

# Glory Days of Fly Fishing in Phoenicia

## Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection at the Phoenicia Library

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### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

phoenicia, fishing, trout, fish, creek, fly, rainbows, Catskill, Catskills, river, barber, today, diner, milo, reservoir, turbidity, clove, people, fishermen, stony

### SPEAKERS

Everyone, Tony Bonavist, Beth Waterman, Richard Loveless, Bob Sills, Mark Loete, Brett Barry, Male Voice, Female Voice

#### **Brett Barry** 00:01

The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Sporting Legends of the Catskills: Glory Days of Fly Fishing in Phoenicia at the Phoenicia Library, Sunday, October 15, 2023.

#### **Beth Waterman** 00:17

Welcome everyone to the Glory Days of Fly Fishing in Phoenicia. I'm Beth Waterman, the curator of the Jerry Bartlett Memorial Angling Collection upstairs. If you haven't seen it, I hope you'll take a chance to take time afterwards to go upstairs and see the fishing collection. Doris Bartlett and I founded the collection 27 years ago. This is our thirteenth presentation in the Sporting Legends of the Catskill series of programs and podcasts. Our programs are recorded by Silver Hollow Audio, Brett Barry, and posted as podcasts on our website by Stephanie Blackman. If you're not familiar with our website, it's [www.catskillanglingcollection.org](http://www.catskillanglingcollection.org). This is a thirteenth program in our series and all the other programs are archived with photographs by Mark Loete. A lot of information about the history of fly-fishing in Phoenicia already been recorded and if you're not on our mailing list, this is our sign-up sheet. If anyone wants to be on it, I'll pass it around, but if otherwise, come on up afterwards. Today, we're going to take a deep dive into history to discover how and why Phoenicia became such a fishing mecca. We have focused in past programs on individuals like Ray Smith, Phoenicia's Premier Fishing Guide and Fly Tyer. We have taken some books out of the collection to give you an opportunity to learn more about our collection and about Ray, who is a legend, fishing legend in Phoenicia ... a premier fishing guide and fly tyer from the 1930s to the 1960s ... and on the legendary history of Old Bess, the 9 1/2 pound brown trout caught by Larry Decker that lay in state in Folkerts freezer for people to admire and Rainbow Lodge was another program; these photos of these three programs are on our flyer. Rainbow Lodge was a fishing lodge that catered to fishermen, and journalists, and all those are part of our archived series. Today, we're going to talk about the culture of fly-fishing in Phoenicia, the stores and other ancillary businesses that catered to anglers. Our speakers today are Mark Loete, licensed guide and president of Ashokan-Pepacton Chapter of Trout Unlimited, who will tell us a bit about the

earliest period and the Milo Barber farm. Richard Loveless, the son of the owner of Elmer's Diner, and Tony Bonavist, an angler and fisheries biologist, who came to fish Phoenicia as a teenager because the word was out on the grapevine that this was the place you had to fish. We're hoping that you, the audience, can help fill in the gaps with your recollections of the glory days. This is our first in person programs since May of 2019, and I'm very glad to be with you again. We thank the Catskill Watershed Corporation and New York City DEP for the funding that allows us to record and archive this program and to the Phoenicia Library for making this possible. So, without further ado, I will introduce Mark Loete.

**Mark Loete 04:15**

Okay. Beth, thank you for organizing this. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. As Beth mentioned, I'm a professional fly fishing guide ... Catskill Mountain Angler and we usually guide on the Esopus Creek and I usually meet my clients at the corner of Main Street and Route 214. There's a gazebo there and before we take our clients out fishing, I like to give them a little background about the history of the area. I like to tell people, "You're fishing in the cradle of American fly-fishing, the birthplace of American fly-fishing," and right behind you is Stony Clove Creek. It was one of the first places anybody ever fly-fished and ... oh, by the way, just up the street is the first fishing resort in America, the Milo Barber boardinghouse and that's what I'm going to talk to today, and I have a lot of documentation about where it was and what they did there. But before we get into that, we need to dispel some misinformation. This book, "Land of Little Rivers" by Austin M. Francis, who was also part of our former podcast. There's a gorgeous coffee table book. We highly recommend it if you don't have it and there was a chapter on every one of the Catskill rivers. It's a chapter on the Esopus Creek and he has these maps that were cleverly drawn. Francis located the Milo Barber boardinghouse in Allaben, which is, I think, about four or five miles up the street and he even goes so far as to say, and then 1830, as sport fishing was just beginning to catch on in this country, the Esopus already had a boardinghouse, run by Milo Barber in Shandaken, which catered to anglers from the city. That's totally erroneous information. We have absolutely zero documentation and that the Milo Barber boardinghouse was in Allaben, but we have lots of documentation that it was just up the road in Phoenicia and in fact, we have the original deed from the original sale to Milo Barber and I want to read you some of this deed ... anybody who has recently purchased the house in there and will find this highly amusing. But before I do that, I wanted to set the stage. Back in the day, the Stony Clove was the go to place to fish and it was loaded with brook trout. Brook trout were the only native species of trout in the area, the *Salvelinus fontinalis*, and it's not even a trout species. It's actually a charred species like Arctic char or grayling, the rainbow trout, and the brown trout that we fish for today. The rainbow trout is the *Oncorhynchus mykiss*, the brown trout is the *Salmo trutta*; they were introduced species. The rainbow trout was introduced in 1883 to these waters and that particular species came from the McCloud River in California and back in the day, they were referred to as a California mountain trout. I don't know what point they started to be called the rainbow trout, but initially they were California mountain trout. The brown trout was native to Europe and they were introduced into these waters in 1888 and they were referred to back in the day as the German trout. So, the only extant native trout was a brook trout and they were extremely plentiful and they were typically smaller. They seem to range between 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 inches. The catches were measured not by the number of fish but by the pound or by the basketful and they were extremely plentiful in the Stony Clove and the Stony Clove was one of the firstbest places. People came to fish starting in the 18 teens and how do we know that one way we know that is because the Hudson Valley

