

# Valley Angler Local Flies by Bill Thompson

The calendar may say that its spring, but the sad truth is that it will be a few weeks before we will be able to cast a line. A lot of fly fishermen will be taking up the slack time by tying flies. Most will stick to tying those tried and true flies that always seem to work. However, others will be tempted to strike out on their own and create their own unique patterns.

The fact is the Valley has a long tradition of creative fly tiers. Most local anglers are acquainted with Dick Surette's book *The Trout and Salmon Fly Index*. This little book made quite a splash in its day and was an inspiration to others that followed. The original book was presented in a loose leaf binder. The idea was that supplements could be added latter. Unfortunately the idea was not carried forward by the publisher and the second edition, although expanded, was printed as a paper back. The Orvis Company picked up on the idea and printed their own "pattern bible" in loose leaf form and did issue supplements at latter dates.

One other innovative idea that was presented in the *Trout and Salmon Fly Index* was that Dick featured the flies of several New Hampshire tiers, some of whom were native to our Valley. The book included flies by Carl Stilphen, Oliver G. Harris, Lonnie Harris, Larry Roy, and of course Dick Surette. Some of the flies shown in the book were patterns that were unique to Dick's shop, *The North Country Angler*. These patterns were no doubt the result of the genius of several local men who tied for Dick, notably Dick Stewart and Bill Franke.

The first fly in the book is the Maynard's Marvel. This fly has an interesting history in that it is often confused with another fly by the same name. Dick Stewart in his book, *Trolling Flies for Trout and Salmon*, tries to separate the two by renaming the other fly the Golden Marvel. Both of these flies have a long history in New Hampshire fly fishing lore. The story is an interesting one and deserves telling, but for now we will stick to the one shown in Dick's book and brought to North Conway by a local florist by the name of Carl Stilphen. Apparently the fly had its roots in Pittsburg, New Hampshire and was named for a local guide by the name of Maynard.

The fly is a simple streamer fly with a mallard flank for the wing. The dressing calls for a red hackle tail, embossed silver tinsel body, a throat of red hackle and a wing of golden pheasant over which is blue impala followed by the mallard flank which is sheathed. This fly is still quite popular and is well known as a great brookie fly.

The "88" is another New Hampshire favorite that ironically originated in the Sabago Lake area on Maine. The fly, however, was popularized by Larry Roy of Salem, New Hampshire. The story goes that the first time the fly was used on Perry and Indian Stream in Pittsburg the fly caught 88 trout in one day.

This fly is really a wet fly tied on a Mustad 9671 hook. The fly has a body of two thirds red

brass wire and the front third green floss. The wing is wood duck with a grizzly hackle for a collar. The fly is sometimes tied as a dry fly. If tied dry the wire should be replaced with red dubbing and two grizzly hackles are used in the collar.

One of my personal favorites from the book is Dick's own Riffle Fly. This is a dry fly and is tied similar to the Wulff style flies. Dick used the Mustad 9671 hook in order to allow the fly to be tied larger than if a standard dry fly was used. The tail is white impala. ( calf tail ) with a wing of the same. The body is muskrat tied full and the hackle consists of three grizzly hackles. The wing is tied in one size larger than the hook. This creates a larger profile so that the fly can be easily seen in the dark.

The fly was tied for the Saco River. Dick liked to fish just after sundown for large cruising brown trout. The fly was designed to be a large tempting target for big fish that could easily be seen by the angler in low light conditions. The theory still works as well to day as it did when Dick first created the fly.

These flies and many more of the patterns that were originated by Dick and the other local tiers featured in Dick's book are still available today at the North Country Angler. They have lost some of their luster as new more and more patterns come on the market that captures the imagination of younger fishermen. There is one thing for certain these flies will always have a home in our fly bins if for no other reason then to pay homage to Dick and all the other local fly tiers and fishermen that came before us.

See you on the river.