**The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Sporting Clubs: Saviors of Our Catskill Rivers. Saturday, April 28th, 2018, at the Phoenicia Library. Featuring Beth Waterman and Austin "Mac" Francis.**

Beth Waterman: Welcome to today's presentation on sporting clubs of the Catskills. This talk will be audio recorded by Brett Barry of Silver Hollow Audio and his assistant, Sarah, photographed by Mark Loete, and posted on our website by Stephanie Blackman. We're grateful to the Catskill Watershed Corporation and New York City Department of Environmental Protection for providing support for these technical services, so we can archive this talk. For those of you who are here for the first time and would like to be notified of future events, we have a clipboard that's going around with our mailing list. And attached to the clipboard is the newsletter that we publish once a year. Feel free to take a copy if you'd like to read about the sorts of activities that we do throughout the year. And then we're also going to pass around these cards, which will give you a quick reference to our website. After the presentation, we invite you to attend an informal reception upstairs, in the angler's parlor. Amy Jackson of Amy's Takeaway in Lanesville, has donated some Bartlett Tartlets and her special trout-related snacks. Amy wanted to be part of this trout tales celebration, for those of you who may be aware of this ongoing series of events, we're happy to be participating in this annual trout tales event. Amy wanted to be here, but she has a conflict today. And Shandaken Historical Museum has loaned artifacts from their collection, as well as others in the community who have loaned some of their personal memorabilia, which you will also see upstairs during the reception. The reception will also include a book signing by Mac, of his classic, Land of Little Rivers. Mac donated copies to the library, and he will sign them for a donation to the library. The retail value is $60. Now, let's get started. My name is Beth Waterman. I helped start the angling collection in 1995 with Doris Bartlett, in honor of her husband, Jerry, who was a conservationist and president of Trout Unlimited, licensed guide, and teacher. I am a trustee of the Phoenicia Library, I'm not an historian, but I love local history. I have a masters in environmental studies and worked for many years in the Hudson River Estuary program. Today I will be speaking about three local sporting clubs in Shandaken. Our guest speaker today is Austin “Mac” Francis, owner and publisher of the Beaverkill Press, and author of two legendary books on fishing in the Catskills: Catskill Rivers, and Land of Little Rivers. Over the years, Mac has made it his life’s avocation to learn about the history of fly fishing. The culture of the sport, the expert craftsmanship of the flies and the equipment, and the pastime’s birthplace region. Now, 35 years later, Mac is considered to be the leading authority on Catskill fly fishing tradition. The Phoenicia Library is proud to celebrate the heritage of fly fishing in Phoenicia. We welcome you, Mac, back to the library. Eighteen years ago you came and signed copies of Land of Little Rivers. And we’re so happy to have you back again today.

Mac: Thank you Beth.

Beth: Thank you.

[applause]

Mac: The luckiest of us are those who find pleasure and fulfillment out of what we enjoy most, and also at the same time help others. And I hope I qualify. So the Catskills' richest resource is water. It grows the trees that have supported industries years ago. It pumps, or actually, just through the pipe without pumping, a billion gallons a day to New York City, to bathe, to drink, flush toilets. And it also, with these trees, it provides a home for one of the finest freshwater fish populations in the world. Now, these river industries, what we're talking about now, is what went on before all of these wonderful clubs that we're hear to talk about, what was going on here 150, 200 years ago. And so it all started pretty much as well as we can understand with a man named Daniel Skinner, who was a Connecticut Yankee, and he came over here to the Catskills and settled on the Delaware River. And given the traditional ingenuity of these Connecticut Yankees, he spotted these tall white pines growing along the banks of the Delaware. And he thought, boy, you know, those could be masts of these big schooners that are being built down river, these ocean-going schooners. So he cut them down, maybe 20 of them, and one by one, in the spring freshets, fed them into the Delaware. And they went on down, and it wasn't very far until they got caught up on rocks and got smashed to pieces. And he says, ah, what are we going to do about this? And so he figured, if I take enough of those trees and lash them together, and make a big raft, and put a tiller on this raft, I can get a tiller man to steer the raft around these rocks. And he did it, and that was the beginning of the rafting industry on the Delaware in the 1700s. So in addition to sending these white pines down the Delaware to become masts of schooners, he also would put on top of the rafts, say, hardwood, to become floors, and timbers of these docks being built, and underpinnings of these early skyscrapers down there.