School of Painters; those familiar with art history know the Hudson Valley School. These people were painting the wilderness aspects of our area: the Catskill Mountains, the Adirondacks, and painting the untrammelled, unowned wilderness of America. Something that was totally unheard of in Europe, and so the school of painting became a world-famous, distributed worldwide. These people were Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Thomas Doughty, Sanford Gifford, Jervis McEntee, Thomas Worthington Whittredge, Asher Durand, and they ... these people were all with the exception of the founder of the school, Thomas Cole. These people were all fishermen, they're all fly-fishermen. So, they would traverse these mountain streams with their ... with their ... the painting kit, their easels, and their paint box and also their fishing rods. So, they were painting where they were fishing and they were fishing where they were painting and I'll read to you a couple excerpts. Asher Durand in particular was the most famous of the Hudson Valley School of Artists had a number of paintings and titled, "Mountain and Stream," "Catskill Mountains Near Shandaken," "View of Shandaken Mountains," "Shandaken, Ulster County," "Ulster County, New York," "Brook Trout," "Shandaken Mountain," "Bushkill Creek on the Esopus." He painted at least four paintings and titled, "Esopus Creek," and one titled, "The Sketcher," a landscape with fishermen and artists. So, it was Asher Durand. Another example ... Jervis McEntee sketched and fished along many of the Esopus tributaries, including Watson Hollow, Beaverkill, Stony Clove, and Mink Hollow. He was especially fond of an area known as Lanesville, along the Stony Clove about 214, where it joins Hollow Tree Brook. It was here that he made many of his sketches, which he later turned into the landscapes that brought him fame. So, this is back in the early 18 teens, 20s, 30s, and just an example of how prominent the Stony Clove Fishery was. So, that sort of sets the stage. So here in the Catskills, we have an ideal environment for these trout, these are shaded streams, there's cool fresh water, a lot of snowmelt, a high concentration of insect life. So these are ideal. Trout watch for propagation of trout and also have this beautiful mountain scenery, so it would stand to reason that one of the first fishing resorts in America was here in the ... Hey, how you doing? ... was ... was here in ...

**Richard Loveless** 11:23

I would say, "We don't have a lot of snowmelt anymore."

**Mark Loete** 11:26

Oh, yeah, I stand corrected. But, you know, we're on the cusp of another winter. So, let's ... let's ...

**Richard Loveless** 11:34

I'll call you in the spring.

**Mark Loete** 11:35

Yeah, let's ... let's keep that opinion in advance. So yeah, so it stands to reason that the first fly-fishing resort in America was here in the Catskills on the Stony Clove and I ... we actually have the deed from the first purchase of Milo Barber. It's 2007 and ...

**Beth Waterman** 12:01

2007, the deed ...

**Mark Loete** 12:02

I'm sorry. 1807. 1807.

**Beth Waterman** 12:06

Thank you.

**Mark Loete** 12:06

... and ... and these ... these were laboriously handwritten. They were written with ink and a feather quill pen and I actually transcribed this because we were very difficult to read and what I noticed was ... whoever wrote this deed, his penmanship got more sloppy, as ... well, this is like a 2 or 3 page deed and I'll just read you ... I won't read the whole thing because it quickly devolves and even back in the day quickly devolves into very obtuse legalese, but I'll just read the first few paragraphs. This indenture, made the sixth day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twelve between Peter Livingston and Joanna's wife of the first part, and Milo Barber of the second part, witnesseth that the said party, the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of \$136.50. Lawful money. This was ... this was 91 acres. So you can do your own math about how property values have ballooned since then, and it turns out in 91 acres and they ... they paid \$136.50. Mr. Barber purchases land for \$1.50 an acre. Lawful money of New York to them in hand paid at and before the unsealing and delivery of this premise by the said party. The second part ... the receipt thereof his word by acknowledging the said party. The second part ... therefore acquitted and discharged, having granted bargain and sold elude released and conveyed, and by these presently do grant bargain and sell elude into the party. The second part, I think, actual possession, now being into his heirs and assigns forever, all that tract or parcel of land situate, lying and being in the county of Ulster in the state of New York being part of a tract of said county owned by the party, the first part, and here is the description of the land. Beginning at a stick and stone on the east side of the Bush Kill and standing on the west side of Andrew Longyear's farm, who has a neighboring property, and running from the east side set bounds north 33 degrees east, 50 chains, to a stick and stone standing on the land descending westerly. Now, a chain was 66 feet and a link of the chain that ... there were 100 chains, 100 links in a chain, so each link was 66/100th of a foot. So, it's about two-thirds of a foot, but a chain was 66 feet. So, stick and stone standing ... land is anywhere till we hence north 57 degrees west, 20 chains, to a stick and stone standing on flatland. Then, south 30 degrees west, 38 chains, 40 links, to a stick and stone on the east side of the Bush Kill. This ... down the same, south 4 degrees east, 4 chains, fence. This ... south 49 degrees east, 3 chains, and then south 46 degrees, 30 minutes east. It changed 90 links to the place of beginning.

**Beth Waterman** 12:07

1807, everybody. Okay.

**Mark Loete** 15:30

So, that's the plan.

**Beth Waterman** 15:31

So, let's just point out where this is.

**Mark Loete** 15:33

So, here ... here is the actual plot that I just read on the deed. This is where the Stony Clove is at the time. It was referred to as a Bush Kill, eventually became the Barber Bush Kill, not the ... not the First Lady Barbara Bush killed, but the Barber Bush Kill that runs along here and this is a plot that I just described. One side is 2,534 feet almost a half mile, and then the short part is 1,320 feet, and then this part is 3,300 feet, and then here's the river, and here is the location, and by the way, this information comes from Ed Van Put, where he did a lot of this research was brook trout fishing in the Catskills, which is one of the best histories of trout fishing in the Catskills. I highly recommend it if you're interested. So, here is where the plot is and generously laid out in blue, where ... where the actual pie just described this here. This is the Esopus Creek and here's the Stony Clove and here is the plot. Now, you can see that the whole town was divided into grids and the plot numbers here have no relation to the current plot numbers that we'll use to identify real estate holdings today. So, I'm ... I'm extrapolating by looking at the geography of the river and maybe Richard can help us out with this and also the topography that this was approximately where from the Graham and Company up to the Phoenicia School.

**Richard Loveless** 17:12

Yeah.

**Mark Loete** 17:12

Is that correct?

**Richard Loveless** 17:13

The house I live in was owned by Barber.

**Mark Loete** 17:16

It's owned by Barber and what is the address of your house now?

**Richard Loveless** 17:19

98-214.

**Mark Loete** 17:20

Okay. So, we thought that this extended ...

**Richard Loveless** 17:25

Then, probably went beyond that. So ...

