-fishing shows next year.



## The Things That Made Us Love the Game

When I started fly fishing, it was a simpler time: you acquire a rod, your first of many, if you stay with it, and cobble together an outfit that suits your finances. I lovingly remember my first real one, a 7-foot Cortland glass two-piece, yellow, with a cork-and-rings-seat. Holding that rod was like holding the king’s scepter. A Medalist reel was clamped to it, with level line, and a short piece of spinning-rod mono made up the leader.

It took a lot of walking and flogging water before I hooked my first fish with that outfit, in the East Branch of Callicoon Creek behind the Victory market in town.

Years go by, and you gain in knowledge of all things trout related, become a better caster and a student of the sport, and piece by piece, you start purchasing better and newer equipment, catch harder-to-catch trout, then start hunting for bigger ones. My trip through this game is likely much like everyone else’s, and I’m certain anyone reading this can relate to my experiences growing in the sport.

Now, fifteen years later, I have immersed myself so heavily into the game, it consumes most of my thinking. Not a minute goes by throughout the day that some aspect of fly rodding doesn’t consume my thoughts.

Lately, though, I have been going through a slump of sorts. This year has been somewhat different, as far as conditions go, with a cold spring and lots of precipitation, and my life schedule has not matched up favorably to the good days. I have been away during prime times and able to fish only during unfavorable ones.

I had been looking at the hobby I love through different eyes, too. Through the years, I altered my techniques and gear toward bigger and more trout, learning everything I could about anything that would put the odds more in my favor, setting aside perfectly good equipment for things that could potentially boost my chances at more and bigger fish, getting away from “standard” gear and using rods and rigs that target fish more efficiently, always looking for the big numbers, both in count and measure.

On the ride back from the stream, after a less than stellar outing where I caught “only” four and none bigger than thirteen inches, I felt something I never felt before when driving home from fishing. I was almost disappointed. I felt as if all the effort I put into this, all the logged miles, both driving and

walking, the planning and preparation, were not met with satisfactory results. Four: I got four trout, and not even big ones.

I got home a little dejected, not like when I first started, when I was happy just to be fishing, regardless of the outcome, regardless of the numbers of fish caught, if any at all.

I didn't get back to the Catskills for three weeks—partly because of family things, and, sadly, partly because I didn't have a desire to go.

Then I saw on social media where a friend I never met posted a picture of a fly. He was very tight lipped about it, because he was asked to make a few for the guy who originated it, and he didn't want to give away the name of it because he thought it wasn't his place to do so. I recognized it right away. When I told him the name, who originated it, and what the body color was, he was more than shocked. But what he didn't know was, that pattern originated sometime in the 1980s and was a favorite of mine. I knew the guy who tied it, knew where he used it, and at one time, when I loved fishing, I had used it myself.

Seeing that fly did something to me, like that feeling you get when you see a close friend by chance you haven't seen in many years and good memories flood your mind in a torrent. In an instant, I knew what was wrong. I had slowly and unknowingly slipped away from the reasons I fished at all. I had forgotten the feeling of the dry fly take in choppy water, mending line to lengthen a drift, striking from sight and not feel, all the things we first felt that made us love the game. I had pushed that aside for more and bigger. . . .

I fished Saturday in a small stream that I fished years ago, but have not been back to in many years. I had a different rod and reel from what I have been carrying lately, and instead of a loaded chest pack, I dug out my old day-trip pack that holds a couple squeeze bottles of floatant, one dry-fly box, and not much more. I cast an old favorite dry fly that I haven't used in a long time, watched it drift over choppy water, and then watched it get eaten over and over by small fish that were so beautiful—I didn't recognize just how beautiful until that moment. I was seeing fly fishing through the eyes of a man fifteen years younger, and it felt really good. Like it's supposed to.

