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THE COLLECTOR AS BOOKBINDER
The Piscatorial Bindings of S. A. Neff, Jr.

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THE COLLECTOR
The Piscatorial Bi

Essays by
Elisabeth R. Agro
Stanley I Grand

Binder's Statement, Catalogue
S. A. Neff, Jr.

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Binder's Statement, Catalogue Entries, and Glossary by
S. A. Neff, Jr.

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BINDER'S STATEMENT

S. A. Neff, Jr.

THE WORK in the exhibition was produced over a two-year period beginning in 1986. Both the exhibition and catalogue have been arranged in chronological order to allow the viewer to see the development of the concepts and the techniques used in the work. The work has been created for my personal angling library and is the culmination of one angler's passion for fishing. It is not just a fly, as will be clear to the viewer, many of the sets contain more than one fly. In fact, some of the sets become miniature museums that attest to and support the written word. Included in the various sets are photographs of angling, actual fishing flies and the materials used for dressing them, angling artifacts, and paraphernalia.

I was introduced to bookbinding in my mid-forties, and from the beginning I knew this craft would become one of the major directions in my life. As my skills developed, I realized that my twenty-five year's experience in graphic design had inadvertently trained me to be a bookbinder. I arrived into the world of bookbinding with a well-developed aesthetic sense, a keenly honed hand, good coordination, a sense of proportion, and patience.

A sense of history prompted me to look closely at the techniques developed by bookbinders of past centuries. These bookbinders and bookmakers have built a very solid foundation, and I have behaved to continue to build on that inheritance. I have respect for the rules of that rich tradition to attempt to break them to negate them altogether. My direction as a bookbinder is to be as creative as possible, while firmly remaining within the parameters of the craft.

BINDER'S STATEMENT

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THE WORK in the exhibition was produced over a twelve-year period beginning in 1986. Both the exhibition and the catalogue have been arranged in chronological order to enable the viewer to see the development of the concepts and the techniques. All the work has been created for my personal angling library. In a sense, it is the culmination of one angler's passion for fishing for trout with a fly. As will be clear to the viewer, many of the sets contain material far beyond the written word. In fact, some of the sets become a kind of miniature museum that attests to and supports the written word. Included in the various sets are photographs of angling environments, actual fishing flies and the materials used for dressing them, letters, angling artifacts, and paraphernalia.

I was introduced to bookbinding in my mid-forties, and from the beginning I knew this craft would become one of the most significant directions in my life. As my skills developed, I realized that my twenty-five year's experience in graphic design inadvertently had trained me to be a bookbinder. I arrived into the world of bookbinding with a well-developed aesthetic sense, a keenly honed hand-to-eye coordination, a sense of proportion, and patience.

A sense of history prompted me to look closely at the traditions developed by bookbinders of past centuries. These bookbinders and bookmakers have built a very solid foundation, and I have always felt behooved to continue to build on that inheritance. I have far too much respect for the rules of that rich tradition to attempt to break them, or to negate them altogether. My direction as a bookbinder is to be as creative as possible, while firmly remaining within the perimeters of

these traditions. Some people think of my work as design binding, but I consider it fine binding because I have chosen to follow the traditions set by past generations of bookbinders.

Almost from the start of my career, I have been intrigued with the concept of creating containers to house bindings and other volumes. Many of the containers take the form of a drop-back box covered with goatskin. All are decorated to various degrees, and this decoration generally sets a theme for the housed volumes.

In juxtaposition with experimenting with container forms, I have continued to explore techniques for decorating them. Although a detailed description of techniques evolved for the decoration of the containers and bindings is inappropriate in a catalogue of this nature, some bookbinders and viewers may be interested in a brief description.

In the late 1980s I began working with Japanese dyed paper and gilt paper to create decorative panels used on covers as well as doublures (decoration on the inside of the cover). As this method was refined, the panels became more complex; and some comprised hundreds of shapes. The process is begun by making a detailed drawing on tracing paper. Appropriate colors are then selected from a chart of dyed paper swatches. Next the images in the drawing are traced onto the dyed papers and cut out. When all the shapes have been cut out, they are glued to a piece of gilt paper then put under a light weight to ensure that they dry evenly. Later, each shape is carefully cut out, allowing a border of 1/16". When all the shapes have been prepared, they are glued in position on a piece of bristol board, commencing with the sky and finishing with the foreground. The process is not unlike assem-

bling a puzzle. When the panel is completed, it is trimmed to size and glued into a slightly depressed area in the goatskin cover or doublure.

As I continued to become familiar with working in goatskin, I began to explore the possibilities of using it for decoration. The first experiments were done with flat on-lays (thinly pared goatskin pasted onto the binding) with blind-tooled edges. Then I worked with raised on-lays (thinly pared goatskin glued onto four-ply bristol board shapes). When working with either type of on-lay (separately or in conjunction), I expanded the decoration with either blind or gilt tooling. At first I executed the tooling with conventional tools, then I learned of the flexibility of the Ascona tool, a specially cut brass tool used with stiff paper templates as guides. This method allows a binder to tool curvilinear lines more fluid than those made with conventional tools. By working with these tools and multiple, interlocking templates, I blind-tooled complex designs onto goatskin covers. Sometimes the

blind-tooled lines do not give enough definition to the design, but I resolve this problem by gluing very narrow strips of goatskin, of a contrasting color, into the linear depressions. This allows me to draw with leather.

One experiment leads to another, and sometimes another technique of decoration emerges within a relatively short period. Rarely have I set out to create something different. Rather, I follow a direction dictated by the content of the text, the materials, and the tools.

At the risk of sounding self-serving, I must say that although my containers and bindings may appear to be nearly flawless, the procedure has never been flawless. There have been occasions when I have needed to repeat a process several times before achieving a satisfactory result. Bookbinding is an old-world craft that requires an essential discipline and devotion. In this computer age it is almost an anomaly to work patiently with one's hands, using simple tools.

S. A. NEFF, JR., ANGLING ARTISAN Caught by Trout, Piscatorial Books, a

Elisabeth R. Agro
Carnegie Museum of Art

THE WORK of S. A. Neff, Jr., piscatorial bookbinder, is alluring for those who appreciate masterly design, high quality binding, and (perhaps) trout. At a mere glimpse of his work, the viewer mesmerized—transfixed by each binding's exacting beauty. Neff literally ensnares (or should I say hooks and reels?) his viewer into a world, assembled in goatskin and Japanese paper. The essence of S. Neff, Jr., consists of three inseparable and integral elements: he is a devout angler, a collector of angling books, and a piscatorial fine binder.

The piscatorial bindings of S. A. Neff, Jr. illustrate not only his passion for angling for trout and collecting books on angling but also his work as a fine binder for his personal collection. Neff's fancy for fly-tying and angling for trout began when he was fifteen; in the five years since then, he has waded trout rivers throughout the United States, Ireland, England, and Central Europe. Because he wanted to know the trout and its environment, Neff began to collect old angling books: with his first purchase, at the age of twenty, he embarked on education in aquatic entomology, the devising and dressing of flies, the hand-crafting of fly rods, and the understanding of piscatorial history. As Neff's collection of old angling books grew, he became caught up in their history and significance as books. He joined the Pittsburgh Bibliophiles, of which he was a member for seventeen years and president for two. His library now contains two thousand volumes on fish and fishing, focusing on books prior to the twentieth

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century, with some dating as far back as 1600. This collecting enthusiasm propelled him to the next logical step: the care and restoration of his fine collection.

In 1982—in order to make small repairs on some of the books in his growing collection—Neff took a few simple workshops on binding methods in the Pittsburgh area. Reflecting on his late start as a bookbinder, Neff often refers to T. J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840–1922), known as the Father of Modern Bookbinding, who also began his career as a bookbinder at middle age. Realizing that he would not have enough time to learn all the various methods and styles of binding, and being an autodidact by nature, Neff struck out on his own, teaching himself procedures that would be most applicable to the care and repair of his personal library. Neff soon realized that his twenty-five years as a graphic designer and illustrator, coupled with his long experience as an angler, provided him with the skills and design sensibility needed to become a bookbinder: "My development of hand-to-eye coordination during my longtime activities as a designer and flytier inadvertently trained me in bookbinding."

Since 1982, Neff has continually added new methods, techniques, and materials to his bookbinding repertoire. Initially, he worked in quarter- and half-leather, then in full leather with simple gilt-stamped designs (the stamping dies are of his own design). After taking a vellum workshop in 1985, he began creating half- and full-vellum

bindings. With this new skill, Neff created his first multiple set of bindings and boxes for *A Book of Small Flies* (Figures 1-4). This unique edition, originally a two-volume set, comprises four volumes bound in full vellum over raised foundations with marbled paper panels and on-lays of goatskin. Neff created two additional volumes, which include objects beyond the text such as materials used in making flies, and photographs taken by Neff based on the text of the book. This set was the first four-volume set of angling books to contain a related grouping of all these piscatorial materials. *A Book of Small Flies* marks the beginning of Neff's serious commitment to bookbinding; it was the first work Neff exhibited nationally and was selected for inclusion at the juried Guild of Book Workers' 1986 national exhibition.

In 1988, Neff began to experiment with Japanese dyed paper to create decorative panels, using it in conjunction with Japanese gilt paper to provide a linear definition between the shapes. He used this technique on a set of two bindings in a box, *A Modern Dry-Fly Code*, second edition, and *In the Ring of the Rise*, both by Vincent C. Marinaro, published in 1970 and 1976 respectively (Figures 6 & 7). The two volumes are found within a drop-back box portraying the Cumberland Valley, which provides the viewer with a glimpse of what is contained inside. The image found on the decorative panels of each binding represents the subject of that volume. *A Modern Dry-Fly Code* investigates the methods of fly fishing on the Letort Spring Run in the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania. Neff portrays this small river, including an image of the predominant variety of mayfly, the *Ephemerella dorothea* (Figure 7). He depicts the stream in detail on the panels for *In the Ring of the Rise*, which thoroughly examines the feeding habits of the Letort trout. Neff includes an illustration of a trout that has just risen to the surface for a mayfly, resulting in a rise-form, or "ring of the rise" (Figure 7). The viewer is first struck by the image of the Cumberland Valley on the box. Neff says, "The viewer moves into the valley when looking at the covers of the *Code*, and finally to the river's surface with the covers of the *Ring*." This application of pictorial panels to foretell the contents of a box and bindings was the beginning of a style formula for Neff.

Neff further developed this innovative pictorial panel technique. The application of panel decoration in combination with box sets

containing two or more volumes imparts a particular expression to Neff's work. He says, "I have always been interested in creating sets of books, rather than simply putting a cover, albeit a decorative one, on a book." Neff calls these sets "containers" because they usually hold items such as actual fishing flies, photographs, letters, and reels in addition to the text of a book or essay. As an observer of Neff's work, I am more inclined to call these box sets "environments." Each panel draws the viewer into the subject explored within a box and volume. The specific angling materials placed within each box further the experience of the subject. Giving the subject matter of each book careful consideration, Neff essentially documents the specific angling environment on the panels of the box set and the bindings it contains.

The three-volume set *Miniature Nymphs: A Chapter from "The Masters on the Nymph"* (1989) exemplifies this angling environment (Figures 8-12). This set contains text, actual trout flies dressed by Neff and materials for making them, manuscript, photographs used in the text, and correspondence with the publisher. On the box are scenes of limestone and freestone rivers, two of the earth's three river types. The highly detailed images of a brown trout in a limestone river, rainbow trout in a freestone river, and nymphs on the bottom of the rivers appear individually on the bindings of each volume. The pictorial panels found on this set inform the viewer of the contents of each volume.