**Mark Loete** 17:30

Yeah, we thought this extended from probably 80 Route 214 to 110 Route 214 and that includes your property. So, that's ... so this is the first holding and Milo Barber property 1807 on the ... on the banks of the Stony Clove Creek.

**Beth Waterman** 17:48

Well, that is fantastic. Thank you, Mark.

**Mark Loete** 17:51

So, we have established ownership, we have established location and we have established a time sequence. The only other possibility for the first fishing resort in America would be the Murdoch boardinghouse on the Beaverkill, the upper Beaverkill in what is today, the ... the hamlet of Lew Beach, but that deed was purchased 1830. So, this predates that by 5, 6, 7, 8 years. So, we've established ownership, we've established location, we've established time sequence, and here's a couple ... couple little tidbits of information. This came from "History of Ulster County" by Nathaniel Sylvester, 1880, which he says, "Eli Barbara was licensed to keep an inn in 1810. His place was a little north of the corner and after his death, a tavern was kept many years by his widow." So, I surmise said ... \$103 at the time was a huge amount of money at the time. I surmise it. There's probably family money that probably came from the ... the grocery store and the tavern they kept, so that was ... that was 1810. Here's another little tidbit. This is from "The History of Ulster County," edited by Apostle Clearwater in 1907, which says that Milo Barber, Sr. kept the small store near Phoenicia on the road to Chichester as early as 1826 and also, this is the ... the book that we ... our favorite quote about our area, Shandaken, is from ... from his book. Pine Hill and almost the entire town at the time was a dense wilderness with hearing they're clearing. Bears, wolves, deer, and other wild animals held almost universal sway. So, it was a rough and tumble place and it was hard to get to.

**Beth Waterman** 19:59

It was before they built the Plank Road. The Plank Road wasn't built until 1851 and the railroad didn't come to Phoenicia until 1870. So, the people who came up from Kingston to fish at Milo Barber's farm and boardinghouse had quite a journey up on stagecoach on what was the Old U&D Turnpike, but they came in droves and in the book that Mark mentioned by Ed Van Put. It mentions that in 1844 for ... Sorry. 1848, a group of men came in. They caught 1,400 to 1,500 trout.

**Mark Loete** 20:45

Oh, I can actually read the newspaper clippings.

**Beth Waterman** 20:47

Oh, okay.

**Mark Loete** 20:47

Yeah and I'll do this in numerical order. This one is 1844 from the Catskill Democrat. FINE SPORT: A party of four gentlemen from this village who recently visited the town of Shandaken, Ulster County on a fishing excursion. They stopped at the house of Mr. Miles Barber misprint about two miles from the corner post office; a lovely spot; situated within a gorge of the mountains were several streams from the county of Greene unite and correct ... the county of Ulster. All of which are well stocked with trout. After taking sufficient trout for breakfast, the party commenced fishing about eight o'clock a.m. and by the middle of the afternoon had filled their fishing baskets weighing 52 pounds, besides having their pockets well-filled with trout. They speak in the highest terms of the excellent fair and comfortable quarters at Mr. Barber's, as well as the beauty of the mountain scenery and the exciting nature of the sport and the quantity of trout may be taken by those skilled in that delightful recreation to say nothing of the healthful nature of such an exercise. To all who are fond of the sport of the field and flood we say, "Visit Mr. Barber's." Now, we should say that these were extremely plentiful trout. They weren't



very large because there's probably a very high degree of competition for the food source and this was long before the dry fly style hit ... hit American waters. So, these were likely wet flies, probably resembling nothing like the actual entomology in the creek, but the competition for food source for these trout was such that if you were even close to the size, shape, and color of anything that actually looked like a living insect, you're probably catching a lot of trout. So, here's one from June 14, 1848, also the Kingston Democrat. FISHING EXCURSION: A party of eight or ten gentlemen from Catskill, Coxsackie, and New York, left the village on Friday last on a fishing excursion to Shandaken and return the next day, bringing with them 1,400 to 1,500 fine trout. I mean, how do they even keep track of the number? I think my arm would be getting a little tired after first 1,000 or so. The day was an admirable one for fishing. The trout exceedingly plenty and the host, Milo Barber and his obliging family, made it one of the most agreeable excursions imaginable. That's been the Catskill Democrat. And now, here's one from the Kingston Weekly Freeman, dated June 1877. Now, we should mention that as this history was progressing, the history of industrialization of the Catskill Mountain was also progressing and for those that don't know, the industrialization was the leather tanning industry and the ... is estimated that half the forestry was hemlock and the issue about hemlock is hemlock bark is rich and tannic acid and tannic acid is what it is used to tan leather. So, as the history of this fishery was progressing, the leather tanning industry was progressing and what they would do is they would either cut down the hemlock tree or simply strip the bark in the tree, thereby killing the tree. So, as the ... and this was an extremely extensive throughout the Catskill just started in Prattsville is Zadock Pratt was the king of the leather tanning industry in the early 1820s and basically spread all over the Catskill Mountains. So, as the leather tanning industry was progressing, they're cutting down the trees, removing the shade from ... from the watershed and they would put the ... the hemlock bark and these big vats of water, leach out the tannic acid, throw the hides in these vats, tan the hides, and this slurry of acidic water would eventually wear out to dump it back in the creek, thereby poisoning the creek and also, as they were removing the ground cover from ... from the mountains and these heavy rain events, the river was silt up. So, there was a triple whammy of environmental degradation that was eroding the ... the trout population. But it seems that on the Stony Clove, there was in fact a tannery on the Upper Stony Clove in what is today Lanesville and there is also a sawmill. The Fenwick Sawmill also in Lanesville, but it seems as Stony Clove was somewhat spared from this environmental degradation that took place because of the tanning industry. The ... the Catskill Mountains were the main source of leather for the Union Army during the Civil War, 1860 to 1864, and after the Civil War, the place was apparently pretty much denuded and the saying in Catskills end was ... "Ain't worth an acre in Shandaken." It was post-Civil War, and then nothing doing no ... there's no agriculture ... no nothing. The forest was allowed to grow back into his present state. So, I like to tell my clients, "You look around, you think this is forest primeval?" It's not. It's second or third growth. So, this one was from 1877. Mr. Milo Barber, a thriving farmer and a prominent citizen, is erecting a new house on his place for the accommodation of summer borders.

**Richard Loveless 26:25**

Is that your house by any chance? I believe so.