Overlapping with the rafting industry was the tanning industry. And they were cutting down these giant hemlocks that were away from the river, stripping them of bark, taking the bark, grinding it into a powder, almost, soaking it in hot water, creating tannic acid to tan these hides. So what they would do is they would leave these giant hemlocks denuded, big white giant carcasses, like, of these trees, rotting away there, and Skinner said, hey, we could send those down, too. So they start dragging the hemlocks over and putting them on these rafts. So after a while, they ran out of their resources. And so there were no more white pines, there were too few hemlocks left, so the rafting industry declined and pretty much died out. But the tanning industry was just gaining speed. So by this point we're talking maybe the early 1800s, and there were still enough trees farther inland. In fact, the Schoharie valley, that was where a man named Edwards set up a big tannery, another Zadock Pratt, set up one, and then there was a third one, let's see what his name was, Gilbert Palen. So each of those, one became Edwardsville, Palenville, and Prattsville. So they all gave their names. And there were these huge tanneries, and the reason they thrived here in the Catskills, in addition to the fact that the hemlocks here, and the bark was here, is that in took a whole lot more labor, establishment, and the weight of all of these hemlock barks, than it did for the hides, which were shipped up from South America. So they sent the rawhides here, and they tanned the leather. So that

went on, it really gained its biggest power during the Civil War, because the fine red sort of colored leather, because the hemlock bark was reddish, it created a reddish liquid, was very favored for boots, bandoliers, saddles, all of that. So the Civil War consumed a whole lot of Catskill leather. And then that started trailing off after the war, until, well, at its peak, there were, and this is a hard number to believe, 157 tanneries operating in the Catskills. It really denuded, it took most all of the hemlocks out. In their place grew back hardwoods, like ash, cherry, oak, maple, and those also, when it was still time to float a raft, they became the flooring of houses further downstream, in Philadelphia and New York and so on.

So then the tanneries died out, but while the hardwoods could still be shipped, say, to a sawmill, the sawmill would be on any of these small streams, big enough to have a water wheel that would power what was then called an up and down saw. This was before circular saws. And there were a whole lot of sawmills. On the Beaverkill, back in the 1870s, '80s, there must have been, in just a 10-mile stretch, 5 or 6 sawmills. They were also powered by these water wheels, turning mills. In fact, there's a little community still called Turnwood on the upper Beaverkill. And they turned bowling pins, balusters for stairs, and peg legs. These peg legs, the maple ones, that had a, sort of an iron ferrule shrunk over the end, were the everyday peg legs. But on Sundays, they had the very fine grain basswood peg legs. So you switched off and put your basswood leg on to go to church. Right. So the sawmills, the water powered turning mills, they ground grains, they had during all of these industries up here including farms, oxen that pulled these big wagons with hay to feed the horses and other animals on these farms. So then that pretty much started declining.

But as I wrote, I was probably a little too proud, I said mother nature having supported all of these industries heaved her bosom once more and gave rise to the acid factories. Now, the acid factories, their raw material was called 4-foot wood. So they would send these hardy young men out into the woods with their double bitted axes, they were like 5-pound axes… and they would chop 4-foot wood, and by the cord. And many of you know the man named Harry Darbee, who I wrote my first book with over 40 years ago. Harry, when he was a teenager, among the many other things that he did, was chop 4-foot wood. So the four-foot wood was taken to these acid factories, and through a process of distillation… they would create acetate, wood alcohol, and charcoal, in these retorts and kilns. Now, charcoal was a main ingredient in gunpowder. And so during the first world war and Spanish American, I guess, other wars, these acid factories were prime suppliers of raw materials for gun powder. Harry, one day, went into the woods, and he was chopping away, and he got what he thought was a cord. And he called the foreman in, and the foreman looked at it, and what Harry didn't realize was that it was the custom to stack your cord so loosely to get the 4x4x8 dimension, that a dog could chase a rabbit through the pile and out the other side. So the foreman said, hey guys, come over here and take a look and see if this boy has a cord yet. So they came over, and he winked at these guys, and they … well, I don't know Jake, because I think maybe he needs just a few more pieces. And so Harry, not a dumb kid at all, kind of figured something was up.

So he detoured to his cutting area, over through the other cutting areas, and saw these loosely stacked cords. So he went over, he cut another good dozen pieces, he stacked them tightly, put his ax on top of that, and walked home, and never cut another stick of wood. [laughter] That was Harry. So the last acid factory was I think George Treyz, T-R-E-Y-Z, on the bend down near Horton on the Beaverkill, and it closed in 1955. All of these industries, which were supported by the rivers, they dumped, I should have added that these tanneries, with all of the hair, and the hide, skin, were dumped into the river, and the river became where you put all your trash and everything. And the acid factories, as bad as this putrefaction of the tanneries was, the acid factories killed more trout more quickly. And so finally, when these things died out, and I should have really stopped at one point there to talk about… well, let me go one step further. Each of these river industries declined either to exhausted resources or technological advances. So tanning at this point was done by synthetic chemicals, rather than … and so now I think you want to know how did we ever get to have clubs, right?

Beth: Yeah, in this environment, where the waters were polluted, and the lands were clear cut, how did these clubs come to be? What were they trying to do?