In 1990, Neff began experimenting with full goatskin bindings over raised foundations, flat on-lays, raised on-lays, and blind tooling. Neff integrated these new techniques with his decorative panels and boxed-set formula. *Catskill Rivers*, written by Austin M. Francis (1983), was bound in 1991 and is a product of this integration (Figures 15-18). The covers on the box and volume are incredibly fine. Neff describes the design as follows:

The panel on the front cover depicts the trout of the Catskill rivers; the brook trout (leaping downward) declined at the end of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by the brown trout (moving upward). The vivid colors of the panel are in direct contrast with the subtleties of the binding. The dark green on-lays quietly set the scene on the book's cover for

the three bands of bright blue raised on-lays symbolizing the Catskill rivers.

Revealing the connection between the box and the binding, states, "There is no apparent relationship between the box and the binding [at first glance] until the book is opened to reveal the doublure portraying a scene on one of the rivers." This Catskill environment is made whole by a second river scene, which appears on the back doublure, and aquatic insects, which are found in the ground of each panel.

A set consisting of two volumes housed in an inner and outer box made for Rodolphe L. Coigney's *Izaak Walton: A New Bibliography 1653-1987* (1989) represents Neff's interest in creating twentieth-century designs based on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century designs (Figures 23-28). "As a twentieth-century binder and book designer, I can immerse myself in period design, but to attempt to produce a similar design would simply be making a facsimile. It is actually a personal aesthetic effort," states Neff. Therefore, he rated these bindings with a twentieth-century version of a seventeenth-century panel design.

Of particular note in this container are the interior of the outer box and the cover of the inner box, which form a triptych (Figure 23). When the viewer opens the box, he or she finds a scene depicting Charles Cotton's Fishing House, *Piscatoribus sacrum*, on the River Dove in England, which ran through Cotton's estate. An angler and close friend of Walton, Cotton memorialized their friends and the cypher "IWCC" inscribed on the keystone above the door of *Piscatoribus sacrum*. Neff uses this cypher as a decorative element on the box and binding, thus linking them to Walton, Cotton, *Piscatoribus sacrum*, and the River Dove. Two aquatic insects found on the cover long before the seventeenth century are also in full view in the container. In this boxed set, Neff creates a twentieth-century design based on a seventeenth-century binding style, effectively juxtaposing two periods. He accomplishes this by binding both volumes in a seventeenth-century style, including a doublure panel depicting an angler of that period and another portraying a modern angler

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Of particular note in this container are the interior of the outer box and the cover of the inner box, which form a triptych (Figure 24). When the viewer opens the box, he or she finds a scene depicting Charles Cotton's Fishing House, *Piscatoribus sacrum*, on the River Dove in England, which ran through Cotton's estate. An angler, poet, and close friend of Walton, Cotton memorialized their friendship in the cypher "IWCC" inscribed on the keystone above the door to *Piscatoribus sacrum*. Neff uses this cypher as a decorative element on the box and binding, thus linking them to Walton, Cotton, *Piscatoribus sacrum*, and the River Dove. Two aquatic insects found on the river long before the seventeenth century are also in full view in this container. In this boxed set, Neff creates a twentieth-century version based on a seventeenth-century binding style, effectively juxtaposing two periods. He accomplishes this by binding both volumes in a seventeenth-century style, including a doublure panel depicting an angler of that period and another portraying a modern angler in the

same setting, using the IWCC cypher as a decorative motif, and including contemporary photography of what he calls "the relatively unspoiled beauty" of Dove Dale and the river.

Neff designed this set to be experienced in stages, which he feels makes it "more complex and interesting than a simple binding." The panel decorations, together with the binding techniques described here, aid Neff in achieving his goal of developing a sense of movement through space and history within his containers.

Since 1992, Neff has continued to excel at binding and creating pictorial panels. His recent bindings and containers include *A Treasury of Reels* (1995, Figures 36–40), *The Angling Letters of S. A. Neff, Jr. and J. S. Hewitson* (1997, Figures 41–44), and *Angling in Hibernia* (1998, Figures 45–49). *A Treasury of Reels* is a two-volume set that contains text and actual nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century fly reels. These are housed in a drop-back box, which is embellished by designs that mimic ten actual reel designs. The volumes are contained in a chest with a bas-relief of a brook trout on the top. *Angling Letters* is a grouping of correspondence, dating back to 1965, between Neff and Hewitson. Neff has organized each decade in a drop-back box. Also included are photographs Neff took to illustrate a point from one letter for each year of the correspondence. *Angling in Hibernia* is an autobiographical work of Neff's experiences of angling in Ireland. This impressive five-volume set contains text, related photographs, flies tied by Neff, materials used for making Irish trout flies, and a life box containing piscatorial objects. These works represent Neff's persistence in striving to perfect his skills as a binder and binding designer. The combination of Neff as artist, angler, collector, and binder—coupled with his vivacity and dedication—result in the achievement of high quality in his work.

Although the combination of talents and interests Neff exhibits would seem to be unique, his work can be placed within a historical framework. Thomas Gosden (1780–1840) should easily come to mind for bibliophiles who collect sporting books. Gosden described himself as a bookbinder, publisher, and printseller. Like Neff, he was an outdoor enthusiast and a lover of books who brought his enthusiasm for angling to his work. Gosden is best known as a binder whose

angling books are stamped with small piscatorial and emblematic designs. In 1819, he published T. P. Lathey's poem *The Angler*, which he embellished with a full-length portrait of himself outfitted with a fishing rod and net as a frontispiece. In this engraving, Gosden signals the depth of his knowledge of angling and angling literature by including the IWCC cypher of Walton and Cotton on the plinth upon which he is leaning. The portrait verifies William Loring Andrews's description of Gosden in *An English XIX Century Sportsman, Bibliophile and Binder of Angling Books* (1906) as "a true disciple of Izaak Walton." As a fly-fisherman of trout, a book collector, and a binder, Neff has continued in the tradition of Gosden as a twentieth-century "sporting bookbinder" and enthusiast.

Since Gosden, many others have produced distinctive angling books. Some angling authors—such as William Blacker (1814–1856), W. H. Aldam (active mid-nineteenth century), Preston Jennings (1893–1962), and Charles Phair (1875–1943)—took their published works a step further by incorporating flies and fly-tying materials into their texts. Blacker and Aldam, both British, published notable works in

1842 and 1843 and 1876. They were followed by the Americans Jennings and Phair in 1935 and 1937 respectively. Although these books were deluxe editions, they were commercial in nature. In the twentieth century, firms such as Robert Riviere & Son and Sangorski & Sutcliffe were known to have produced magnificent bindings, but their binders were usually not anglers. Neff has followed in the tradition of Blacker, Aldam, Jennings, and Phair by incorporating angling materials into his angling "environments."

As a collector and binder, Neff can be placed in a special category of twentieth-century collectors of angling books who execute fine bindings for their personal collections. The depth of his knowledge of angling and of the content of each book in his library—along with his design expertise—brings the quality of his work to a high level. Each binding reflects his base of knowledge; each design is unique and particular to the subject of the book. His pictorial bindings are exceptional, superbly executed, and innovative. S. A. Neff, Jr., guides the viewer through an exploration of the history of angling for trout. His work becomes a lens into this fascinating and special world.

ANGLING BOUND

The Bindings of S. A. Neff, Jr.

Stanley I Grand
Wilkes University

The "essence" of S. A. Neff, Jr., writes Elisabeth Agro of three inseparable and integral elements: being an angler, a collector of angling books, and a piscatorial binder." In the remainder of her essay for this catalogue she traces Neff's development as a fine binder and locates him within the historical context of artist-binders of angling literature. Neff's statement likewise focuses on binding techniques and innovation. This essay, on the other hand, looks at the images that Neff creates and their relationship to the books they adorn. It is concerned, therefore, with iconography ("picture writing"), angling writing, and fishing for trout, the center link in Agro's tripartite chain.

In his binder's statement, Neff observes that he has an "artistic sense, a keenly honed hand-to-eye coordination, a sense of precision, and patience" along with a well-developed "sense of history." The images of the trout are precisely the qualities one associates with fly fishing. The image of the beautifully streamlined and colored trout in pure flowing waters, by means most graceful and refined, is built on aesthetic values. Moreover, it is a pursuit rich in history. The tradition of catching fish on a hook decorated with bits of feather and fur is ancient (Figure 12), as is the practice of writing about it. As late as the third century, we find an unequivocal description of fly fishing in Claudius Aelianus's *De Animalium Natura*: "The fishermen use wool around their hooks and fasten to the wool two feathers which grow under a cock's wattle and which are the colour of dark red." After Aelianus, no true angling literature is to be found until the publication of *The Treatise of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* (publi-

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In his binder’s statement, Neff observes that he has an “aesthetic sense, a keenly honed hand-to-eye coordination, a sense of proportion, and patience” along with a well-developed “sense of history.” These are precisely the qualities one associates with fly fishing. The pursuit of the beautifully streamlined and colored trout in pure flowing waters, by means most graceful and refined, is built on aesthetic values. Moreover, it is a pursuit rich in history. The tradition of catching fish on a hook decorated with bits of feather and fur is ancient (Figure 12), as is the practice of writing about it. As early as the third century, we find an unequivocal description of fly fishing in Claudius Aelianus’s *De Animalium Natura*: “The fishermen wind red wool around their hooks and fasten to the wool two feathers that grow under a cock’s wattle and which are the colour of dark wax.”¹ After Aelianus, no true angling literature is to be found until the publication of *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* (published in

1496 but written some seventy-five years earlier), which most attribute to Dame Juliana Berners. Its importance, as John McDonald notes, is that since it “has no known antecedent in fishing history and asserts for the first time distinctive sporting attitudes toward fishing, it serves as the point of origin of modern angling.”² Earlier writings on fishing had treated the subject as a profession or occupation rather than a sport. More than simply a collection of recipes and tactics, “what is noteworthy is that Dame Juliana sets the cheerful and pious tone which is so characteristic of English books on angling.”³ The 1496 printing of Dame Juliana’s treatise included a woodcut famous in angling circles, a copy of which Neff has inlaid on the cover of the *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Westwood, Esq.* (Figure 13). Here we see a fifteenth-century angler, who, to judge from his costume, is a member of the merchant class—a gentleman but not an aristocrat. Bending, he reaches out toward the taut line while simultaneously lifting a fish from the stream. He wields a two-piece rod to which is attached a tapered horsehair line (made by twisting together hairs from the tail of a white horse) and a cork float or bobber. The fish dangling from the end of his line is about to be swung ashore, destined to join two others swimming in a short wooden barrel. If our angler has followed Dame Juliana’s advice, the lower section of his rod or “rodde” is made of hazel, willow, or aspen; and the flexible tip section, a yard in length, of blackthorn, crabtree, medlar, or juniper.

During the century and a half between the publication of Dame Juliana’s *Treatyse* and the first edition of Izaak Walton’s *The Compleat Angler* (1653), only a handful of new angling books appeared. One of

these, *The Arte of Angling* (1577), author unknown, was familiar to Walton, who "borrowed" numerous sections without attribution or credit. Having gone through five editions in Walton's lifetime and well over four hundred to date, *The Compleat Angler* is not only one of the most influential books in angling literature but also one of the most widely published books in the English language (Figures 14, 32, & 33). Keeping track of all the editions has become a cottage industry: in the nineteenth century, Thomas Westwood, the piscatorial bibliophile-collector mentioned above, along with Thomas Satchell, published a bibliography entitled *The Chronicle of the Compleat Angler* (1864), which was followed, most notably, by Peter Oliver's *A New Chronicle of the Compleat Angler* (1936), Bernard S. Horne's *The Complete Angler 1653-1967* (1970), and Rodolphe L. Coigney's *Izaak Walton: A New Bibliography 1653-1987* (1989, Figures 23-28).