**Mark Loete 26:27**

Oh, okay. He is an experienced guide in this region and is at the station with his team and wagon on the arrival of all trains ready to convey passengers to any boardinghouse. Trust dream or other points

and to go trout fishing with Milo as a guide is a thing to be remembered as a red day in anyone's calendar. I want to read one thing, and then I'll pass the microphone along. This is just from a newspaper. We have the Xerox. It wasn't included as a wish newspaper or the date of the newspaper, but there's little editorial complaining about the Wilmot Proviso and the Missouri Compromise. The Wilmot Proviso was debated in 1846 and Missouri Compromise goes back to 1820, so this article is apparently sometime around 1840s, mid-1840s, and there's a little editorial here that says, "On Wednesday last some Rondouters from the Rondout section of Kingston included a moiety (M-O-I-E-T-Y) ... I've never heard of that word. ... of ourselves made an inroad to Shandaken near Milo Barber's scenery. The party fish up the West Branch of the Bush Kill in the region and caught some 300 fine trout. One reason for the comparatively indifferent success ... 300 fine trout, right? ... was the fact that some poacher scamp had swept to kill with a net and another was a new trial of the plan of the distribution of labor as lately established in France; part of the association being engaged in eating the fish, which the residue were catching with exemplary patience and tolerable skill. So, these people were upset that they only caught 300 trout. The East Branch of the Bush Kill had said, "You swarm with trout and viserys would do well to a shoe of the west for the present. I think what they ... but these branches ... Bush Kill, I think, they probably mean Warner Creek, which today called, "Warner Creek." For the information of others penetrating Shandaken, we would tell the hungry and worried to stop at Landen's and if our friend, Dudley, does not give them the best of suppers in the shortest possible time, he won't deserve the praise which he fairly won from our famished ... famished party. So, if you're one of those people like we are while catching two or three or four trout and you think it's a good day to fish, he might harken back to the old days when they were taking him 1,400 to 1,500 trout ... hard to believe. So, to those who all were fond of the sport of the field and flood, we say, "Visit Mr. Barber's."

**Beth Waterman 29:10**

Yeah, great. Thank you, Mark. The ... this book by Austin M. Francis, "Catskill Rivers," has ... has a ... an appendix and it's called, "Important Dates in Catskill Angling." The title of the book is "Catskill Rivers: Birthplace of American Fly Fishing" and the first entry in this chronology is from 1830 and it says, "First known fisherman's boardinghouse in America," established by Milo Barber in Shandaken on Esopus Creek. So, wasn't on the Esopus, but it's close enough. So, that's really the origin. You know, Phoenicia is talking about how Phoenicia is famous as a fly-fishing center. It goes back to the earliest recorded history. There were no newspapers at the time. In 1830, it was really just be settled and already people were flocking here to fish. So, if we flashforward, you know, from 1830 to 1950 or whenever, Richard is going to give us the dates. Richard, fly-fishing was enormously popular here and the businesses flourished in Phoenicia that ... that catered to fly-fishing and dependent on fly-fishing and one of the ... one of the sites that people love to gather was called, "Elmer's Diner," and Elmer's Diner was owned by Richard's father. So, Richard is going to give us a little quick history about Elmer's Diner where it was, when it was, and what they served there.

**Mark Loete 31:01**

I like to excuse myself. So, I can take some photographs.

**Beth Waterman 31:04**

Yeah.



**Richard Loveless 31:05**

Well, my parents came down to Phoenicia before World War I or before World War II and they had a small diner between the Nest Egg and where the beauty shop is now and the ... the train that ran from here to Haines Falls, ran right by the diner there, and then when the war came, they couldn't get food because of the rationing and so forth. So, my dad and mother went back to Lake Delaware. My mother's mother, my grandmother, and my maternal side was in a wheelchair and her three sons were in the service. So, my father and mother took care of her and they had a subsistence farm on Route 28. We're right near where in Lake Delaware, right near actually where the Episcopal Church is that was built by Angelica Gary and my mother was named after her, and so my father only had ... had chopped his fingers off on his left hand (in a farming accident), so he couldn't go in the service. So, he worked in a creamery at night, and then during the day, he trapped and he was successful trapper and fur was valuable because they use it inside: the liners of gloves and collars on flight jackets and that kind of thing. So ... so, that's what he did. Then after the war, it came back down here and the providence of God, Jimmy McGrath's father, Bill McGrath, sold him the property down below. They were the Catholic churches, and so he bought a diner from Silk City in Paterson, New Jersey. This is a picture of the diner that he had and it was state-of-the-art at that time. There's ... every once awhile you see one like this ... my brother and I think there's one in Millbrook over in Dutchess County and there's another one around or something that's quite similar to that. So, anyway, it was. You know, today it would be really small and so forth, but the state-of-the-art then, and so, you know, my dad fly-fished and he knew Ray Smith. He fished with Ray and I have a ... I had a picture of my brother had ended up with it and I think my niece or nephew have it. I'm sure they didn't throw it out, but I didn't have a chance to get it. It shows my dad fishing in the Esopus, but and so anyway ... in 1950, as in Warwick, they ... he and Earl Conro, who was the county identifications officer, he did fingerprints and pistol permits and so forth and he was a good friend of ours and they got the idea to put this effigy on top of the diner and I have an article from the Catskill Mountain News in May of 1950 and it shows and tells where they interviewed my dad and my mother convinced them to do it. Earl had this birch bark canoe that he got in Canada. He used to go up to every year and both hunting and fishing and Folkert went with him a lot and they brought this birch bark canoe back and it had been ... had one end was hit Macedo Rocker. Some had a hole in it. They built this effigy up. This article comes about people named Potter from Ashokan built the effigy and they put them up and what they were doing was the people was a drought and they were trying to get rain and they thought they could ionize the clouds and that would produce some kind of rain and, you know, so that was a deal. So, they had this banner up there. Let the rainmaker come and they had the effigy in this canoe with a broom for a paddle and ... and so ... but this thing, you know, they did it as a lark, you know, and the thing went all over the world. I mean, this was before they had ... it was actually in the Tokyo Times. Some people ... my father had somebody who he knew in the Navy and they sent him a picture from the ... I don't have that picture. But, you know, the picture ended up over there. I mean, you know, it's ... so, anyway, that's what it was, and then, you know, it's too bad. My brother and my father are going. They could speak more about fishing. My brother was a good fisherman like Jodi and John and, you know, so he would know more about that and of it and Eddie was good at tying flies real good like that, and so that end of it, and then she asked me about, you know, people that came in the diner, this and that. Well, my father was friends with when Davis who was a fishing editor of "Outdoor Life" and he wrote up about the diner and fishing in the Catskills and that kind of stuff, and then there were three guys who were in the original "Show Boat" and they used to come and come in the diner and they fished here and they were ... Huey Hendrix, Leonard Stokes, and