Mac: Well, leading up to that, the fly fishing in this country sort of was modeled on fly fishing in England. And they both were kind of creatures based on the industrial revolution. And England's industrial revolution was about 50 years before ours. And so when we came along, these rivers, with the decline of the industries, we talked about many of these farms were deserted, there was no one to buy them or pay taxes on them. I think it was 1885 that the Catskill forest preserve was created, when New York state took possession of enough land to become that forest preserve. And then also the industrial revolution created leisure. Fishing was well-established, but mostly it was fishing for food. And so the sport started getting a little bit of momentum in the 1880s. But even before that, Beth, because the Esopus was the closest river to New York City, could be reached more easily, things started even sooner…

Beth: Well, I think some of you are familiar with this book of Mac's called Catskill Rivers, and this was one of the first books I read when I first became interested in Catskill fishing. And I couldn't believe it, but here are important dates in Catskill angling, and the first date says 1830, first known fisherman's boarding house in America, established by Milo Barber in Shandaken, on Esopus creek. And that really, you know, was such a dramatic statement. That farm, Milo Barber's farm is where the Phoenicia Elementary school is now…

And actually, Mark has a copy of the deed. It's been researched. That was the first boarding house that catered to fishermen in the Catskills. And it was partly because of the old Plank road, that led from Kingston to Phoenicia. And another reason that it was a popular location is what Mac was saying about the pollution in the Esopus from all the tanneries. They were fishing in Stony Clove. That was a very productive, and still is, and the preferred fishery at that time. But that's part of our heritage in

Phoenicia that really kind of helped me realize when we founded this collection upstairs, which you'll see later, how important Phoenicia is.

Mark Loete: The Milo Barber boarding house was approximately where the Phoenicia Elementary school is today.

Beth: Right.

Mac: These things never happen by throwing a switch. For example, the Algonquin Indians, one of their main places to live was here in this valley. And the word Shandaken is actually the Algonquin word for hemlock. And then one of the tanneries was the Phoenix tannery, which gave its name to Phoenicia. So these things sort of interwove, and at any rate, others were fishing in those years, and certainly staying at a boarding house like Milo Barber's, over in the Beaverkill there was a man named Thaddeus Norris, known to his friends as Uncle Thad. And Uncle Thad Norris wrote the first book, comprehensive book on fly fishing in this country, in 1864. He and a group of friends would convene at another boarding house called the Boscobel over in Westfield Flats, now Roscoe, and they met informally either on the river or at this house, and the book, the American Angler's Book, something like that, was dedicated to the little club called the House … the Houseless Anglers. And what he said was, we formed this in contradistinction to the old fish house clubs, associations rather of a convivial tendency than that of pure angling. And so it was only 8 or 10 of them, and they'd get together and go out there and fish the local rivers. He was one of the early ones to … these were very informal groups. And then it started, because everything was sort of a void, a vacuum out there where all these industries had been, people who liked to fish didn't want to be too crowded, they wanted to have their own little place if they could afford it, and so the anglers who had enough money to buy up a piece of river would come in and start doing that. And New York state in those… 1880s, passed a law called the club corporation law, and it enabled these groups to buy river frontage to issue stock, contract debt, to own river mileage and post it. And so that was sort of the underpinning, legally, of these formations. There were city clubs, too. Country clubs for shooting, golfing, horseback riding, even yachting and stuff like that. So these clubs started coming into the Catskills. Some of them were private preserves. One which I know you told me about it, Beth, but Clarence Roof was a New York olive oil importer, and so he focused on the west branch of the Neversink river, and he started buying up these little small farms that'd kind of been abandoned, in 1882. He created a private preserve which he named Wintoon, after an old Algonquin chieftain, I believe it was. This was a private 4000-acre preserve on the west branch. Now, they had some problems, right Beth?

Beth: Clarence Roof, once he had his 4000 acres, he wanted to make sure that nobody was poaching on his land so he hired a game keeper to patrol the property. And the game keeper arrested three young men. The three young men who were arrested were tried, but the jury refused to convict, because juries at that time didn't really like to find local people who had been fishing there all their lives and

suddenly were prevented from fishing there, didn't really like to convict them. But Mr. Roof brought his Wall Street lawyer, Mr. Govins.

Mac: Yes

Beth: Brought Mr. Govins up, and had the trials moved to different locations so that they would have juries that would find in his favor. And after a couple of years, these three young men, whose names were E.S. and Marion Whitney, and John Bill Rogers, were convicted on the third attempt, third trial. Now, the Whitney boys were Shandakeners, and they were the sons of Hiram Whitney, who owned this chair factory, which was located just west of Fox Hollow road. The chair factory employed 125 men. So they were, you know, the young gentry of Shandaken, and they were forced to pay $70 fines, which was very steep at the time. Some of the people had been charged 6 cents for poaching.

Mac: And they call it the great trout wars?

Beth: Yes, the press, it was not just these three men, it was many people who were arrested and tried by Mr. Roof and Govins. And Govins actually even came up and bought 2000 acres of his own land, and he had a different strategy, which Mac writes about in his book, of only posting certain sections and hiring the worst poacher to be his game keeper [laughter] and leaving the rest open for public fishing. But I'm going to pass this picture around. This is from the Shandaken Historical Museum. And you can really see, this is the property just west of Fox Hollow, you can really see how different the landscape was at that time, how open it is. And you can also see this immense chair factory, which was in the 1880s. So it was 1888, no 1888 was the first trial of the young men, but they were convicted in 1890. And Alf Evers says it well; he says, "Old timers and young alike grumbled at being refused the right to hunt and fish, which had been there's from the first settlement of the Catskills." So you can be sure there were some hard feelings about some of these large preserves.