Until the present century, the appeal of Walton's *Angler* has remained relatively constant—excepting only a period of obscurity between the publication of the fifth edition and his rediscovery by Moses Browne—because, as Charles Lamb observed in 1796, "It breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity and simplicity of heart. . . . it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it."⁴ Written in the form of a discourse between Piscator, Venator [Viator or "Way-farer" in the first edition; Venator in all subsequent editions], and Auceps, the *Angler* is part of a pastoral literary tradition that includes Theocritus's *Idylls*, Virgil's *Eclagues*, and in angling literature, John Dennys's *Secrets of Angling* (1613). The *Angler* begins with a chance encounter of three sportsmen who commence a friendly exchange on the relative merits of their respective pastimes (fishing, hunting, falconry). Following a medieval formula (utilized by Dame Juliana as well) of argument followed by instruction, a conversion occurs in the course of their discussions when Venator requests instruction in the art of angling and Piscator agrees to be his Master. The *Angler's* charm is enhanced by a liberal sprinkling of poems, songs, ditties, and rhymes amid an exposition on the characteristics of a wide variety of fish, their habits and preferences, and techniques for ensuring their capture.

Walton lived through a period of civil unrest, an interregnum when Cromwell headed England. A Royalist, Walton found a respite from

the political divisiveness of the time in pastoral pursuits. The most famous of his pastoral retreats is *Piscatoribus sacrum*, a fishing house built by his friend Charles Cotton in 1674 along the banks of the River Dove in Derbyshire, which Neff represents on the inside panels of the outer box containing Coigney's *Walton* (Figure 24). Cotton memorialized his friendship with Walton by linking together their initials to form a cypher (Figures 14 & 23), which he had carved above the fishing house entrance. This cypher also appears at the beginning of Part Two of the fifth edition of the *Angler* (1676) in which Cotton's own contribution, a supplemental manual entitled *Being Instructions How to Angle for Trout or Grayling in a Clear Stream*, appeared for the first time. Unlike Walton, Cotton concentrated on two fish known for their willingness to take a fly; he is consequently known as the "father of fly fishing." The "mother of fly fishing," of course, is Dame Juliana, whose classic patterns for a dozen artificial flies reigned supreme for two centuries.

On the back doublure of the binding for Coigney's *Bibliography* (Figure 27), Neff depicts a seventeenth-century angler catching a carp, a much maligned fish today, but one that Walton called the "queen of rivers."⁵ Reflecting Walton's observation that one must have "a very large measure of patience . . . to fish for a river Carp," Neff has thoughtfully provided his angler with a three-legged stool.⁶ The seventeenth-century angler holds a rod not much changed from the time of Dame Juliana. The absence of a reel is expected since they were reserved primarily for salmon fishing (a fish that Walton claims, erroneously, will "not usually [bite] at a fly, but more usually at a worm").⁷ Walton does note, however, that salmon fishers use a rod and reel combination: "a ring of wire on the top of their rod, through which the line may run to as great a length as is needful, when he [the fish] is hooked. And to that end, some use a wheel about the middle of their rod, or near their hand."⁸

In the century after the death of Walton, the reel became an increasingly common sight on British streams. Along with other technical innovations, there was a great advance in, and disbursement of, piscatorial knowledge. However, as Major John W. Hills wrote in *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout* (1921), "When we leave them [Walton and the other seventeenth-century writers] we leave the reign of the

book, and come to that of the manual."⁹ *The Gentleman* typical example of an eighteenth-century manual (Figure 19-20). This volume, which first appeared in 1747 and Charles's father Richard, went through numerous editions, and revisions. Bowlker is remembered for his willingness to challenge received authorities (Berners, and original fly dressings based on his knowledge of the spirit of the Enlightenment. Bowlker championed close and scientific method over the existing, authoritative, classical paradigm. By the end of the eighteenth century influence was preeminent: as Arnold Gingrich observe Cotton and Ronalds [see below], and the dawn of an approach. Bowlker is the one main landmark."¹⁰

The nineteenth century witnessed not only a great volume also an outpouring of titles devoted to angling, including *British Angler* (Figure 31). Combined with the contributions of the eighteenth century, these and countless other books established as the undisputed font of classic angling literature. John has summarized the century's great piscatorial achievements: "The century's great piscatorial achievements were explored and promulgated in angling books as few before. The work of the nineteenth century was in the creation of the decisive shift to upstream fishing, and the invention which together formed the greatest revolution in fly-fishing since the sport has been known."¹¹ In this connection, the innovations from the second half of the nineteenth century of mention: floating fly lines of oiled silk and H. S. Hall's fine-wire hooks with eyes (previously all hooks were "snelled"). Austin Francis views these developments in the context of a larger societal change when he argues in *Catskill Rivers* *American Fly Fishing* (Figures 15-18) that "Fly fishing in England, grew out of the Industrial Revolution. And as industrialization trailed England's by a good half century, the coming of age as anglers."¹²

In the decades after the Civil War, the effects of immigration, and urbanization profoundly defined the

of the time in pastoral pursuits. The most notable is *Piscatoribus sacrum*, a fishing house built by Cotton in 1674 along the banks of the River Delaware. Neff represents on the inside panels of the book *Walton's* (Figure 24). Cotton memorialized himself by linking together their initials to form a monogram which he had carved above the fishing house. This appears at the beginning of Part Two of the book (1676) in which Cotton's own contribution, a book titled *Being Instructions How to Angle for Trout*, first appeared for the first time. Unlike Walton, no fish known for their willingness to take a hook as the "father of fly fishing." The "mother" is Dame Juliana, whose classic patterns for a fly were supreme for two centuries.

The binding for Coigney's *Bibliography of the Seventeenth-Century Angler* catching a carp, is not one that Walton called the "queen of flies," but one that Neff has thought of as "a very good fish for a river Carp." Neff has thought of it as "a three-legged stool." The seventeenth-century was not much changed from the time of Dame Juliana, as they were reserved for a fish that Walton claims, erroneously, to be a fly, but more usually at a worm.⁷ Walton's non-fishers use a rod and reel combination: the reel is on the end of their rod, through which the line may run freely, and the hook is attached about the middle of their rod, or near their

mouth. In the case of Walton, the reel became an increasingly important part of the equipment in fast-moving streams. Along with other technical advances, the reel advanced in, and disbursement of, the reel. However, as Major John W. Hills wrote in *A History of Fly Fishing* (1921), "When we leave them [Walton and his century writers] we leave the reign of the

book, and come to that of the manual."⁹ *The Gentleman Angler* is a typical example of an eighteenth-century manual (Figures 21–22). A noteworthy exception is Charles Bowlker's *The Art of Angling* (Figures 19–20). This volume, which first appeared in 1747 under the name of Charles's father Richard, went through numerous editions, expansions, and revisions. Bowlker is remembered for his direct approach, willingness to challenge received authorities (Berners, Cotton, et al.), and original fly dressings based on his knowledge of entomology. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Bowlker championed close observation and scientific method over the existing, authoritative, and essentially classical paradigm. By the end of the eighteenth century, Bowlker's influence was preeminent: as Arnold Gingrich observes "Between Cotton and Ronalds [see below], and the dawn of an entomological approach, Bowlker is the one main landmark."¹⁰

The nineteenth century witnessed not only a great Walton vogue but also an outpouring of titles devoted to angling, including *The Improved British Angler* (Figure 31). Combined with the contributions of earlier centuries, these and countless other books established the British Isles as the undisputed font of classic angling literature. John McDonald has summarized the century's great piscatorial achievements, which were explored and promulgated in angling books as follows: "The real work of the nineteenth century was in the creation of entomologies, the decisive shift to upstream fishing, and the invention of the dry fly, which together formed the greatest revolution in fly-fishing history since the sport has been known."¹¹ In this connection, two other innovations from the second half of the nineteenth century are worthy of mention: floating fly lines of oiled silk and H. S. Hall's invention of fine-wire hooks with eyes (previously all hooks were "blind," heavy, and snelled). Austin Francis views these developments as part of a larger societal change when he argues in *Catskill Rivers: Birthplace of American Fly Fishing* (Figures 15–18) that "Fly fishing in America, as in England, grew out of the Industrial Revolution. And as American industrialization trailed England's by a good half century, so did our coming of age as anglers."¹²

In the decades after the Civil War, the effects of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization profoundly defined the development

of American fly fishing. As the great eastern cities, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia grew, railroad arteries spread out, linking these centers to the rest of the country and opening up new areas for commerce and recreation. By 1851, the Erie Railroad had already made the Delaware River a relatively easy destination. Twenty-one years later, in 1872, the Ulster & Delaware and Ontario & Western rail lines each inaugurated rail service to the Catskills. Urban sportsmen no longer had to endure long, brutal, and unpleasant journeys by horse and stage to reach these pristine destinations. Such was the impact of the transportation revolution that by the end of the century great stretches of the Catskills were owned by the various captains of industry, their sporting sons, and fishing clubs like *Salmo Fontinalis*, established in 1873. Within a dozen years or so after the opening of the Catskills to "sports," as these fishermen were called, the fishery had declined precipitously due to a combination of factors including overharvesting of the native, eager brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis* is actually a char, not a trout) and the diminution of habitat caused in part by logging which, among other things, raised water temperatures, contributed to greater fluctuations in water levels, and added to pollution (Figure 37). Fish managers responded by introducing two new species to the Catskill streams: the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), a European import often called the German brown, and the rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*, formerly *Salmo gairdneri*), from California (Figures 9 & 11). Neff commemorates the successful establishment of the European transplant and the decline of the brook trout on the box cover of *Catskill Rivers* (Figure 15). On the binding itself, he represents three Catskill rivers by means of undulating on-lays, flowing in tandem (Figure 16) (of the famous Catskill waters, three are rivers—the Beaverkill [Figures 17 & 18], Neversink, and Delaware—and three are creeks—the Willowemoc, Esopus, and Schoharie).

The brown trout's successful introduction in the Catskills, and subsequently throughout the American continent, was due in part to its willingness to take a floating or dry fly (Figure 47) and its innate adaptability to a variety of waters. Prior to the nineteenth century, artificial flies were, with few exceptions, fished wet, that is, below the surface of the water. Animated by the current or the angler, most wet

flies, such as the Childers salmon fly (Figure 35), act as attractors or lures. Anglers, however, had long observed that various insects on which trout fed spent a portion of their brief, ephemeral lives on top of the water. As knowledge of the various insects became more systematic and widespread, fostered by influential studies such as Alfred Ronalds's *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (1836), anglers in the British Isles began to develop dry flies specifically tied to correspond with, and imitate, particular stages in the life cycle of the mayfly. (As a general rule, subject to the usual qualifications, of all the various insects found on trout streams—caddis flies [Figure 17] which are called sedge flies in England [Figure 24], stoneflies, midges, terrestrials like ants or grasshoppers, et cetera—the mayfly is the most important.)