Tommy Wyman and I've met ... I remember meeting Huey. The other guys probably came when I was in school or something. I didn't get to meet them, but they fished, I think, with Ray and like that and they ... I don't know if you remember when TV first came out. "The Mitch Miller Show" was one of the variety shows and the first, you know, they're only three channels or whatever and he's on the air and he had them as part of his ... the male group that sang on that show and Mitch Miller was sort of a pioneer, too, in a way because he featured Leslie Uggams as his female singer and she was black and that was unusual at that time. Okay, so anyway, those three guys used to come in the diner and I remember meeting who we ... I have a picture at home of Mitch Miller and he ... I didn't bring it because but he, you know, autographed it to my mother. My mother ... every time he came up ... would make him a chocolate pie because that was his favorite. He took that back to the city with him and I mean, they were really nice people. You know, so that ... that's ... that's what I can tell you about. So, it was the grace of God that they got the property, and then eventually built the campsite there and he had that, and then they retired and like that. So, that's ... that's basically it. But people used to come in, you know, the fishermen used to come in a lot and was a ... was a big thing and hunting was also big in the fall. So ...

**Beth Waterman** 38:29

Did the fishermen bring their fish for your dad to cook?

**Richard Loveless** 38:32

They could have. I'm not. I don't remember exactly. You know, so ... probably, you know.

**Beth Waterman** 38:41

And what else did they serve at the diner?

**Richard Loveless** 38:43

Well, it's typical diner food, you know, and a steam table with whatever they had on for the day. Then, he had shorter you know, shorter stuff and that was just like most diners today.

**Beth Waterman** 38:55

Yeah, but it was a gathering place for fishermen.

**Richard Loveless** 38:59

Yeah.

**Beth Waterman** 38:59

Yeah.

**Male Voice** 39:00

How long was the diner open from what you're away of?

**Richard Loveless** 39:04

Well, he opened the original one there before World War II, and then closed when the war started because he couldn't get food. Then after the war, it came back down and through the providence of

God. I don't want to go into all the details, but Jimmy regrets his father or grandfather or Bill McGrath. He sold them the property down there, and then it was before 1950 because it was in there then and I ... I was born in '45 and I can just barely remember the old diner that he had when he first came back, and then this one I certainly remember ... my brother and I used to work there and, you know, we had really good help. That's why they were successful. They treated their help properly, too.

**Beth Waterman** 40:00

Is it okay if we pass this around?

**Richard Loveless** 40:02

Short, yeah.

**Beth Waterman** 40:03

On the back, it says, "1958." Do you think that's ...

**Richard Loveless** 40:06

Well, the article here that I have from the Catskill Mountain News is May 19th of 1950. So obviously, they had it up there. There's a picture of my father, my mother on top of the diner with the effigy, and so forth. So, then I brought one other article that I had was right near it and it was shown at the mark before. This talks about ... this is from 1961 and it's an article that Earl Conro... they interviewed him. He was a head of the Phoenicia Fish & Game Association, as well as being the county identifications officer and they had a lot of fish that were dying along the Esopus and he felt it was because they'd shut the portal off and the fish, you know, couldn't get back into the water. So, that's what the article ... that was about I just ... it would happen to be next to that, so I brought it and just in case you wanted to see it, but ...

**Beth Waterman** 41:08

Yes.

**Female Voice** 41:09

I'd like to tell you what I know that the origin of the houses on South Street.

**Beth Waterman** 41:18

Well, if you could ...

**Female Voice** 41:19

... had to do with fishermen coming to the area and building houses here. I don't ... thank you. Yeah, you're interested.

**Beth Waterman** 41:29

Okay. Well, I think we'll have more discussion at the end, but we have one more speaker and for those people who just came in ... in the back, there are some folding chairs back there if you'd like to set them up. Does anyone have any specific questions for Richard?

**Tony Bonavist** 41:46

That was at the very south end of town, right?

**Mark Loete** 41:49

Yeah.

**Richard Loveless** 41:50

Yeah, there's three ... three trailers down there. Now, Larry Rotella, the Black Boy, and Ophia and the original diner that was there, they had to take it down because they didn't maintain the roof periodically. You have to maintain the roof on those kinds of buildings and the people that had ... had it before didn't keep it up like, you know, so that's the way it was. My father when he ... when they rode ... when 28 went over where it is now, you know, he that ... he decided to retire. He could have moved over there and somebody didn't want to. He retired and they were just really in the camp for a while, and then they retired. So, that and, you know, and then he ... he did woodworking and John ... you probably worked in his shop right with him up there and Jodi and like that. So, he did that and he trapped a little on the side and stuff and, you know, I know he told me when he was trapping during the war, he paid an Indian guy two hundred dollars, which was a lot of money then to learn how to trap fox and he was very successful at a trapping over there and the Little Delaware Lake, Lake Delaware, and I know he used to trap. When he caught some fur ... would leave it in a certain spot. My mother would go with her horse and pick up the fur and they had their horse. They handled fur around the horse enough, so they didn't ... didn't shy, I guess, and whatever and ... and she pick it up and she ... and she told me about Angelica Gary visiting, and then we were first born. My brother and I ... she was raising us. Angelica Gary came down and, you know, medicines, infants, of course, and she rode her horse down because rationing was certainly ... she could have gotten as much gas as she wanted, right? Because the Gary's were signers of the Declaration of Independence, but she wasn't that type of person. So, shows you about their character.

**Bob Sills** 44:08

Well, your mother was my den mother.

**Richard Loveless** 44:10

Yep.

**Bob Sills** 44:10

A few years back.

**Female Voice** 44:15

I have one question. Do you think that the diner was ordered from New Jersey?

**Richard Loveless** 44:20

Yeah, Paterson, New Jersey's Silk City Diner.

**Female Voice** 44:23

And how did they bring ... they brought it here like a truck or something?

**Richard Loveless** 44:26

I believe. I don't know if it's a truck or a train. I think it was a truck, but I'm not 100% sure.

**Female Voice** 44:34

Okay, interesting. I didn't know that it was done that way. I thought about it.