Mac: You bet. And others who came in doing the same thing Clarence Roof did, there was George Gould, the son of the railroad baron, Jay Gould, and he located on Dry Brook, which is just up the road here. It was a tributary of the East Branch of the Delaware. And he bought up 3000 acres and set his house, which is about a 26-room mansion, out of stone and Catskill wood, around Furlough Lake and that still exists. As these families grow, this son gets this piece, and this daughter gets this piece, and so they become kind of defracted. So George Gould was was one of the accumulators of land. Anthony Dimmick was a Wall Street man, and he went to the Rondout, to a little valley called Peekamoose, and set up. That was more just a family location. And then Ed Hewitt, a very well-known name in our Catskill fly fishing tradition, located in 1918 on the main stem of the Neversink river. And he accumulated about 4 miles of that. He was a big experimenter. He had a laboratory in his house in New York City, where he experimented chemically and otherwise. One time he tried to figure out how much fat was in an Acellus bug, which is one of the things the trout eat. And

he tried to figure out which bugs were preferred by these trout. But one of the things Ed did was he experimented on improving the river; raising fish, stocking them in there. Then in, let's say about … 1906, along came New York city. And where Ed's water had come originally back in the years in New Amsterdam, from wells, and then they had their little reservoirs, one where the New York Public Library is, one now which is still there at the top of Central Park, and they kept moving north and north as the population grew, and as the local water around these houses became polluted, they moved up to the Croton system, and even that was outgrown as New York increased in size. So where did they come? Here. And so in 1906, which actually was the year my dear friend Harry was born, they started work on the Ashokan Reservoir, the first of the New York City Catskill reservoirs, which was then completed in 1915. And gradually, more reservoirs, protecting these reservoirs, and so that became, like, the use, and where the water now comes from, from this great city. So what about all of these clubs that started out, now gave rise to where the earliest, really, activist clubs got founded. And once again, we're back in the home river, the Esopus.

Beth: Right. Well, are you going to tell us a little bit about the clubs on the, before we get to that, about the Willowemoc Club, and the clubs on the Beaverkill?

Mac: Sure. Yeah, let's do that. Willowemoc Club was actually on Lake Willowemoc, which was the upper part of Willowemoc Creek. It's now known as Sand Pond. And in those days, we're talking now the 1870s, a group of men formed this little club that was as much social as it was sporting. And one of them, still the Dutch influences then, one was Van Brundt, one was Van Norden. And what they could do was, that was high enough up on the hill, they could walk up over the top of the mountain and down, and they were in the headwaters of the Beaverkill. So they wanted a little river club, as well. They formed the Balsam Lake Club in 1883. It had been preceded by another little club downriver, Salmo Fontinalis which was a few years before that. That's a very small club. And then on down river, gradually, from the 1880s, 1890s, you got other clubs. Beaverkill being a closed valley, like a dead-end valley. It was easy to protect. And so you got the Clear Lake Club, you got one that's no longer there, Beaverkill, well actually this one is, Beaverkill Trout Club is quite well-established. Fly fishers… Brooklyn… founded by a group of Brooklyn brewers, even though when you tell them fly fishers club of Brooklyn, I didn't know any trout rivers were down there [laughter] but they just wanted to keep their home base in the name of the club. So all those clubs began, some as late as 1910, in fact I think there's one over in the Willowemoc called DeBruce Fly Fishing Club, which didn't get started until the 1940s. But these clubs, then, they weren't what you'd call activist fighting clubs. But they protected their rivers. And so then, not long after that, we come back, and this is where you wanted to tell us…

Beth: I wanted to do a little research on the three clubs, I chose three clubs that are public clubs that actively seek members in the town of Shandaken. The Phoenicia Fish and Game, the Upper Esopus Fish and Game, and Stony Clove Rod and Gun, which is actually in Lanesville, but it's on, you know, kind of close to Shandaken.

When I started researching these, I was surprised to find that there was no written history and no, the clubs didn't have any bylaws, or, I mean, they didn't have records. There were no written records. So I read newspapers, the Catskill Mountain News, and other newspapers. Of course, books by Mac and Ed Van Put and Alf Evers. And I went to Kathleen Myers at the Shandaken Historical Museum, who showed me copies of the Pine Hill Sentinel, which is a newspaper from the 1880s; and the Catskill Mountain Reflector. And then I spoke to members of these clubs who shared their memories with me.

On January 13th, 1923, the Kingston Freeman announced the formation of Phoenicia Fish and Game, Inc., a membership corporation organized for the propagation and preservation of fish and game. Directors were some of Phoenicia's prominent citizens. Harry Breithaupt, Ralph Longyear, and David Hillson. Breithaupt had a store where Ulster Savings Bank is now and he owned a funeral parlor which was located in this building. And Longyear owned the land where Phoenicia was built. So propagation and preservation of fish and game was their mission. What was the status of fish and game, and why did they need propagation and preservation?