Comprising approximately five hundred species, the mayfly is a complex, varied, and adaptable creature belonging to the order of Ephemeroptera. Like the butterfly or moth, the mayfly undergoes a series of striking metamorphoses during its life. After hatching from their eggs, most mayfly nymphs spend a year living and growing on the bottom of a stream. Depending on the type of water—moving or still, rocky or silty—the different species have developed specialized body types. Although all mayfly nymphs have heads; wing pads at the thorax, abdomen, and gills; legs; and tails (either two or three part), the proportions of these components vary depending on habitat. Neff has carefully observed and rendered these differences on the covers (Western limestone nymphs on the front and Catskill nymphs on the back) of his manuscript from *The Masters on the Nymph* (Figure 10). At the proper time, the nymph leaves its underwater home and drifts or swims upward to the surface of the water where it sheds its nymphal shell. (A few species crawl onto rocks for this transformation.) Now called a dun (subimago), the newly emerged mayfly drifts downstream helplessly while its upright wings dry. In this vulnerable stage the dun provides a ready meal for rising trout and the inspiration for the dry fly. Figure 47 shows a brown trout in an Irish stream about to take a green drake: the upwinged construction identifies the fly as a dun imitator (*Ephemera danica*, the green drake found in Ireland, differs somewhat from the North American green drake, *Ephemera guttulata* [Figure 18]). Other prominent parts include the head, body,

legs (simulated by hackle), and the tail. Neff clearly shows how surface tension keeps the fly afloat. Once its wings dry, the dun flies to a nearby tree or other resting spot, where it undergoes its final metamorphosis. Now known as a spinner (imago), the mayfly mates. As its brief life ends, the female deposits her eggs back into the stream, and the cycle begins anew. (Since classical times, the Ephemeroptera—from the Greek meaning "over in a day"—have been a symbol of life and its transience, a conceit Neff revives in his boxes for the angling correspondence of S. A. Neff, Jr., and J. S. Hewitson [Figures 41–44]). The spinners, their wings now down and transparent, fall back upon the water and again provide the hungry trout a meal. The development of imitative dry flies, therefore, required an understanding of the life cycle of the mayfly, with an emphasis on the important postnymphal stages.

The insights of Ronalds were pivotal to the development of the floating fly. Others expanded on this knowledge; and Frederic M. Halford in particular, the author of *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* (1886), was to have a tremendous impact on American fly fishing. Since the brown trout was nonindigenous, American anglers quite naturally turned to European sources for information on its habits. Here again England provided the lead; but the ecology of American streams was and is rather different from that of streams in the British Isles. Interestingly enough, Izaak Walton had recognized the need to match artificials and naturals: "there are in Wales, and other countries, peculiar flies, proper to the particular place or country; and doubtless, unless a man makes a fly to counterfeit that very fly in that place, he is like to lose his labour, or much of it."¹³ In the Catskills, Theodore Gordon understood this; as Francis points out, "the thing that sets Gordon apart from the other early American dry-fly enthusiasts is the fact that he scrutinized English dry flies and dry-fly tactics and found them unsuited to American trout streams."¹⁴ Gordon not only knew Halford's books, he also corresponded with him. (Neff's angling correspondence, then, should be viewed as referencing and continuing a well-established tradition.) Gordon's initiatives were continued by others, including Preston Jennings, whose landmark *A Book of Trout Flies* (1935) proposed new mayfly patterns based on his in-stream

studies of the aquatic insect life found in the Catskills. Jennings "stands in the same relationship to angling as Ronalds does to British; each of them we think of serving as a link between angling and entomology, the first to approach the role properly, and do it right." The most appropriate that Neff has included actual flies in the container for Francis's *Catskill Rivers*.

In addition to its willingness to take the dry fly, the brook trout—unlike the brook trout—has proven remarkably adaptable to a wide range of types of water. Browns are now found in the freestone streams of the Catskills (Figure 8), the limestone streams of South Central California (Figures 6 & 7) and the spring creeks of the West (Figure 7). Vincent Marinaro in *The Ring of the Rise* (Figure 7) provides a synopsis of the differences among these waters. The stream originates in elevated terrain when surface melting snow trickles downhill and merges with other streams, brooks, streams, and finally rivers. Water flow is at its greatest with the greatest volume occurring most often during the winter. During the summer, the flow declines, and the water temperature tends to increase. With their rocky bottoms, sparse vegetation by spring floods and winter ice jams, these streams are generally much less fertile than limestone streams. Limestone streams, on the other hand, are meadow streams, flowing through areas of low relief, vast, primordial seas. Unlike the freestone streams, limestone streams originate in bedrock, the skeletal remains of the microorganisms that once lived in the ocean. Being both porous and easily dissolved by water, limestone makes an ideal aquifer, and the springs from these ancient underground reservoirs are significant that the flow from these underground reservoirs is constant, in terms of both volume and temperature. The limestone does not undergo the cyclical variations of freestone. Perhaps even more important, these alkaline streams are less subject to the cleansing effects of floodwaters on their bottoms to provide anchorage for watercre

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In addition to its willingness to take the dry fly, the brown trout—unlike the brook trout—has proven remarkably adaptive to diverse types of water. Browns are now found in the freestone streams of the Catskills (Figure 8), the limestoners of South Central Pennsylvania (Figures 6 & 7) and the spring creeks of the West (Figures 8 & 9). Vincent Marinaro *In the Ring of the Rise* (Figure 7) provides a useful synopsis of the differences among these waters. The typical freestone stream originates in elevated terrain when surface water from rain or melting snow trickles downhill and merges with other rivulets to form brooks, streams, and finally rivers. Water flow is extremely varied, with the greatest volume occurring most often during the spring of the year. During the summer, the flow declines, and the water temperature tends to increase. With their rocky bottoms, scoured free of silt and vegetation by spring floods and winter ice jams, freestoners are generally much less fertile than limestoners. Limestoners, on the other hand, are meadow streams, flowing through areas once covered by vast, primordial seas. Unlike the freestoners, whose rocks tend to be inorganic, the limestone streams originate in bedrock composed of the skeletal remains of the microorganisms that once inhabited the long-gone oceans. Being both porous and easily dissolved by chemical action, limestone makes an ideal aquifer, and the modern limestoner springs from these ancient underground reservoirs of water. It is significant that the flow from these underground sources is relatively constant, in terms of both volume and temperature, which means that the limestoner does not undergo the cyclical variations of the freestoner. Perhaps even more important, these alkaline waters, rich in calcium carbonate, support a wide variety of aquatic life. Since these streams are less subject to the cleansing effects of flooding, silt remains on their bottoms to provide anchorage for watercress and other

aquatic plants, which in turn add essential oxygen to the water and host whole colonies of tiny snails and bugs—the basic building blocks of the food chain. (Western spring creeks, for the most part, are comparable to the limestoners.) From an ecological standpoint, this means that more and bigger trout are likely to be found in fertile waters (although big fish are also found in large freestone waters because there is a sufficient volume, if not density, of food).

Each type of stream has different conditions; and American anglers and angling authors have studied their own home waters closely. For example, fish that live in fast-moving broken water such as rapids or riffles, must decide quickly and impulsively whether to grab a passing morsel before it is swept downstream. The famous, gin-clear, slow-moving streams of Central Pennsylvania, on the other hand, produce wary trout who carefully inspect each offering for any sign of artificiality (color, size, silhouette, or drag). Their selectivity has prompted numerous studies including Vincent Marinaro's *In the Ring of the Rise* (1976), which interprets the rise patterns of trout as a key to understanding their feeding habits (Figure 7). Earlier, Marinaro's studies of the Letort and other limestoners resulted in *A Modern Dry Fly Code* (1950). Although this work argued for the importance of terrestrials in the diet of these trout and included innovative dressings for flies based on these conclusions, Neff has chosen to represent the *Ephemeral dorothea*, known to anglers as the sulphur dun, on the cover (Figure 7). Neff's homage to Marinaro includes flies tied by the master, slides, an audio cassette, and letters—all housed in boxes along with his seminal books.

Marinaro's influence is felt in *Angling in Hibernia*. When Neff first went to Ireland in 1964, and on his return in 1966, he applied Marinaro's experimental approach to the streams of Eire and developed new designs for flies with which to imitate the full range of Irish aquatic insects (Figure 47). Memories of Ireland appear in the abstract landscapes of mountains, meadows, rivers, and lakes that adorn both covers of *The Angler's Calendar* (Figure 14). More literally, we are transported back three decades by the objects preserved in a Cornell-like life box: Mucilin, the old-reliable, pre-silicon floatant; a Hardy Lightweight reel on a simple two-ring reel seat from a cane rod; a

finger vise, small hackle pliers, scissors, hooks, and silk for tying flies streamside; a small glass to identify insects; photographs and pamphlets; an amadou for drying flies; a spool of leader material; and a combination scale and measuring tape that promises, like some Baroque allegory, the triumph of truth over falsehood (Figure 49).

In Neff's time, trout fishing with the fly has undergone dramatic changes. Once mostly the sport of an elite, often Anglophile, group of men—for whom fly fishing was an emblem of class—who fished with silk, gut, and Tonkin cane, the sport has gradually found more and more adherents. In the 1940s, after World War II, nylon leaders replaced gut, which required soaking prior to use. Next, modern floating lines banished silk, with its confusing designations and high maintenance (C. F. Orvis invented the ventilated reel in the late nineteenth century to facilitate the drying of silk lines [Figure 40, lower center]). Finally, fiberglass at first, and now graphite rods have triumphed over hand-made, split-bamboo wands (except in the eyes of a small band of dedicated partisans). With technological advances, increased environmental awareness, and a wealth of new angling titles, fly fishing has rebounded from its nadir in the early 1950s when it appeared that spin-fishing, a postwar French import that exploited the properties of newly available nylon, would relegate it to history.

Yet along with its democratization, many of the sport's traditions have been lost, or are of little interest, to its new adherents. One need only listen to an old-time fly tier talk of water-bird, forest-bird, and other feathers; water-shedding muskrat-beaver-seal furs, or hair from the woodland deer, the meadow hare, the wily fox to understand a great, interconnected cycle that comes together in the flash of a rise or the underwater wink, in Skues's immortal image, of the trout. Today, artificial materials increasingly predominate.

Neff's entire endeavor is an homage to tradition and values, craft and sport; it is a studied, but natural, anachronism. In both his bindings and his angling, he stresses continuity and innovation (Figures 26 & 28). He does not disdain his own time, but he moves slowly and reflectively before embracing change. His moral compass does not swing freely with the relativism of the postmodern age but remains

fixed. He traverses an ordered landscape where precedent and learning are the major features. In the face of the cheap, the arriviste, the tawdry, and mass culture, he flaunts his love of the handmade, the beautiful, the unique, and, of course, the trout. Like the cloistered scribes who kept alive great books during the centuries after the fall of Rome, Neff is at heart a preservationist. He is the keeper of the tangible remains of friendship—the letters—for which he constructs elaborate, modern reliquaries or treasuries. Like a carefully considered garden, fly fishing is a magnificent obsession in which civilization and art elevate and transform the mundane into a conceit. It is not a simulacrum; there is really nothing else like it.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Charles Jardine, *The Classic Guide to Fly-Fishing for Trout* (New York: Random House, 1991): 10.
2. John McDonald, *The Origins of Angling*, 1963 (reprinted New York: Lyons & Burford, 1997): 6.
3. Margaret Bottrall, Introduction in Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 5th ed. 1676 (reprinted London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1906, 1970): viii.
4. Quoted in Bottrall, Introduction, p. v.
5. Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 5th ed. 1676 (reprinted London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1906, 1970): 132.
6. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, p. 137.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
8. *Ibid.* According to McDonald, the first mention of the reel occurs in Thomas Barker's *The Art of Angling* (1651) (*Origins*, p. 23).
9. Quoted in Arnold Gingrich, *The Fishing in Print: A Guided Tour Through Five Centuries of Angling Literature* (New York: Winchester Press, 1974): 60.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
11. McDonald, *Origins*, p. 106.
12. Austin Francis, *Catskill Rivers: Birthplace of American Fly Fishing*, 1983 (reprinted New York: Lyons & Burford, 1996): 22.
13. Walton, *Compleat Angler*, p. 8.
14. Francis, *Catskill Rivers*, p. 41.
15. Gingrich, *Fishing in Print*, p. 277.