**Beth Waterman** 44:39

So, Silk City Diner was the name of the company that built it?

**Richard Loveless** 44:42

Yes, in Paterson. Yeah, they were considered the Cadillac of diners at the time and I guess they probably still are. I don't know their makeup ... obviously bigger than they would be, you know, very small.

**Beth Waterman** 45:01

Well, thank you. Oh, another question.

**Mark Loete** 45:03

I just had a question. You said the location was down at the end of the town where those three trailers are now by the church. Was there any significant businesses in that like kind of industrial building where the Quonset hut is or anything like that?

**Richard Loveless** 45:15

Yeah, that was the PMC, Phoenicia Manufacturing Company. In "The Simpsons," during World War II, they stamped out silverware for the war effort and if you get a chance to interview Jay Simpson, he could tell you a lot more about that and ... and they were ... I don't know what they did it after the war ... sort of after the war ... sort of petered out and they also owned the ski center there on Woodland Valley Road.

**Mark Loete** 45:44

That also ... in the early 1900s, that was the assembly plant for Model T automobile.

**Richard Loveless** 45:50

Yeah, you could buy a Model T in ... in Phoenicia and it was ... when I was growing up, there were three doctors, three lawyers, a dentist ...

**Mark Loete** 45:58

They were assembled in that building.

**Richard Loveless** 46:00

A market.

**Mark Loete** 46:01

The parts would come up on the railroad and there was a railroad bridge going across the Esopus Creek at that time and ...

**Richard Loveless** 46:08

Right.

**Mark Loete** 46:08

... assembled in that building.

**Richard Loveless** 46:09

Right.

**Female Voice** 46:11

John.

**Male Voice** 46:12

The market was a garage and he also ...

**Richard Loveless** 46:16

Yeah, finished the market.

**Male Voice** 46:17

So, I think Ford cars way back.

**Richard Loveless** 46:20

Yeah, I believe it was Ford.

**Male Voice** 46:22

Right.

**Beth Waterman** 46:24

Well, it's really painting an interesting picture of Phoenicia in the 1950s.

**Richard Loveless** 46:30

If you interview Jay sometime, he could ... he could explain more about the manufacturing and the ski center and all that he ... he's very interesting. He lives over in Poughkeepsie and every once in a while, I run into him. So, it's really nice.

**Beth Waterman** 46:42

Okay, one more addition, and then we have another speaker here.

**Female Voice** 46:46



I spent all my summers here in Phoenicia growing up and speaking of World War II, my mother was a plan spotter on top of the Phoenicia Hotel, it was a structure. My mother would go and look for German planes.

**Richard Loveless** 47:02

Right. Yeah, they did. Yeah, they ... there was part of the war effort was to spot ... try to spot any aircraft like that.

**Male Voice** 47:14

Yeah.

**Beth Waterman** 47:16

Well, for those of you who aren't familiar, the Phoenicia Hotel burned in 2007. It was located on that corner right over there, which is now grass and it also hosted fishermen, of course, and in 1923, the The Anglers Club of New York City had their annual meeting at the Phoenicia Hotel, so it attracted people from far and wide. So, thank you very much, Richard, for telling us about ...

**Richard Loveless** 47:55

You're welcome. Thank you for inviting me.

**Beth Waterman** 47:57

Well, we're very grateful to you.

**Richard Loveless** 47:59

You want to talk about flies? Those are guys, Jody's real good.

**Beth Waterman** 48:02

I know these two guys.

**Richard Loveless** 48:03

Yeah.

**Beth Waterman** 48:03

Alright, but Tony is going to talk to us a little bit. Tony came up here and fished as a young man. So, Tony's a retired fisheries biologist and angler of note.

**Tony Bonavist** 48:17

Before I started, I just want to mention a couple of things you brought up Lake Delaware that Tunis Lake, Balsam Lake, all have their own strains of wild brook trout.

**Male Voice** 48:29

Okay.

**Tony Bonavist** 48:30

They evolved in the Catskills when the glaciers receded about 12,000 years ago and that's ... I don't know where the stream ones came from. They probably evolved in the streams, too. But those lakes still today all have wild brook trout populations and even though there was a lot of lumbering going on and there was overfishing, the brook trout populations in the Catskills are really pretty good in a lot of the tributaries. I mean, the fish are not big, but you haven't been in the Rondout. You got them in all the trips to the Esopus. You got them down by Margaretville and Delaware County. I mean, they're all over the place. They're not very big, but there's lots of them around. So, the brook trout population has come back really pretty strongly, even after all of this stuff that went on way back in the 1800s.

Anyway, Beth, thank you for inviting me. I'm going to try to put a perspective on all the stuff I know about the Esopus in this valley and all the things that went on over here; more so than all the other Catskill rivers. I mean, the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, and the Delaware System. They're all pretty stable areas. This place was famous for fly-fishing many years ago and it kind of tapered off over time. I started coming up here and I'm dating myself now; probably around 1957 and we used to stop in your dad's diner to get whatever and I don't remember what it was. But we came here because we grew up in Westchester and we heard about the famous rainbow runs that occurred in the Esopus every spring. So, we started coming up here when trout season opened, I think around April 1st or April 10th and one of the big highlights of the weekend was that we would fall in a lot because we didn't have felt soul waders, we had hip boots, and these rocks are like bowling balls with ... what's on the top of them ... that the turbidity. No, it's not algae. It's red clay that's in suspension and it sticks to the rocks. So, every time you fish in the Esopus falling in was part of the day and it was cold. So, you know, but we were kids, so it didn't make any difference and as I mentioned, we would stop ... stop in and have a bite there. I don't recall catching much, but my friend, Tony, who was a better fisherman and we're talking bait at the time; no flies then did very well. So, you mentioned, I think, someone mentioned that rainbows were stopped here in the 1880s; brown trout probably is about the same time and those two fisheries blossomed over many years and the river became very famous for ... as I mentioned before, the spring runs of rainbows and people came from all over to fish those runs. Those fish came out of the Ashokan Reservoir, which was built in 1915, and it followed by the Schoharie in 1926 and that led to the evolution of the Shandaken Tunnel, which brought water from the Schoharie down the tunnel to the Esopus Creek. Before that system was implemented in 1926 or '27, the Esopus was not a trout stream below Shandaken. It was a warm water typical Freestone Catskill stream that essentially got very low and warm and dry in the summertime. So, you didn't have much of a trout fishery here. Once that tunnel went online, it changed the Esopus forever. The downside of it was that ... that whole Schoharie Watershed is full of red clay and every time there's a big storm, that clay goes into the tributaries, ends up in the Schoharie, ends up in the portal down into the Esopus. So, that's a liability. 1936: The New York State Conservation Department did a study of the Lower Hudson Watershed and they have a mention in there about the portal and hey ... they say it's a mixed bag. It provides cool water for the river, so it's a trout fishery all year, but then there's the turbidity side and people have been trying to figure that turbidity issue out for the last 60 years, I think, and if you read the Kingston Freeman, you'll see that every time we have a spill over from the Ashokan Reservoir that there's a lot of complaints that the river down below Kingston is red and I don't want to get on a sidetrack, but there's probably not a lot you can do about turbidity up there because the whole watershed is full of that stuff and that has a major impact on this river right now. The fishing pressure and you guys will know better than me because I fish other places now, but I think that turbidity has had an impact on this river from a