It was a very different landscape from what we see today, because overhunting, overfishing, and habitat loss had caused great decline amongst the fish and game species that were once here. Deer had disappeared west of the Hudson by 1875. Turkey had been extirpated in New YorkState in the 1840s. Trout were in decline by 1870, and New York state fisheries commission began stocking around that time. In the 1880s, less than 25% of New York State was forested. Today, 63% is forested. The founding of Phoenicia Fish and Game preceded the creation of New York State's conservation department by 4 years, although they had these, a fish commission, a forest commission, and a game commission. But the conservation department didn't start until 1927. And the first Trout Unlimited chapter in New York State was organized in 1964 in Kingston, and we're fortunate to have one of the founding members here with us, Cliff Schwark. So from the outset, these early environmentalists began stocking fish twice a year, raising pheasants from eggs – can you imagine taking the eggs home and raising little pheasants and then releasing them – protecting deer from being chased by dogs – I don't want to tell you how they did that – feeding deer (which is illegal today), and stocking other game such as rabbits, grouse, and partridge, while shooting varmints such as foxes and bobcats, that preyed on small game. The meetings were held at Simpson ski slope, which is right here at the foot of Woodland Valley. A year later, in 1924, with the completion of the Shandaken tunnel, connecting the Schoharie reservoir to the Esopus, the entire character of the Esopus changed. The opening of the portal brought muddy, silt-laden water, warm-water fish species, and sudden fluctuations in volume and temperature. They immediately began protesting and advocating for some regulation of the discharges. In 1929, they reached a decision with the Bureau of Water Supply, which was not a final solution to the problem, but they guaranteed at that point a constant level of discharge. It improved fishing, but it didn't solve the problem, because they would shut it off and on at random. By mid-century, the club and their conservation efforts were rewarded with a national award. The Freeman

reported that Phoenicia Fish and Game won the Field and Stream of the Air Award, for the club that showed the most interest in conservation during March of 1951. In one season, they stocked 176,000 trout. The award brought them an aluminum boat, a 5-horsepower Johnson motor, and a deer rifle [laughter] and the paper reported that not only is the club interested in fishing, but game conservation as well. The commitment to conservation and advocacy really peaked in the 1970s and '80s, when Phoenicia Fish and Game, led by Chuck Schwartz and Ed Ostapczuk, who's here today, were instrumental in two major environmental battles involving the Esopus creek. Catskill Waters, led by Frank Mele and John Hoeko, was a six-year legislative battle that resulted in a law which was passed by New York state legislature by a single vote in 1976, that created regulations regarding the discharges from New York City's water system, and the shutdown procedures, making it an incremental shutdown instead of a sudden on and off. During the '70s they had had massive fish kills and any of you that saw the copy of the Woodstock Times noted this photograph, which we have upstairs, thanks to Wayne Gutman, who loaned it to us, that's Chuck Schwartz with dead fish. So they were very, very actively campaigning for state legislation to prevent this from happening, to prevent sudden shutdowns. And we have actually had a program in the past about Frank Mele and John Hoeko in this, the Catskilll Waters fight, that you can listen to as a podcast on our website. And there are photographs there, also. But hard on the heels of this victory, which succeeded in having DEC actually oversee New York City's water releases, another major fight loomed. In the late 1970s, the power authority of New York proposed Prattsville pumped storage project, which would have raised the water temperature and introduced even more silt into the Esopus, threatening fishing in the Esopus and Schoharie creeks. The Esopus legal defense fund was formed by Phoenicia Fish and Game, TU, the Catskill Center, and Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers. They led the opposition to the project, and one of the older members of Phoenicia Fish and Game called them "the Rebels," because they broke from Ulster County federation of sportsmen in their opposition to this project. They spent, Phoenicia spent between 35- and $50,000 hiring lawyers and consultants. And in 1984, the appellate division of the supreme court ruled against the power authority. Thank you Ed and others! [applause] These were major environmental battles that took place right here in this community. But the Phoenicia Fish and Game was also very active as a social club, as all of these clubs had a social element. I think it was more unusual to have the activist element than the social element. In the first years after they were founded, they had annual outings at Breithaupt's picnic ground at the switch in Snyder Hollow, west of Phoenicia. Snyder Hollow is now called Woodland Valley, so it's right down at the foot of Woodland Valley. And among the activities at the annual outing was casting competitions. Now, for those of you who've attended other programs here, you know the name Ray Smith. He was a famous and legendary guide, fly fisher, angler, and he guided Babe Ruth and Fred Allen and other celebrities. We have a special section upstairs devoted to Ray Smith. Ray's son, Cal Smith, who lives in Phoenicia, remembers Floyd, who's Ray's younger brother, as a worm fisherman. Cal says he's the guy you went to if you really wanted some trout. He got up early in the morning and caught his limit. Floyd was four years younger than Ray. He was still in his teens when he attended the annual