GLOSSARY

- Adhesives** Polyvinyl acetate (PVA) is a flexible glue commonly used for adhering cloth and paper to binder's board. Wheat starch is used for adhering leather to binder's board or to leather.
- Ascona tool** A small brass tool with a wooden handle used for making templates for blind-tooling.
- Basswood** A soft, finely grained wood that is easily carved.
- Binder's board** An extremely dense paper board (available in various thicknesses) used for cover boards and boxes.
- Binding (full)** The entire book cover is of goatskin or other leather.
- Binding (half)** The spine and part of the sides and either edge are covered with goatskin; the remainder is covered with decorated paper.
- Binding (quarter)** The spine and part of the sides are covered with leather; the remainder is covered with cloth or decorated paper.
- Bound, case** A binding technique used primarily for cloth covers. The text block is sewn on linen tapes and the cover is made of cloth or leather. The first and last sheets (papers or pages) of the text block are covered by gluing or pasting.
- Bound by hand** A technique used primarily for leather covers. The text block is sewn on linen tapes or cords which are then glued to the binder's board to form an integral unit and then covered with leather.
- Bristol board** A stiff acid-free paper made in several thicknesses. Used for tooling templates, bases for raised on-lays, and other decorative work.
- Chemise folder** A folder made with Bristol board and cloth or leather.
- Doubleure** Usually a decorative panel on the inside of the cover, made of either paper or leather.
- Drop-back box** A container made for storing rare or fragile books. It is constructed of cloth or leather over binder's board.
- Edge** The top edge is the top of the text block; the fore-edge is the edge of the text block. A deckle-edge is an uneven edge used for handmade paper; it may be left uncut or trimmed. The edges may be treated with graphite or gold leaf and polished.
- End bands** Hand embroidered silk bands or goatskin bands at the ends of the spine of the text block.
- End papers** The first and last few leaves (pages) of the text block. They may be plain, colored, or decorated.

GLOSSARY

- Adhesives** Polyvinyl acetate (PVA) is a flexible glue commonly used for adhering cloth and paper to binder's board. Wheat starch paste is used for adhering leather to binder's board or to leather.
- Ascona tool** A small brass tool with a wooden handle used with stiff paper templates for blind-tooling.
- Basswood** A soft, finely grained wood that is easily carved.
- Binder's board** An extremely dense paper board (available in six thicknesses) used for cover boards and boxes.
- Binding (full)** The entire book cover is of goatskin or other material.
- Binding (half)** The spine and part of the sides and either the corners or fore-edge are covered with goatskin; the remainder is covered with cloth or decorated paper.
- Binding (quarter)** The spine and part of the sides are covered with goatskin; the remainder is covered with cloth or decorated paper.
- Bound, case** A binding technique used primarily for cloth covers. The text block is sewn on linen tapes and the cover is made separately. The first and last sheets (papers or pages) of the text block are attached to the cover by gluing or pasting.
- Bound by hand** A technique used primarily for leather bindings. The text block is sewn on linen tapes or cords which are then laced into the binder's board to form an integral unit and then covered with goatskin.
- Bristol board** A stiff acid-free paper made in several thicknesses; used for tooling templates, bases for raised on-lays, and other applications.
- Chemise folder** A folder made with Bristol board and covered with cloth.
- Doublure** Usually a decorative panel on the inside of the cover; it can be either paper or leather.
- Drop-back box** A container made for storing rare or fragile books; constructed of cloth or leather over binder's board.
- Edge** The top edge is the top of the text block; the fore-edge is the front edge of the text block. A deckle-edge is an uneven edge usually found on handmade paper; it may be left uncut or trimmed. Trimmed edges may be treated with graphite or gold leaf and polished.
- End bands** Hand embroidered silk bands or goatskin bands attached to the ends of the spine of the text block.
- End papers** The first and last few leaves (pages) of the text; the first and last may be plain, colored, or decorated.
- Goatskin Chagrin**—a hand-finished fine grain leather processed in France using South African goatskin; **Chieftain**—an even, large grain leather processed in Scotland using goatskin from Botswana; **Oasis**—medium grain leather processed in England using Nigerian goatskin.
- Goatskin, in-lays** Shapes of goatskin pasted into position on the binding where their corresponding shapes have been removed (so the in-lays are flush with the surface of the binding); linear in-lays are very thin strips of goatskin adhered into blind tooled lines.
- Goatskin, flat on-lays** Thinly pared shapes of goatskin pasted onto the binding.
- Goatskin, raised on-lays** Thinly pared goatskin glued onto shapes of four-ply Bristol board, turned-in, and glued onto the binding.
- Italian cloth** A finely woven book cloth with a paper backing.
- Japanese dyed paper** A paper made in Japan using dyed fibers; available in a multiplicity of colors.
- Japanese gilt paper** A very thin paper with hand-laminated gold-colored foil; also known as Tea chest paper.
- Marbled paper** Paper that has been colored or stained by hand with variegated patterns to resemble marble.
- Panel design** A vertical design of rectangles and borders reminiscent of binding designs commonly used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- Polished graphite** A gray metallic covering applied to the edges of the text block and brought to a high sheen by hand polishing.
- Stamping** A method of impressing an image into goatskin using a press that will heat a die to the necessary temperature; this plain impression is known as blind-stamping; when gold foil is used (a second time) to create an impression, it is known as gilt-stamping.
- Stamping die** A metal block with a design (in relief) used for creating a blind or gilt impression in goatskin or other materials.
- Text-block** All the leaves (pages) sewn on linen tapes or cords.
- Tooling** A method of impressing a small image or line into goatskin using a hand tool or wheel; the plain image is known as blind-tooling; when gold foil or leaf is used, it is known as gilt-tooling.
- Tooling templates** Shapes cut from Bristol board (to the binder's design) are used as guides with the Ascona tool.
- Vellum, calf** Calf-skin treated with lime to produce a strong, cream-colored material for bindings.

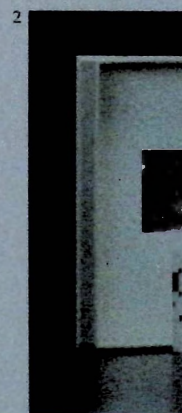
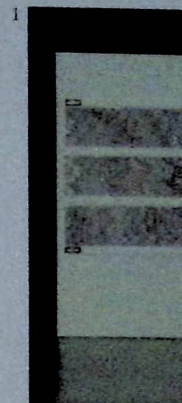
1 S. A. Neff, Jr., et al. *A Book of Small Flies*. Arlington, Vermont, 1983.
Created in 1986.

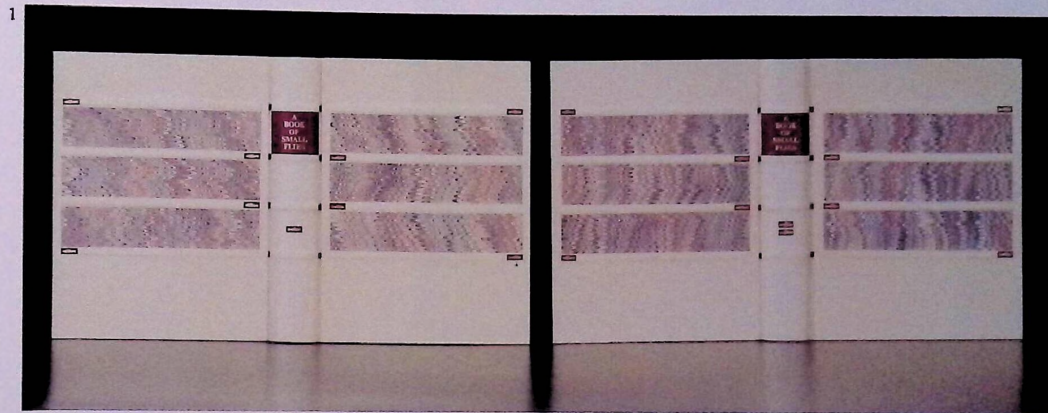
Two drop-back boxes containing a unique four-volume set; in full calf vellum with panels of marbled paper and raised bands; gilt-stamped Oasis goatskin on-lays and spine label.

21.6 × 16.5 cm.

2 Each box contains two volumes; uniformly case-bound in full calf vellum with panels of marbled paper and raised bands; gilt-stamped onlays and spine labels. Vols. I and III are sewn on Oasis covered vellum strips; silk endbands and marbled endpapers. Contents: Vol. I: text; Vol. II: actual flies; Vol. III: color photographs; Vol. IV: feathers and furs for dressing small flies.

7.5 × 6 cm. (each volume)





3 S. A. Neff, Jr., et al. *A Book of Small Flies*. Arlington, Vermont, 1983.

Created in 1986.

A drop-back box containing No. 54 of the original edition of 60 numbered two-volume sets; in full calf vellum with a panel design of raised vellum, marbled paper, piscatorial devices and spine label gilt-stamped on Oasis goatskin.

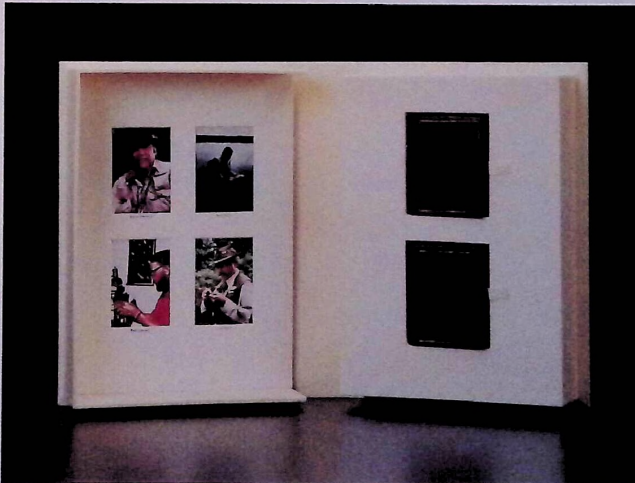
26.9 x 18.4 cm.

4 Box opened to show the original two-volume set bound by Gray Parrot for the publisher and portraits of the four authors. Also contains a vellum back cloth chemise with the manuscript for Mr. Neff's essay, the publisher's correspondence and announcement, and associated items.

3



4



5 Vincent C. Marinaro.

I *A Modern Dry-Fly Code*. New York, 1950.

II *Flies, Letters and Photographs*. Sewickley, Pennsylvania, 1973.

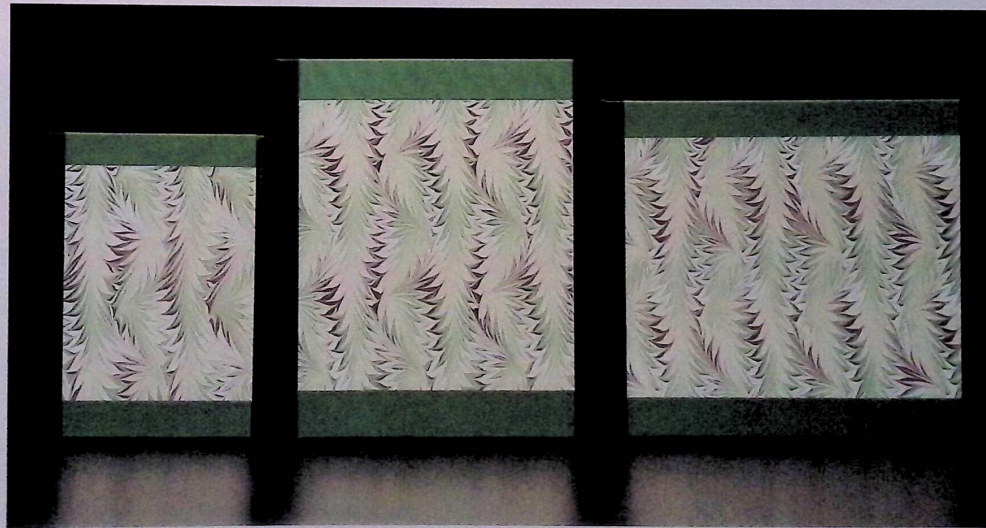
III "A Limestone Challenge." Sewickley, Pennsylvania, 1973.