fishing standpoint. What happened with the Esopus years ago, too, and somebody mentioned that they would turn the portal off and there would be fish getting stranded all over the place. When I worked in New Paltz, Ed refresh my ... my memory. Who was the guy that called us all the time?

**Bob Sills** 48:35

It's Chuck Schwartz.

**Tony Bonavist** 53:19

Chuck Schwartz would call our office. We got fish lying all over the place. This went on for years, and then finally in the 1970s, the early '70s, a bunch of us and Ed Ostopczuk was involved intimately and so were many other people that were in his valley. We got involved with New York City to try to change some of the operation of some of these systems. One was the Esopus, the other was the East and West Branch of the Delaware's. There was no water in those rivers in the summer and over here, we had water, but they would turn the portal on, and then they would shut it immediately off when they were done moving water that caused all kinds of stranding. In 1977 or 1976, the DEC commissioners signed legislation establishing the water releases legislation and part of that legislation, part 670 was for the Esopus that required New York City to open the portal and 40 cubic foot per second increments and close it and 20 cubic foot per second increments. So, we eliminated all this yo-yo where it was on and off immediately. Also, instead of having crazy flows in the river at all the time, the DEP how to provide a minimum flow of 248 CFS at the Shandaken USGS gage all the time unless there was flooding or droughts concern. So, that's some of the history of the water releases and what changed the Esopus as a fishery over time. From a water standpoint, you've got better fishing now from just the amount of water that's in the river on a day-to-day basis, but the turbidity impacts the river from a fishing standpoint. I came all the way up here from Ossining to fish in the Esopus. Now, I'm 20 miles away and I go to Downsville. So, figure it out. You know, that's ... that's what we do as crazy fishermen. Some of the history here that went on, outside of all this environmental business, Lee Wolf and Dan Bailey, who are two famous old guys like me or both passed away, worked in New York City and they came to the Esopus and Lee evolved his Wolf pattern of dry flies on the Esopus Creek in the 1930s. So, there was that and Ray Smith was mentioned and he was a guide and he had people up here like Yogi Berra and all those people that he know that he got it in those days. There was Folkerts and nobody mentioned that and maybe somebody here in this audience will know more about it than I do. What I ... the story I heard is that he left town in a hurry for some reason. The son, yeah, that I know. But he ... okay, so he sold good quality like Payne fly rods, if you guys are familiar with bamboo rods going back into the fifties and so forth. He had a high quality store, and then I don't know when it closed and I don't know most of the history. A friend of mine, a girlfriend that I had lived up here, took care of Reggie Bennett, whom the school is named after, and when that man died, I got his Payne rod and I left over there ... some of Ray Smith's flies, if anyone wants to see them. So, there is that history, and then later on and I don't know exactly when Emil Grimm came over here from Vermont, where he had a fly shop over somewhere in Vermont and he opened the store. Yeah, that's true. I did find that and I forgot about it, but I did find that reference and he opened the store. He was here until the eighties, I think, and he sold, you know, dry fly-fishing stuff, nets, tackle, and he also made fly rods in the wintertime I learned and when Beth asked me to research him because I did a little work for him. I think probably around 1975 or so. I found a thing on the classic fly rod form from his son, if I can find it in my pile here.

**Beth Waterman** 57:06

Can you just tell us where his shop was?

**Tony Bonavist** 57:09

It's right in the middle of town, is it? Yeah, it's got a sign in front of it now like a ... whatever it is. Yeah, it's there.

**Beth Waterman** 57:18

Phoenicia Belle. It's a bed and breakfast now.

**Tony Bonavist** 57:20

Yeah, they retired. Ultimately, they left and they went to the Adirondacks. I don't know why that was. So, one other thing that happened over here that was interesting and Germane was that in about 1978. Ed ... tell me if I'm wrong on it. The New York State Power Authority proposed to build a pump storage project up on Schoharie Reservoir and that reservoir is turbid enough and we figured in the DEC, if they built that reservoir. Moving that water back and forth up and down a hill day and night to provide a certain amount of electricity would have kept that reservoir turbid forever. Would it just pull that bottom muck in there? It was defeated that would have been a major league impact on this river. So that in a nutshell, that's ... that's kind of a quick and dirty history of the river. Right now, I ... after being a biologist, the River Reporter asked me to become a columnist over there and I wrote an article about the ice on each mayfly hatch on this river, which in spite of the turbidity. It's the best mayfly hatch in the Catskills as far as that particular fly and that includes the Delaware's and the Beaverkill and the Willowemoc and the Neversink and there's two of those hatches, there's one in June, and that's an evening hatch, and there's one maybe still going on. Maybe it's a little late, but it's a fall hatch and that's an afternoon hatch about ... about two o'clock in the afternoon. So, any ... anything else you want me to add about that? That was pretty fast. I don't know if you got it absorbed or not.

**Bob Sills** 58:56

Tony ... Also, Emil Grimm had the first, Well, one of the first fly-fishing schools.

**Tony Bonavist** 59:02

That's true. I did read that somewhere in the ... in the literature and the note that his son responded to there was an article on a ... on the classic fly rod form. Some guy found an 8-foot Orvis fly rod and it had a serial number on it and Grimm's son is named George and he responded to that ... that little text thing that was on the classic fly rod form and said, "That was my dad's fly rod." So, that was all pretty interesting there.

**Beth Waterman** 59:34

What kind of a person was Emil Grimm?