outing. Newspapers called him the boy caster of Phoenicia. He held the cup, having won it twice, for distance and accuracy. He cast 107 ½ feet on a 4 ¾-ounce rod. That was his distance accomplishment. And for accuracy, he could put a dry fly through a 30-inch hoop at 67 feet. Ray Smith, Frank Smith, and Ernie Smith, his brothers, also placed in the contests. But Floyd was the champ. He won a Thomas tournament rod, a 5 ¾-ounce 9 ½-foot rod, made by a famous rod maker in Bangor, Maine, named Thomas. And he went on to exhibit his skills at the bigger competition run by the DuPont company. So in addition to the annual outings, among the social activities, they had turkey shoots every year at Simpson ski slope, which were fundraisers for the club. They would have 100 turkeys as prizes for marksmanship, they did not go out and shoot live turkeys in these turkey shoots, they had, it was a marksmanship competition, and they would raise as much as $3000 for the club. By 1959, they had 756 members and $10,000 in the treasury, which they used to build a new clubhouse. The clubhouse is on Route 28, as you probably know, opposite where the Catskill Mountain Railroad sits. They opened their clubhouse with a ham dinner, attended by about 150 people. The cowboy and the lady entertained the guests. Paul LaCrosse, a nationally famous knife thrower and fancy gun slinger, and his wife, entertained for over an hour. LaCrosse, it claimed, could outdraw Jessie James, Billy the Kidd, or Wyatt Earp. And the show was said to be a must for anyone with a gun or a pistol. In addition, they had monthly round and square dances with Don Barringer and his orchestra. And the Audrey Shultis school of dancing gave social dancing classes to children ages 9-12. Well, I wonder if anyone in this community attended any of those dances. Today, the Phoenicia Fish and Game is still thriving, with about 500 members. Forty percent are from out of town. They have a pistol steel range, indoor underground 24-hour shooting range, and trap and archery ranges. Once a month they have trap shooting and community dinners. Firearms safety course, free every week. Fish stocking twice a year with DEC and Trout Unlimited. Fly tying, with with our library thanks to Hank Rope, 4 week, 4 Saturdays in February and March, and an annual turkey shoot; and once a year they have a women's shooting clinic and a youth shooting clinic. The dues are $75 for 65 an over, and $125 for a family membership. So they are still a very active club in this area.

Now, the second club, the Upper Esopus Fish and Game Club, was founded in 1933, and it split off from Phoenicia Club. But at the time, Pine Hill was such a thriving community, that I think they really just wanted to have their own club, you know, in their neighborhood. We do have some artifacts from the Upper Esopus club, which are on display upstairs, including the bylaws… from the Shandaken Historical Museum. "The purpose of the organization shall be to further interest of legitimate sport with rod and gun, and to promote the protection of woods, waters, and wildlife" Their first dinner was attended by 150 people, and after that they met in homes of the members. They generally followed the same pattern of both conservation activities and social activities as Phoenicia Fish and Game did. They had turkey shoots, trout stocking, pheasant stocking, meetings and social events, Christmas parties for children. They purchased food for deer. And they were especially avid about illegitimate hunting. They were quite opposed to jacklighting

and made public pronouncements about that. But one of the really unusual things that the Upper Esopus Fish and Game did is that two years after they were founded, they published this pamphlet. Now, this is a copy that went through the fire at the library here in 2011. But we have a better copy from the Shandaken Historical Museum. It's a 16-page pamphlet that is really a tourism promotion pamphlet for the region. It's really an economic development publicity campaign to attract tourists to come up here to enjoy the beauties of nature, and the many beautiful pictures, you know, of … you can't really see these, but of waterfalls and forests and, you know, charming cabins in the woods. All of these things, the pictures were from the conservation department. So it's really interesting to me that it seems to be so parallel to the effort this year from Trout Tales to do the same thing, to promote a business and sporting club partnership, to promote the resources of the area. The president at the time, this was written, was Ed West, who was a local surveyor. And the map is dated 1936. And it includes advertisements in the back from all the businesses in town. It's really quite an unusual effort, I think, to promote the region. So the Upper Esopus Fish and Game had a clubhouse in 1950, and the clubhouse was destroyed by a flood, and then they rebuilt the clubhouse. It was just east of Pine Hill on Route 28 in a building that later became the Silver Dollar Bar, and still located there, but it's currently empty. They rebuilt the clubhouse, and they had a grand opening where the Doghouse Dudes of Kingston played for square and round dancing. In 1955 Ralph Hoffman, Don Partridge, John Yerry and Paul Herdman were the officers. The club meetings, which were held there, and there was a shooting range out behind, but the neighbors complained about the shooting range, which led to the purchase in 1975 under the leadership of Charlie Smith, of 185 acres in Little Peck Hollow, off the Oliverea Road, bordering state land on three sides. And there, led by the president Ben Short, they built a new clubhouse which is still active today, along with the pavilion and ranges for target practice. And one other really unusual aspect of that club is, annually, since 1997, they sponsor a primitive biathlon in January, with, well, dressed as old mountain men… they perform various feats on snowshoes, and shooting black powder and so forth. It's quite something. They also have annual dinners, a wild game dinner, and another beef or pork roast dinner, in August.