Created in 1988-89.

Three drop-back boxes in Italian cloth with marbled paper panels and gilt-stamped paper spine labels. Box I contains the 1st and 2nd issues of the 1950 edition of the *Code*. Box II contains a drop-back box with five flies dressed by Mr. Marinaro and a portrait; two chemise folders containing an unbound suite of photographs of the author; and five of his letters. Box III is one of a set of two, each of which contains a tray of 35 mm. slides and an audio cassette documentary on Marinaro; it functions horizontally and is contained in a cloth slip-case.

I: 24.1 x 16.8 cm.; II: 30.1 x 24 cm.; III: 26.8 x 28.5 cm.

5



6 Vincent C. Marinaro. *A Modern Dry-Fly Code*. New York, 1970
(new edition), and *In the Ring of the Rise*. New York, 1976.
Created in 1989.

A drop-back box containing two volumes; with Italian cloth back and
edges; panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers and gilt-stamped paper
spine labels.

30 x 24 cm.

7 Both volumes are case-bound with Italian cloth back and edges with
panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, gilt-stamped paper spine labels,
silk endbands and color endpapers. The panels on the box portray the
Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania; the *Code* shows the Letort Spring
Run and a mayfly; the *Ring* reveals a feeding brown trout in that stream.
Code: 21.5 x 13.8 cm.; *Ring*: 28 x 21.2 cm.





8 S. A. Neff, Jr. Essay from *The Masters on the Nymph*. New York, 1979.
Created in 1989-90.

A drop-back box containing three volumes; with green Chieftain goatskin back and edges with panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers and gilt-stamped goatskin spine label. The back panel portrays a Catskill river, and the front panel a Western limestone creek.

28.2 x 19.7 cm.

8



— NYMPHS —

9 Vol. I: Text.

Green Chieftain goatskin back and edges with panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, silk endbands and color endpapers. The panels show a brown trout in a Western limestone creek.

25.9 x 17.3 cm.

10 Vol. III: Manuscript and Photographs.

Green Chieftain goatskin back and edges with panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label. Contains a cloth chemise with typed manuscript, photographs, and publisher's correspondence. The panels reveal nymphs on the bottom of a Catskill river and a Western limestone creek.

25.9 x 17.3 cm.

9



10



11 Vol. II: Flies and Materials.

Green Chieftain goatskin back and edges with panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label. Contains a cloth folder. The panels depict a rainbow trout in a Catskill river.

25.9 x 17.3 cm.

12 Vol. II: Cloth folder.

Actual trout flies; furs, feathers and hooks, mounted on printed plates.

11



12



- 13 *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Westwood, Esq.* New York, 1873, and Charles M. Wetzel. *American Fishing Books*. Stone Harbor, New Jersey, 1990. Both bound in 1990.

Left: bound in full dark red Chieftain goatskin with horizontal raised goatskin on-lays of two shades, and gold leather; pictorial paper in-lay, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, leather endbands and marbled endpapers. 24 x 17.8 cm.

Right: bound in full dark red Chieftain goatskin with raised horizontal bars, gilt-stamped facsimile of author's signature, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, leather endbands and marbled endpapers. 25.1 x 18.4 cm.

- 14 Hi Regan. *The Angler's Calendar*. London, 1896, and Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton. *The Complete Angler*. London, 1836. Both bound in 1991.

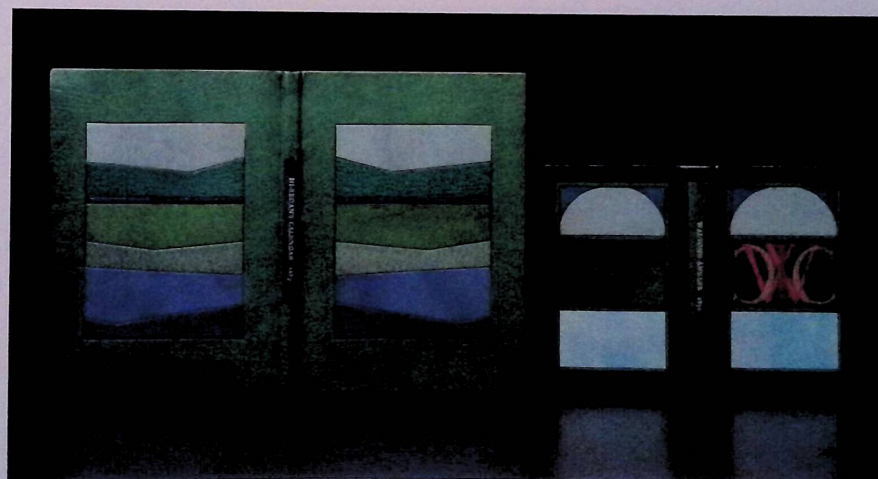
Left: bound in full green Oasis goatskin with on-lays of various goatskins, blind tooling, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, leather endbands and marbled endpapers. Panels contain shapes symbolizing Ireland's mountains, meadows, rivers, and lakes. 24.6 x 18 cm.

Right: bound in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with flat and raised on-lays of various goatskins, blind tooling, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, silk endbands and marbled endpapers. The IWCC cypher was devised by Charles Cotton in 1674. 17.5 x 10.5 cm.

13



14

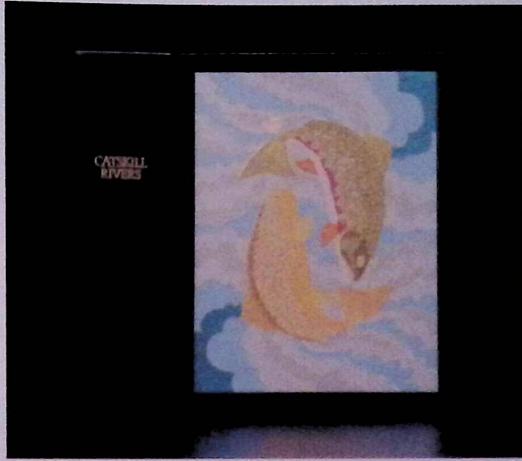


15 Austin M. Francis. *Catskill Rivers: Birthplace of American Fly Fishing*.
New York, 1983.
Created in 1991.

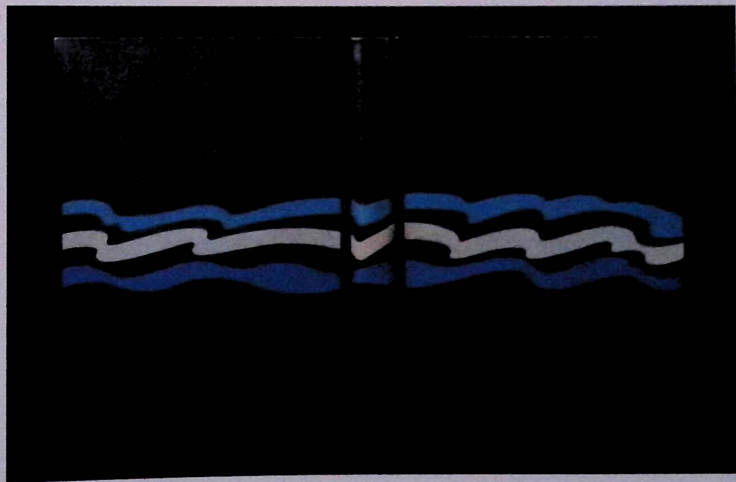
A drop-back box in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with panel of Japanese dyed and gilt papers and gilt-stamped goatskin raised on-lay spine label. The panel depicts the trout of the Catskill rivers: the brook trout (leaping downward) declined near the end of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by the brown trout imported from Europe (moving upward).
40 x 24.5 cm.

16 Bound in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with title in raised on-lays of the same leather; three on-lays of various blue goatskins, pictorial doublures, leather endbands and color endpapers. The three flowing shapes symbolize the major Catskill rivers.
28.5 x 21.5 cm.

15



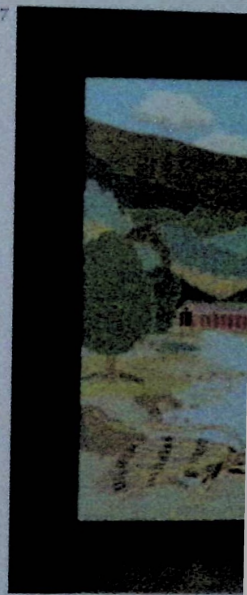
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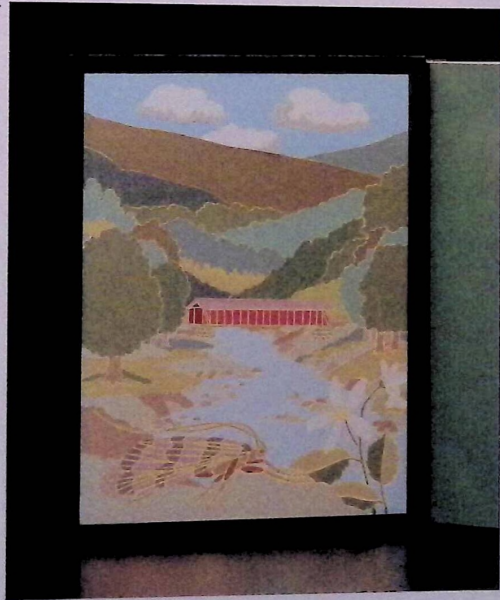
17 Front doublure portraying the upper Beaverkill River and a caddis fly;
panel of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, goatskin edges and hinge.

18 Back doublure showing the East Branch of the Delaware River and a
mayfly; panel of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, goatskin edges and hinge.

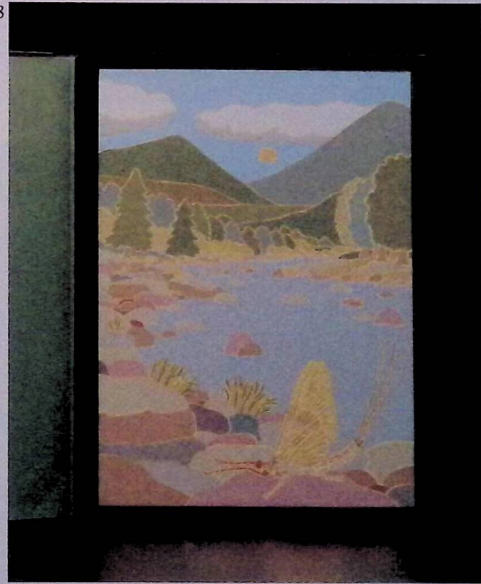
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18



19 Charles Bowker. *The Art of Angling*. Birmingham, 1792, and Ludlow, 1826.
Created in 1992.

A drop-back box containing two volumes; in full brown Chieftain
goatskin with blind tooling, goatskin on-lays and gilt-stamped goatskin
spine label.

19.2 x 13 cm.