## The Picket Pin

I don't recall where I first found a recipe for the Picket Pin. However, I vividly recall the first time I ever saw this wet fly catch a trout. It was a midsummer day in 1985; we still owned an Adirondack camp on Indian Lake. A lifelong buddy, Glenn Debrosky, and I were trout fishing the Hudson in North River, where Thirteen Brook enters the mightiest of The Empire State's waterways. I had just worked a fishy-looking run hard. On the first pass upstream, I pounded it with an Ausable Wulff. Then on the second pass back downstream, I used an ever-trustworthy Fran Better's Mini-Muddler Minnow. Then on my final pass back upstream, I flogged the Hudson with a big stonefly nymph. I never nicked a trout or saw any signs of one.

Standing perplexed along the riverbank, I watched a beat-up old jalopy pull up and two genuine Adirondack characters jump out before the vehicle came to a full stop, then and stumble down to the river's edge. These two looked like the North Country version of Mutt and Jeff. One was tall and lanky, the other short and dumpy, and together with their cherished automobile, I didn't think their financial possessions were worth as much as my Battenkill fly rod and Hardy reel. Yet they were a fishing team to be reckoned with.

### *Up on the Esopus*



With Ed Ostapczuk

Mutt made perhaps a half dozen casts and soon hooked a big brown. With Gadabout Gaddis-like precision, he quickly beached an 18-inch brown with a plump, mustard-colored belly before I could blink my eyes. And just as quickly, Jeff withdrew a penknife from his pocket, gutting that gorgeous trout as it flopped about on the rocky shoreline. Stunned, I had only one question; “What did you catch it on?” Scrambling back up the bank, heading home for a trout dinner, one of them yelled out, “A Picket Pin!”

That made a believer out of me. I’ve tied and fished a Picket Pin wet fly ever since. As best as I can tell, there are several recipes for this pattern, which is generally credited to Jack Boehme of Missoula, Montana. Back in the early 1900s, Jack Boehme was a noted Western fly tyer and national tournament fly caster, according to various sources, including Terry Hellekson’s book, *Fish Flies*. Most versions of this pattern involve a brown hackle, peacock herl, and a gray squirrel tail, although Boehme used Western ground squirrel, or gopher, for the wing. Reportedly, cowboys referred to ground squirrels as “picket pins,” because they sit upright on the prairie, resembling a tether stake.

I credit my success with this wet fly to Eric Leiser and his *Book of Fly Patterns*. Boehme might have tied the fly as a streamer or bucktail, using a slightly different recipe than listed below. Leiser did note that the pattern also “easily” can be fished as a streamer.

I love to fish this wet fly as a dropper when caddis are active from mid-May on. I also fish it as a dropper all summer on the Esopus Creek when the *Isonychia* are about. It rarely disappoints me. I tie my version of the Picket Pin on a shorter-shank wet-fly hook, a Mustad 3399, typically in sizes 8 and 10, rather than the 9672 Mustad hooks Leiser called for. As a suggestion, after tying in gray squirrel, put a dab of head cement on the base of the thread. It will make for a more durable construction of this versatile wet fly.

#### Eric Leiser’s Picket Pin

Hook: Mustad 9672, size 8 to 12

Thread: Black

Tail: Brown hackle fibers

Rib: Palmered brown hackle

Body: Peacock herl

Wing: Gray squirrel

Head: Peacock herl



#### *Looking Back Upstream*



#### **From the Archives: The Beginning**

The pages that follow contain scans of documents from the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild archives: an account of the early days of the guild, written by Dave Brandt soon after its beginning, and the first meeting notice found in the files. From time to time, we may publish other interesting documents from the archives. An organization that remains in contact with its past has the best chance of directing itself into its future.

CATSKILL FLY TYERS GUILD  
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ROSCOE, NEW YORK 12776

Floyd Franke - Judie Darbee Vinciguerra - Dave Brandt  
Co Directors

January 1994

In the beginning, there were fish. Soon there were anglers contemplating the capture of these fine tasting but elusive creatures, the prettiest of which were to be found in cold clean rivers, such as those abundant in the Catskill Mountains.

On this side of the Atlantic, the Catskills became a trout fishing destination by the late eighteen hundreds and those anglers living here and frequently seeking to outwit the native char and trout, took the time to study these fish. With the introduction of the brown trout, just over a century ago, this study became even more interesting.