The third club, Stony Clove Rod and Gun, in Lanesville, was formed in 1951. So it's quite a bit later. It was formed, they met in a tavern, Tony's Tavern, Tony Foglio was the president. And they also began building a clubhouse, stocking trout, planting willows on the Schoharie with annual turkey shoots, clambakes, landowners' dinners, and one interesting thing about this club is that I think the person that wrote the copy for the local paper was far more interested in social events than conservation, because they seemed to have an awful lot of parties up there [laughter] … weddings, baby showers, church fairs. The reports in the newspapers for Phoenicia Fish and Game were incredibly detailed accounts of how many fish, how big they were, and what species they were, all the time. They were just all about stocking fish. But in Stony Clove, they were about parties. So today they have 150 members, 79 acres and a clubhouse.

So, that's the results of my trying to figure out what those three clubs were doing in Shandaken. So, Mac, let's…

Mac: Yes. Meanwhile, back over on the Beaverkill [laughter] Harry Darbee, who's really my mentor, Ross and I were very close with him and Elsie, his wife. Harry, in around 1948, would be writing a lot of letters and receiving them with Sparse Grey Hackle, which is a pseudonym, but one of the finest fishing writers we know, and he and Harry would go back and forth, and one day Harry wrote Sparse a letter and said, we're getting together a group of boys, and we're putting this club together. And we're going to call it the Beaverkill Willowemoc Rod and Gun Club. And we'd like to have a constitution. And Sparse went to his files and got some constitutions together, and they formed this club. It was really kind of right on the threshold of the building of the four-lane extension of the highway, Route 17, from Harriman all the way up to Binghamton. And a lot of it had been completed, I think it was like 4 lanes up to Parksville. And, but it was then, like, a winding road right along the riverbed. And so it gave rise to a huge fight. Harry was the conservation chairman of this little club, which became known as the Bemoc, which you take the B from Beaverkill, and the moc from Willowemoc, and Bemoc is now another chapter of TU. But they had a mascot, and so where the Willowemoc joins the Upper Beaverkill in Roscoe is Junction Pool. And then Junction Pool is the legendary Bemoc critter, which is a two-headed brown trout with horns [laughter] that is trying to decide which river to go to spawn. But of course it's conjoined, like Siamese twins, and so therefore it lives its life out in Junction Pool. And everyone tries to catch the Bemoc. And they have an insignia which shows this mythical creature. At any rate, Harry, I told you about his chopping 4-foot wood and an indication of his independence and his integrity, he became, like, the chief crusader of the Bemoc. And in this case, the adversary was the New York state department, DPW, department of public works. And so they designed this extension of the highway, and because the Beaverkill valley is such a steep valley, what it was going to do is practically go right down the riverbed for some 20-some miles. Well, this horrified these sportsmen, and they're anglers, and they joined, and at one point I think the Bemoc had 800 members. They resisted, they had meetings, they wrote, had a petition, I think it was 75,000 signatures, sent it to Nelson Rockefeller, who was the governor then. I don't think he every read it. Harold G. Wilm was the commissioner of the Conservation Department. There was another guy named [Joseph C.] Federick who was the chief engineer for the Department of Public Works. He was in Binghamton. And so they would have these meetings from time to time, and it became a very sad thing. It lasted from the early '50s, when the highway got designed, and they were actually going to channelize a good bit of the Willowemoc, which is to take a curving river and just straighten it right out and concrete the banks. And so the Bemoc won that one. They got them to at least abandon the channelization. They got them to reduce the number of bridges that cross over. They ended up with 11 or 12 of them. But essentially, that we considered a battle lost, because the highway, what they really wanted, Bemoc wanted it to be built along the ridges, away from the river. And it's too long a story to get into; it's part of the current book I'm working on, that they lost this battle. But this rod and gun club and Harry and Elsie, who was the secretary

of the club, got involved in a number of other battles. One of them, as the dams and reservoirs moved west, you had the one, the Pepacton, and then Cannonsville, but mainly the one on the Neversink and the East Branch of the Delaware, impacted a lot of owners, because they had to condemn the land where these owners had what we know as riparian rights. And so they started suing these owners for the damage done, one, if they just took their land, but the other, if they were downriver from these dams, the effect that these water releases, Catskill Waters, John Hoeko and Frank got involved in, it affected the quality of the fishing below the dams. So law firms, and there were at least a dozen of them, located in towns around these dams, they would find the people who were being damaged, and almost like ambulance chasers, I guess, they came and said, okay, we're going to sue the pants off the city, because it's now the city who is condemning this land. And so they needed expert witnesses. Enter Harry. Harry was a prime riparian rights witness. And so he would appear, and they would say, here's what it's worth, and the city would disagree, and they went back and forth. They won most of those cases. There were hundreds of them. And so that was one of the things Harry got involved in. Another was the DDT spraying. And this is now in the late '50s, it precedes Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, which really was instrumental in sort of outlawing DDT as a spray, because what they would do is they'd get in these little back lanes and load up with all of this DDT, and then fly in very low over these river valleys, spraying for gypsy moths. That was the target. But at the same time, they killed all these insects, the insects went into the rivers, the fish thought they were proper flies and came up and ate them. Hundreds and hundreds of fish died. Harry assembled an army to go down and collect these fish, and they were effective there. So that was one that they won. He and Bemoc got involved in … Island. That's too long a story to get into. They won that one. And so he was like a force majeure almost, to protect our rivers with his army of people. So there, you've already talked about Catskill Waters. And I think you were interested in whether there were any city clubs, was it?