20 Uniformly bound in full brown Chieftain goatskin with blind tooling,
goatskin on-lays, gilt-stamped goatskin spine label, silk endbands and
marbled endpapers. The pattern is a twentieth-century version of an
eighteenth-century panel design.

17.1 x 10.8 cm.

19



20



21 Anonymous. *The Gentleman Angler*. London, 1726; 3rd. ed., n.d.; 1786.
Created in 1992.

A drop-back box containing three volumes; in full dark red Chagrin goatskin with blind tooling, goatskin on-lays and gilt-stamped goatskin spine label.

18.5 x 12.2 cm.

22 Bound uniformly in dark red Chagrin goatskin with blind tooling, goatskin on-lays, gilt-stamped goatskin spine labels, leather endbands and marbled endpapers. The pattern is a twentieth-century version of an eighteenth-century panel design.

1: 16.2 x 9.5 cm. 2: 16.4 x 9.6 cm. 3: 15 x 8.8 cm.

21



22



23 Rodolphe L. Coigney. *Izaak Walton: A New Bibliography 1653-1987*.
New York, 1989.
Created in 1992.

A center-opening box containing an inner box with two volumes; in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with cypher of raised on-lays of various goatskins. The IWCC cypher has appeared in numerous editions of *The Complete Angler* beginning with the 5th edition in 1676.

28.2 x 20.3 x 9.5 cm.

24 Outer box open to reveal triptych of Japanese dyed and gilt papers with goatskin edges and hinges. The center panel is the cover of the inner box. The panels portray Charles Cotton's Fishing House on the River Dove, built in 1674.

23



24



25 Volumes I and II: uniformly bound in full red hand-finished goatskin with blind tooling, flat goatskin on-lays, raised goatskin on-lays with gilt-stamped piscatorial images, gilt-stamped goatskin spine labels, pictorial doublures. Vol. I contains the text; leather endbands with multiple color on-lays and color endpapers. Vol. II contains a chemise with Mr. Neff's color photographs of the River Dove and the Fishing House.

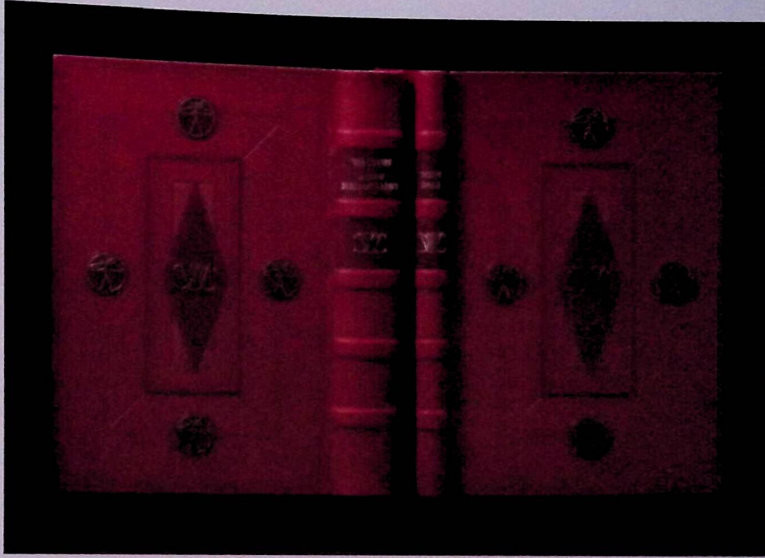
26.1 x 17.2 cm.

26 Front doublure of Vol. I: Japanese dyed and gilt papers, leather edges and hinge. The panel depicts a seventeenth-century angler on an English river.

27 Back doublure of Vol. I: Japanese dyed and gilt papers, leather edges and hinge. The panel shows a seventeenth-century angler catching a fish.

28 Front doublure of Vol. II: Japanese dyed and gilt papers, leather edges and hinge, a cloth chemise is attached to the inside of the back cover. A twentieth-century angler replaces the seventeenth-century angler on the same river.

25



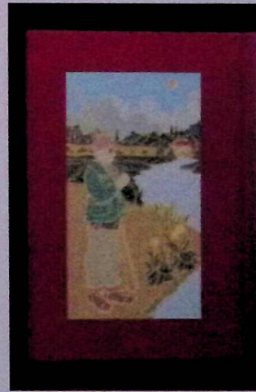
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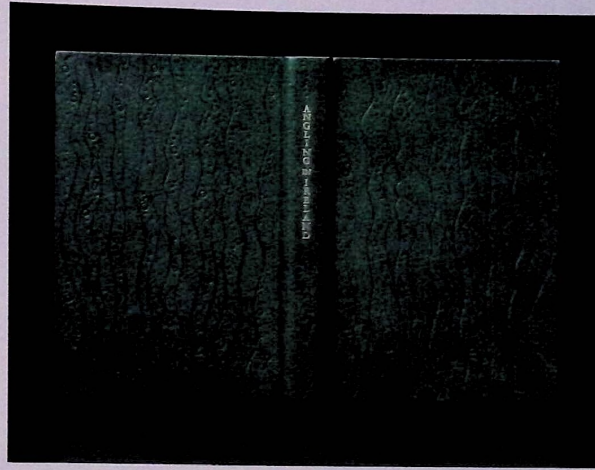


29 Rev. Joseph Adams. *Angling in Ireland*. London, 1938. (A unique copy.)
Created in 1993.

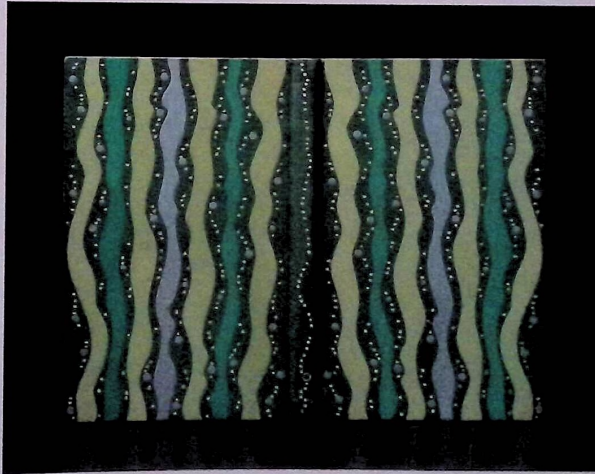
A drop-back box in full green Chieftain goatskin with blind tooling and
gilt-stamped title.
23.7 x 15.8 cm.

30 Bound in full green Chieftain goatskin with goatskin on-lays, gilt tooling
on covers, spine and top and bottom edges, leather endbands and color
endpapers. The blind-tooled design of a flowing river on the box intro-
duces the more developed decoration on the binding.
21.8 x 13.7 cm.

29



30



31 Robert Huish. *The Improved British Angler*. Derby, 1838.

Created in 1990; decorated in 1994.

Bound in full gray-blue Oasis goatskin with goatskin in-lays, gilt tooling, gilt-stamped devices and goatskin spine label, silk endbands and marbled endpapers. Contained in a cloth chemise with a goatskin back and a quarter goatskin slip-case, with gilt-stamped goatskin spine labels. This is a twentieth-century interpretation of an eighteenth-century panel design.

Slip-case: 14.4 x 11.5 cm.; Chemise: 13.8 x 11.2 cm.; Binding: 13.6 x 10.4 cm.

32 Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton. *The Complete Angler*. London, 1797.

Created in 1994.

A drop-back box in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with linear goatskin in-lays and gilt-stamped goatskin spine label.

20.3 x 13.3 cm.

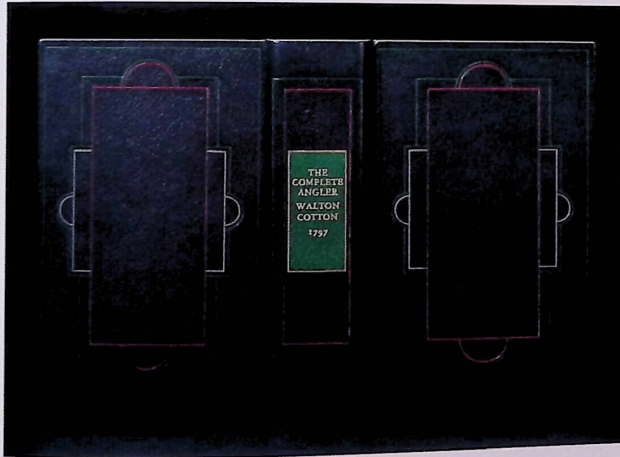
33 Bound in full dark green Chieftain goatskin with panels of goatskin on-lays, linear goatskin in-lays, gilt tooling, gilt-stamped device and spine label, leather endbands with on-lays, marbled endpapers and polished graphite on top edge. This is a twentieth-century version of a seventeenth-century panel design. The simple design on the box introduces the developed design on the binding.

18 x 10.4 cm.

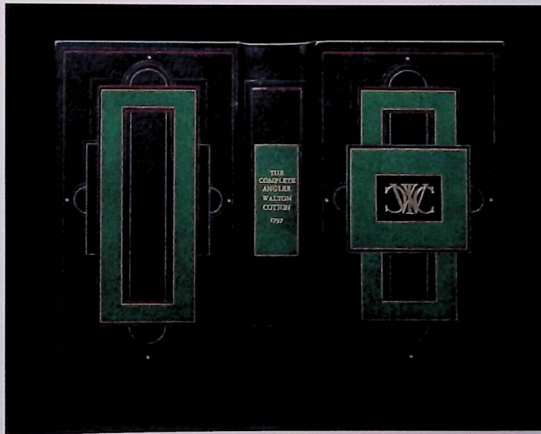
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33



34 Thomas Speedy. *Sport in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland*. Edinburgh, 1884.
Created in 1995.

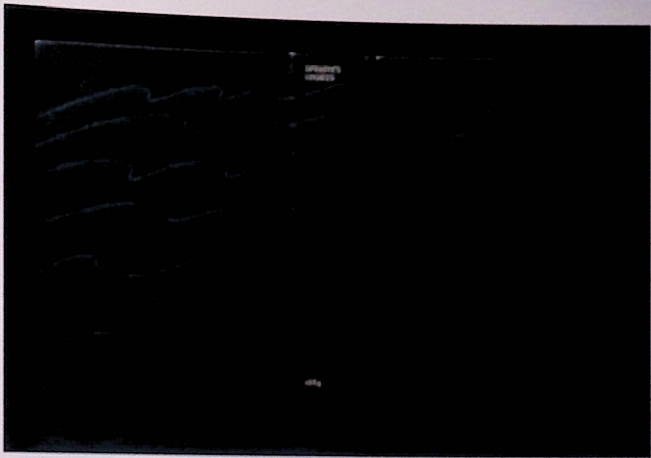
A drop-back box of full dark green goatskin with linear goatskin in-lays
and gilt-stamped title.

23.1 × 16.6 cm.

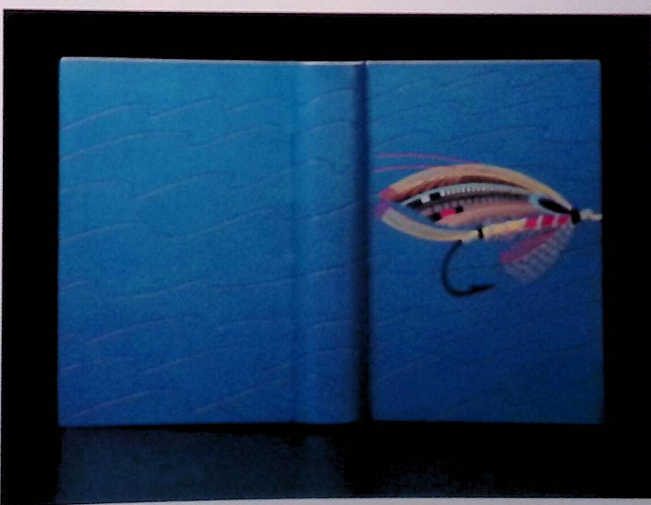
35 Bound in blue Chieftain goatskin with a salmon fly of goatskin on-lays
and linear in-lays, blind tooling, leather endbands with multiple on-lays,
color endpapers and polished graphite on all edges. On the box, the flowing
design depicts a Scottish salmon river; on the binding, a salmon fly appears
in that river.