Much of the early study (fishing) was done using flies and techniques brought here from the slower and smoother rivers making up the great chalkstream fisheries of England. It didn't take the observant student long to discover the relationship of the trout to the fly, nor did it take the more astute of them to notice the differences in the flies or rivers from those found in England.

Theodore Gordon is considered to be the first of these talented angler/fly tyers, and over the years was followed by several others, whose special skills led them to become renowned for their trout flies.

Many of the early fly patterns were tuned to perfection by their creators while some have been modified and improved as the fly gained attention and fame. A few have survived as having been perfect the first time out of the vise.

These Catskill flies, the earliest of American trout flies, are the products of pioneer tyers: their long lived beauty and success dependant on materials and methods that, in many cases have not been made better by 'progress'.

These patterns and their origins are of interest to the serious student of fly tying and their loss has become a concern of a small group of Catskill fly tyers. Just under a year ago, we came together to form the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild.

Today we meet monthly from Fall through Spring. As our 'Foreign Correspondent', I have been asked to report 2 or 3 times a year to our more outlying members and friends. These reports will contain highlights from recorded minutes, and will be quite condensed.



To bring you up to date, then:

The very first meeting was called to order by Floyd Franke on 2/11/93 in Roscoe NY with 17 people in attendance. The evening was spent discussing our mission, with each suggesting ways to support our goal(s). By evening's end we had an official name, Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, and a treasury of \$33 intact. Our recording secretary is Judie Darbee Vinciguerra.

At our second meeting on 3/11/93, it was decided that we need some identity, in the form of a logo. A patch will be forthcoming. It was also noted that we need dues for mailing and to otherwise stay afloat. The vote was unanimous for \$10 a year due in April. By the end of the meeting, we were off on a logo hunt and Judie, now our recording secretary/treasurer, reported \$109.76 in the bank.

April 13, 1993 found us discussing honorary memberships, planning our first fund raiser, and thanks to the skills and efforts of Dave Catizone, perusing 24 logo candidates! A small collection of member tied Catskill flies will be framed and raffled. This was ultimately done and brought \$192. The piece was won by Mr John Day. We were entertained that evening by John Borden, speaking of Bruce Leroy, a companion of Theodore Gordon, Herman Christian and Roy Steenrod. Our treasury, at \$159.29, warranted being in a checking account, with Floyd Franke and Matt & Judie Vinciguerra listed as co-directors for the account.

Our fourth meeting was held on 9/13/93 with Ed Van Put speaking on Harry Darbee's two feather fly, which prompted an in-house tying contest, later judged by four non-competing members and won by Floyd Franke. Manny Zanger was chosen as our fund raiser, with Sam Scafidi, our historian. By this time one of our founders and staunch advocates, co-director Matt Vinciguerra, had passed away unexpectedly, and Dave Brandt appointed to serve as our third co-director. Matty will be sorely missed, not only by the Guild, for his leadership, but by all in the fly tying fraternity for his many contributions and soft spoken wisdom. On this night we also framed our 'Charter Member' requirements by designating Feb 1 through June 31, our membership year. Tell your tying friends - there is still time to become a charter member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild!

We met next on 10/14/93, with Judie Vinciguerra chairing. It was decided here that we would meet through May before breaking for the summer. Dave Catizone provided the group with a hands-on tying session featuring the Quill Gordon. This was very well received and we will have more such meetings. We also discussed our logo/patch; more costs are being solicited to determine where it will be made and when. Our treasury now stood at \$413.66.

Our sixth meeting was on 11/9/93, with Phil Chase and Jerry Bartlett providing the bulk of the show and tell program.

Our get togethers seem to be more informative and more fun each month, as we grow and learn what we are about.

Dec 9, 1993 found us meeting at the CFFC, with Dave Catizone leading us through another fly tying session. We had good company and good fun for our last meeting in 1993.