Beth: Yeah, well I read in your book that the Anglers Club of New York used to meet across the street here in the Phoenician Hotel, which unfortunately is no longer there… there's a good picture of it in Mac's book.

Mac: The Anglers Club started out, we spoke of tournament casting, and it started in 1906. And that was a period when tournament casting was a hugely popular activity. And they actually, they built a platform out into Harlem Meer at the top of Central Park. They owned this platform. and would hold their casting tournaments there. And so casting lasted very popular among fishermen for oh, about 10, 15 years. And it started to decline. Well, the Anglers Club of New York, with these tournament casters, they were really mostly just a group that got together outdoors. They didn't have a place, they didn't have a clubhouse or anything. So Eugene Connett of Derrydale Press was president of the Anglers Club at the time, and he said, while we rent a room once a year for our dinner, we've got to prevail here. What are we going to do? So he changed the Anglers Club from a group of tournament casters into a gentleman anglers luncheon club. And so they first located down in 10 Hanover Square down in the southern end of Manhattan. And

they were there until 1940, and then they moved to where they are now, at 101 Broad Street, and they're still there. There are about, counting nonresidents, about 600 members. They have their own outings. They at one point, right after they started, wanted to have water. That did not work out. But so many of the members of the club anyway were members of these individual little private clubs that it didn't really matter if they had water or not. And they would have an annual outing. And during the 1920s, this was one of their favorite locations, right over here. And they got so carried away with themselves that one of the members wrote this story for the Anglers Club bulletin, and he called it the Mattewan of the Esopus, which was a nut house. And so they were here for years. They loved it here in the Phoenicia Hotel. Then they went over, in Art Flick's Westkill tavern, they would have their outings there. Later on they went to the Beaverkill, and there was a place called Trout Valley Farm. Fred Banks III was the proprietor there. And so they would have it there. And now they go all over. They will have them in the Adirondacks some years. They come back to the Catskills. It is a successful gentleman anglers club. And the other one mentioned already is Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers, which started I think in the early '60s. When I first began fly fishing, Ross and I, when we married, neither of us fished. And her uncle down in North Carolina, said, you know, you're within reach of the Beaverkill, one of the most famous rivers in the world. So he invited us down to his club in western North Carolina. And we started catching fish down there. So it took, and as I've given a talk or two on fly fishing, and many times, as most of us here are outdoor people, in that audience there were a lot of non-anglers, and I said, I have one thing to warn you about. And that is fly fishing is a very dangerous sport. And of course everybody sits up like that. And I said, yeah, because… and then I flashed a slide of a martini glass with a trout fly in it… it's addictive. And I said, you can become addicted as a tournament caster, as an entomologist, learning the bugs, of stream craft, collecting books on it. But the worst of all is to write about it [laughter]. And so we became addicted. I'm a member of one of these little clubs that's all male. Ross is a member of an all-ladies fly fishing club called the Woman Fly Fishers, and they need a word, because in 1932 the wives of these members of the Anglers Club, Ed Hewitt, his wife Mary Ashley Hewitt, B. Tappan Fairchild, his wife, Julia Freeman Fairchild; and Karl Connell Sr's wife, Frank Hovey-Roof Connell…

Beth: Right, who is a descendant of Clarence Roof…

Mac: Exactly. Her name is Frank Connell now. I had the great fortune to interview her when she was almost 100. So that club started in 1932. It was the first all women's fly fishing club in the world. And they're still going strong. So clubs are clubs, and I would simply like to say, and we may have other things, that the appeal most often cited by these fishing clubs is the congeniality of their club mates, but followed closely by the serenity and beauty of their surroundings. So fly fishing and trout are taken for granted. These exist with or without the club privilege. And so whether it's public or private, all these groups have in common the cohesive strength of their shared respect for nature, wildlife, habitat of fish and animals, and the desire and willingness to fight for and protect that environment.

Beth: That's right. That's what we're here today to try to impress you with, that both the private, wealthy preserves, and the smaller common sporting clubs all shared the same love for the region and for the traditions that they grew up with. So we're happy to be part of their legacy here today. So thank you… [applause] I'd like to thank you all for coming, and especially thank Mac for coming and sharing his expertise with us…

Mac: My pleasure.

Beth: We'll have a reception upstairs, we have some snacks, and there are some historical artifacts for you to look at, and as I said, Mac will sign copies of his book if you would like to have one, which he's donated to the library. So thank you all very much.

**This event was made possible with funds from the Catskill Watershed Corporation in partnership with New York City DEP.**