20.9 × 13.6 cm.

34



35



36 Jim Brown. *A Treasury of Reels*. Manchester, Vermont, 1990.
Created in 1994-96.

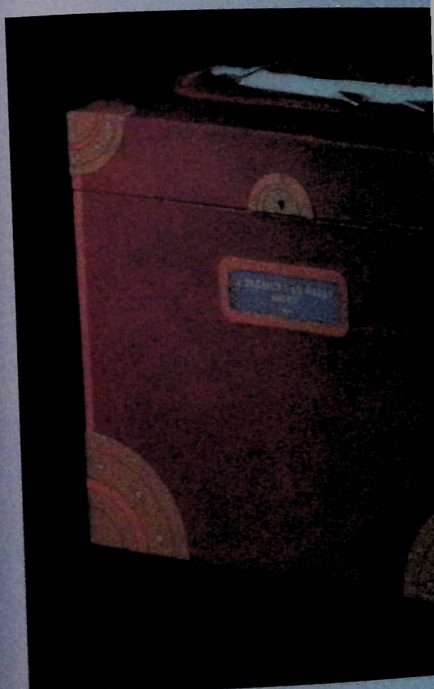
The container is a "treasure chest" housing two volumes; in full brown Chieftain goatskin with a brook trout in bas-relief on the top; corner devices are raised goatskin on-lays with linear goatskin in-lay decorations and gilt-stamped raised goatskin on-lay label.

28.9 x 31.5 x 25.3 cm.

37 Top of chest: Brook trout in bas-relief; basswood shape covered with Chieftain goatskin and decorated with goatskin on-lays; and raised goatskin on-lays with linear goatskin in-lays.

25.3 x 31.5 cm.

36



36



37



38 Vol. I: Text. Bound in blue-green Chieftain goatskin with flat and raised goatskin on-lays, linear goatskin in-lays, gilt-stamped devices, spine label of raised goatskin on-lays, goatskin doublures, leather endbands, color endpapers and polished graphite on all edges.

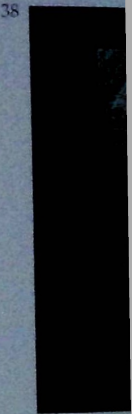
22.2 × 27.9 cm.

39 Vol. II: A drop-back box, uniform with the text volume, containing actual fishing reels. The reels on both covers appear in the text and are drawn accurately in isometric perspective.

22.2 × 27.9 cm.

40 Inside of Vol. II: Full blue-green Chieftain goatskin container housing six fly reels, on removable mounts, dating from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

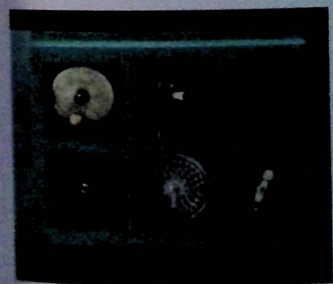
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- 41 *The Angling Letters of S. A. Neff, Jr. and J. S. Hewitson*. 1965–1999. Sewickley, Pennsylvania, 1997.
Created in 1996–97.

A uniform set of four drop-back boxes containing letters and photographs from the mid-1960s to the end of the 1990s.

1960s Box: Full dark red Chagrin goatskin with a twentieth-century panel design of concentric circles of linear goatskin in-lays, a raised goatskin on-lay on each cover with linear goatskin in-lay circles and a gilt-stamped device, and gilt-stamped raised goatskin on-lay spine label. Contains two cloth chemise folders: one with letters written during the decade and the other with photographs by Mr. Neff that illustrate an angling experience. The gilt-stamped device depicting a mayfly nymph becomes a metaphor for the relationship between the two anglers.

30.7 x 24 cm.

- 42 1970s Box: The gilt device becomes a mayfly dun as the relationship develops.

30.7 x 24 cm.

41



42



THE SHAW-WALKER COLLECTION

43 1950s Box: The gilt device becomes a mayfly spinner as the anglers mature.

30.7 x 24 cm.

44 1990s Box: The gilt device remains a mayfly spinner.

30.7 x 24 cm.

43



44



45 S. A. Neff, Jr. *Angling in Hibernia*. Sewickley, Pennsylvania, 1998.
Created in 1998.

A uniform set of five volumes; in full brown Chieftain goatskin with a Celtic device blind-tooled on each cover, gilt-tooled dots, pictorial doublures with panels of Japanese dyed and gilt papers, on front and back of Vol. I and front only on other volumes.

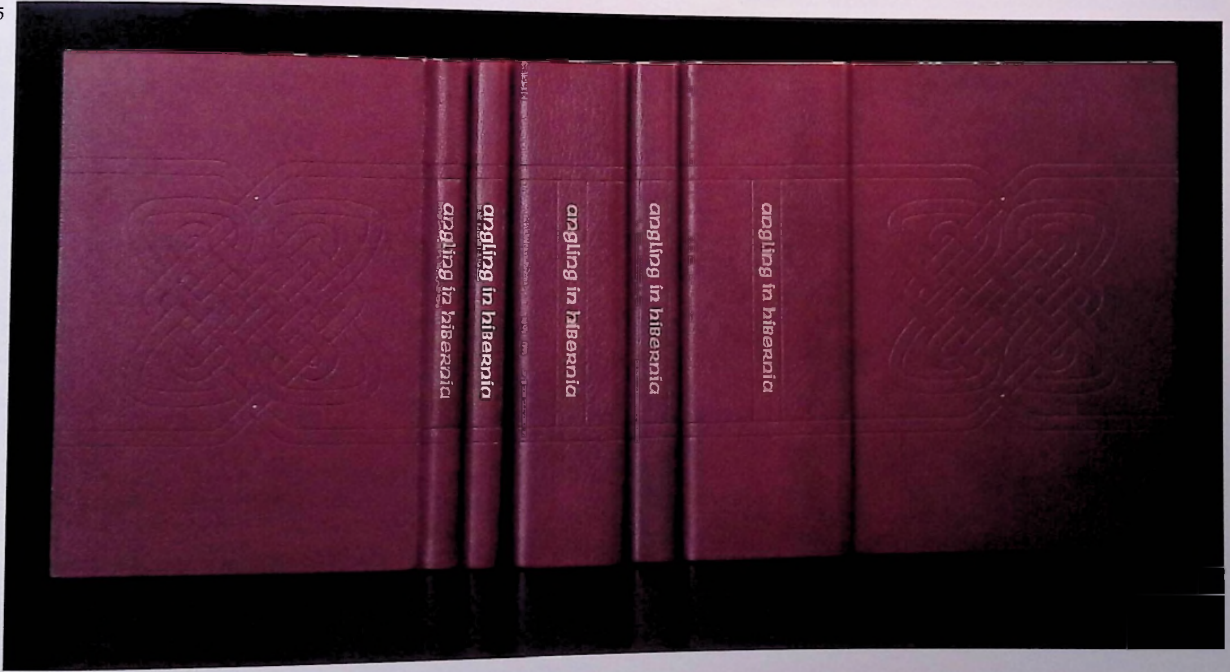
Vol. I: Text.

Vol. II: Contains a cloth chemise with 30 photographs taken by the author.

Vol. III: Fold-out container with 158 Irish flies devised and dressed by the author.

Vol. IV: Fold-out container with the author's fly patterns and the feathers, furs and hooks for dressing Irish flies.

Vol. V: Life-box containing the author's Irish angling memorabilia. A pull-out drawer contains Irish angling pamphlets and correspondence.



IRISH TROUT FLYES

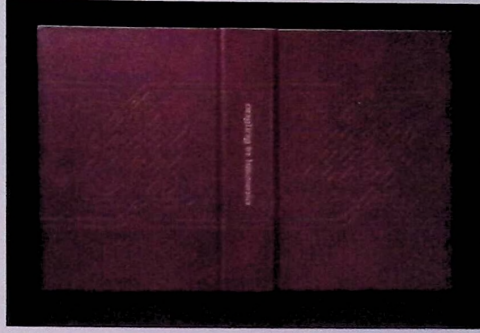
46 Vol. III: Irish trout flies.
30.8 x 21 cm.

47 Vol. III: Panel of Japanese dyed and gilt papers and fold-out container with 158 Irish trout flies. The panel depicts an Irish brown trout about to rise to the author's Green Drake fly.

47



46



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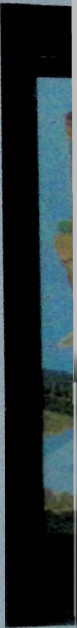


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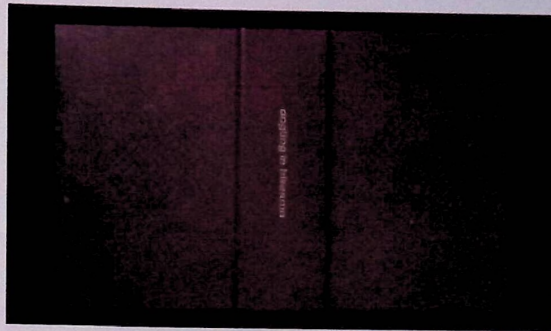
48 Vol. V: *Memento hominem*.

30.8 x 21 cm.

49 Vol. V: Panel of Japanese dyed and gilt papers and life box with angling memorabilia and tools. The panel depicts an Irish brown trout in the landing net.



48



49



S. A. NEFF, JR.

Resides: Sewickley, Pennsylvania

EXHIBITIONS

1986
80 Years Later [Guild of Book Workers' 80th Anniversary Exhibition] (juried), Center for the Book, University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, Iowa; Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan; MIT Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Institute for the Book Arts, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D. C.

1988
Bound To Learn: An Invitational Exhibit of the Book Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia

1989
Members' Exhibition, Guild of Book Workers, New England Chapter, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

1990
The Collector As Bookbinder: The Piscatorial Bindings of S. A. Neff, Jr., Fine & Rare Book Room, Hunt Library, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

1990-1991
Contemporary American Bookbinding: An Exhibition Organized by the Grolier Club at the Invitation of Les Amis de la Reliure Originale (juried), Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, France; Bibliotheca Wittrockiana, Brussels, Belgium; The Grolier Club, New York, New York

1992
10th Anniversary Exhibition of the New England Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers (juried), Museum of Our National Heritage, Lexington, Massachusetts

1993
Exhibition of Design for Communications (invitational), West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia

1992-1993
Fine Printers Finely Bound Too [Guild of Book Workers' 86th Anniversary Exhibition] (juried), Explore Print!, San Francisco, California; Scripps College, Claremont, California; Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas; Minnesota Center for the Book Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota; The University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois; Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

ARTICLES

Robert H. Boyle. "Design: A Tier Who Binds in the Angling World," *Sports Illustrated* (January 1991).

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The Sordani Art Gallery thanks the artist for making the exhibition possible. In addition, the Gallery wishes to thank Susan Sordani for her enthusiasm; Elisabeth Agro for her insightful essay; Christopher N. Breiseth's and Robert J. Heaman's contributions to my essay. Nancy L. Krueger has provided invaluable assistance in all aspects of the exhibition.

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