We will meet next on January 13, 1994, and you are all encouraged to participate, though we know that's not practical for many who will read this version of our news! I would also, note that more complete and precise proceedings from any and all meetings are available from Judie.

Health & happiness to you all in 1994, and since we'll be fishing by the time I report again ..... Tight Lines!

Dave Brandt

A short note to everyone receiving and reading this - please feel free to send letters or notes commenting on our activities. Anything you have to add will be welcomed.

If anyone might be interested in a Saturday meeting in the winter months, let us hear from you. We will be bringing this up at the next meeting.

Judie DV

April 5, 1993

Floyd Franke  
Box 629  
Roscoe NY 12776

Greetings!

Tuesday April 13 is the date set for our next guild meeting. Poul Jorgensen has the program, a trip back in time for a visit with Theodore Gordon. You will not want to miss this historically accurate sketch based upon the unpublished work of Fred Oswald from Michigan.

In addition to the scheduled program the agenda will include progress reports from Dave Catizone and/or Manny Zanger concerning our logo and from Poul Jorgensen and/or Matthew Vinciguerra concerning future programs. If you have any ideas about the logo or future programs be sure to touch base with these fellows and remember, they have agreed to help coordinate these activities, not do all the work. You must become involved if the guild is to succeed.

Before closing let me remind you that annual dues have been set at ten(10) dollars, payable now. Also don't forget that if you are planning to have dinner on the 13th, you will want to be at Raimondos by 6 p.m. The regular meeting will start at 7:30. Don't forget to send back your post-cards!

Sincerely,

Floyd Franke

Matt Vinciguerra

atf

## Book Review

### *Fly Fishing Treasures: The World of Fly Fishers and Collecting*

By Steve Voit. Published by Steve Voit—*Fly Fishing Treasures*, 2018; available at <https://flyfishingtreasures.com>, \$80.00 hardbound, \$175 limited edition.

Collecting stuff can seem to be a kind of genial insanity when other people assemble extensive collections of things such as PEZ candy dispensers or beer cans, but it seems perfectly normal when you or I do it. As a kid, I had a collection of burned-out light bulbs of various types and sizes, and later, a collection of cat's-eye marbles. Although I still have a scar on my knee from when I broke a car headlamp, trying to mount it on a board for display, I have long since lost my marbles, as my friends often remind me.

But enough of the Borscht Belt humor. At the time, making these collections seemed like an obvious thing to do, and in retrospect, it was not crazy at all, but downright sane: I was finding order in the world at a stage in life when I needed to do so, assembling collections of transitional objects. Today, some in my boomer generation do pretty much the same thing when they assemble collections of muscle cars from the 1960s and 1970s.

Something like that may be going on the collectors of fly-fishing gear and ephemera who are profiled in *Fly Fishing Treasures*, a book profusely illustrated with gorgeous photographs of flies, rods, reels, books and manuscripts, and old photos and marketing materials. As Steve Voit notes in the preface, "Collectors are a bit obsessive," and "many collectors associate their treasures with time spent fishing during their youth, often with a father or grandfather who introduced them to the sport."

Whatever their motivation, the collectors profiled here have assembled what amount to object catalogues of the history of fly fishing in the United States and Great Britain—the objective traces of practices in a world gone by, but a world that nevertheless has direct links to our own. That is what makes the book a valuable addition to contemporary angling literature. Because these objects exist in private collections or the collections of manufacturers and museums, the photographs around which the book revolves provide access to things no ordinary angler is ever likely to be able to see.

That includes such things as the Harmood-Banner Collection of 528 classic British salmon flies, presented in the section on the colorful and ever-controversial Paul Schmookler; Izaak Walton's own creel, in the section on David Beazley, librarian of the Flyfisher's Club in London; a rod belonging to Thaddeus Norris, author of *The American Angler's Book* (1864), in an account of fly-rod history; and a devotional book, the Haslinger Breviary, dated to 1460 (almost four decades before Dame Juliana Berners's *Treatyse of Fysshynge with an Angle* was published), in which an Austrian clergyman, Leonardus Haslinger, recorded twenty-one fly patterns and their variations, arranged by month, anticipating by five centuries Norman Maclean's declaration in *A River Runs Through It* that there is "no clear line between religion and fly fishing." The breviary appears in a section on Ray Clemens, curator for early books and manuscripts at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which holds the volume.

The photography and reproduction are first-rate, but what I think really recommends the book is the text that accompanies the photographs. Because the things in these collections are objective traces of the history of fly fishing in the United States and Great Britain, the discussions of the collectors and their treasures supply quick, focused histories of the sport, grounded in references to things that bring it back to life.

There is a brief history of the American fly rod here, along with Jeff Hatton's traveling display of early American rods, and a history of the fly reel and its evolution, as reflected in the collections of private collectors and manufacturers Hardy, and Farlows, and Orvis. Connections to the history of fly



tying abound, seen, for example, in John Shaner's collection of books and manuscripts on the North Country Spider and other wet flies, as well as in the many collections of Atlantic salmon flies. And there are elements of the history of women in fly fishing in Moirajeanne Fitzgerald's collection of documents and images, in a profile of the noted salmon fly tyer Megan Boyd, and in the ephemera that fascinate some collectors.

But in effect, all these collections are archives of ephemera: such traces of the past are collectible because they are rare. Sometimes such things have become scarce as a consequence of willful destruction—mind-bogglingly, in 1967, when Hardy moved to a new factory, it threw away its “pattern reels” and attendant paperwork, the models on which craftsmen previously had based their hand-assembled products. Other things just have been trashed in the disinterest in the past that seems a special facet of American culture. That's why there was a time when someone could be selling an “old fishing pole” at a garage sale, and for a few bucks, a buyer could walk away with a Garrison 206 now worth thousands of dollars.

Whatever someone collects, however crazy it may seem to do so, the chances are that someone else collects it, too. That means there is a community of collectors who share their passion and knowledge, and there is also competition for the most desirable objects. That, in turn, means that there is a market for such things and opportunities for a collection to acquire monetary value and to appreciate—to be an investment. Realizing this, some of the collectors profiled here became dealers and traders in things associated with the history of fly fishing, from rods, reels, and flies to books and ephemera. Hence, *Fly Fishing Treasures* also covers the rise of marketplaces such as Lang's Auction, dealers such as Berkeley's Jim Adams, and ORCA — the Old Reel Collectors Association.

It also includes advice to collectors and would-be collectors about the pitfalls of collecting, in which there is a difference in the roles played by love and money—the difference between accumulating what to others may seem like weird stuff just because possessing it pleases you and cold-bloodedly buying something because you expect it to be worth more later. Reel historian and librarian Jim Brown advises that “it is probably wise for the majority of collectors to combine investment and pleasure perspectives in their collecting. At some point you are going to cash out. If you have collected well, you should make a good profit. If you have collected too carelessly, you may have trouble selling your collection or may take a loss.” Those muscle cars from the 1960s and 1970s may have been someone's heart's desire back in high school, but they're also worth a bundle today and seem likely to be worth more in the future.

As a series of profiles, this is a book best savored in the small bites, which is a good thing, because it's in effect a coffee-table book, in a large format on excellent glossy, heavy paper and registering 5.2 pounds on my digital bathroom scale. It not something with which you can curl up comfortably in bed, but at a table holding an appropriate beverage (it need not be coffee), it's something worth sitting down to read, instead of just flipping through the pictures, stunning though they may be. Chances are you'll never get your hands on anything like what's made accessible here, even if you're a collector yourself, but if you are the sort of person who to come to the past by means of its objective traces in the present, you'll enjoy *Fly Fishing Treasures* a lot.



This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor's discretion. Without the articles, information, for-sale or want ads, cartoons, newsworthy information, and whatever else is interesting and fun that members submit, this newsletter simply becomes a meeting announcement. Send submissions to Bud Bynack, [budbynack@gmail.com](mailto:budbynack@gmail.com) or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY 10708, (914) 961-3521.