**Tony Bonavist** 59:39

He was, you know, a lot of these. You ... we had a Frank Mele thing here several years ago and Frank just got put into the ... the fly-fishing hall of fame thanks to several people in this room. There were some crusty characters around in those days. I mean, they were, you know, they were not easy to get

along with and I did a fair amount of business over at the Darbee's with Bill Kelly after we would survey the Willowemoc. As soon as you went into door, the Dewars came out. There was always that, you know, a little libation to chase the chill or whatever else you were doing.

**Bob Sills** 1:00:13

I was one of the instructors for Emil and I remember one day when a guy come in and asked Emil, "He had any worms." Emil being Emil said, "I don't have any worms and my dog doesn't have any worms."

**Tony Bonavist** 1:00:26

I did a little ..

**Beth Waterman** 1:00:27

Can you give us your name?

**Bob Sills** 1:00:28

Bob Sills.

**Beth Waterman** 1:00:28

Thank you.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:00:29

I did a little work for a while. I had done some ... a slide series for Art Flick. He was going out to a T.U. meeting in Michigan and I set up a slide series for him and Emil asked me if I would set up one for him and I do it, did it and I brought it up to his shop and he didn't want to pay me. So, that was the end of that story.

**Male Voice** 1:00:53

What's the proposed pump storage was ... it's the one that's now north ...

**Tony Bonavist** 1:00:57

No, that's Blenheim and Gilboa. That's ... that was an operational ready.

**Male Voice** 1:01:01

That was already.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:01:02

This is going to be subsequent to that, and then not only that. About a year ago, some other power outfit from California came over here, they wanted to put one up on the upper end of the Ashokan Reservoir and that didn't get very far. See ... what they're doing with pump storage because with solar, you can't store energy. They're looking for ways to store it and I talked to the people in the DEC energy office and asked them, "What was going on with all this pump storage?" He said, "You're gonna see more and more proposals for that because they're looking for ways to store all this energy that's being generated during the day, but they have nothing at night." So, they're looking for other ways until they figure out other ways ...

**Male Voice** 1:01:43

To get property to develop to do it. Yeah. No.

**Mark Loete** 1:01:46

Tony, I can add something to that. The other proposal to that as a company from California was to dam up the Stony Clove Creek or they will in Valley Creek and the ... that ... that's determinations by the Federal Energy. For Research Commission, Federal Energy.

**Richard Loveless** 1:02:06

Energy, Federal Energy Regulatory.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:08

Regulatory commission ...

**Richard Loveless** 1:02:09

Yeah.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:09

... which said that ... that those proposals were the highest public commentary they've ever had from any proposal they'd ever entertained.

**John Byer** 1:02:20

My grandfather did that all the time.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:23

And what did what?

**John Byer** 1:02:24

Dammed up with [unintelligible] valley.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:25

Who was your grandfather?

**Everyone** 1:02:29

Lou Hollenbeck.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:02:32

One of the things from a biological standpoint, we're hearing that the rainbow trout population and maybe, you know, about this because you're out here a lot that the rainbow trout population seems to be on the decline in the Esopus and I don't know if that's true or not, but be ...

**Mark Loete** 1:02:47

There is, too, and maybe somebody out there fishing can help us with this.



**Bob Sills** 1:02:51

They're not declining.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:52

They're not declining.

**Bob Sills** 1:02:53

They're there. They're not always easy to catch, but they're there.

**Mark Loete** 1:02:58

Three years ago, the New York State Department of Conservation revisited their trout management rigs and every trout fishery in New York State is now classified in five classifications: stocked, stocked-extended, and three categories of wild. So initially, they wanted to categorize the Esopus Creek stock-extended and we said, "Great! How many fish you're going to put in there?" We're stocking brown trout. They said, "They're going to stock 22,000 brown trout per year, which would make the Esopus Creek, the most heavily stocked body of water in New York State." Well, the fishing community ... fly-fishing community got busy. There were ... there was a whole series of public hearings, focus groups of which Ed was a part of that group and it was determined by the DEC that the fishing community now historically prefers to fish over wild fish, as opposed to racking up fish count numbers is as opposed to the number of fish being caught. They prefer to fish over wild fish. So, Trout Unlimited was instrumental in this. We were able to change the designation on the Esopus Creek from trout from stock-extended to wild quality. So, this is now the third year that the Esopus Creek is not been stocked every fish you catch in these waterways is going to be wild and there is some ... I don't know if it's a controversy, but there's some speculation. Tony, help us out with this. Are we catching more trout or more rainbow trout or just bigger rainbow trout?

**Bob Sills** 1:04:42

I think more trout. They're in the 8 to 9. It's classed. In fact, I want to ask Bobby Adams ... how old that in fact, Tony, you might know an 8 or 9-year-old fish? How old ...

**Mark Loete** 1:04:54

8 or 9 inch?

**Tony Bonavist** 1:04:55

Yeah, that's probably a two-year-old because these things ...

**Bob Sills** 1:04:58

Next year, what would be the projection?

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:00

That old ... you take a nine incher and put it in Pepacton reservoir in two years. It's five pounds.

**Bob Sills** 1:05:06

No.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:06

But in these rivers there, they grow fairly slow. So, a 12 inch fish is usually at least around 3 years old.

**Bob Sills** 1:05:14

So, that eight or nine-year-old fish that we're catching today.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:17

Probably, a two-year-old.

**Mark Loete** 1:05:18

9 inch.

**Bob Sills** 1:05:19

9 inch, I mean. Next year, what will it be?

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:22

It could be ... it could be 12 ... 10 to 11, yeah.

**Male Voice** 1:05:25

I think there are a lot of 10 and 12 inch rainbows. 13 rainbows caught in the springtime, I know why.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:30

I think there's a big migration of fish in and out of this river all the time moving back and forth.

**Male Voice** 1:05:36

I think it's a total number of small rainbows in a river in the summertime. Some big ones.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:05:39

Yeah, I think this is more of a nursery river, even though the fish get a little bigger because there ... there are anadromous, even though they're not running out of the ocean. I mean, you don't have a lot of big rainbows hanging around in there. Do you ... in the river?

**Male Voice** 1:05:52

No. But part of it, I think, I need a discussion with biologists from Albany one time he's retired now. He told me, "The emerald shiners in Ashokan." The Ashokan used to have emerald shiners and apparently, a rainbow speed on him, and at one point, some fishermen dumped in sawbellies and it wiped out emerald shiners. So ... and also, what caused the decline in the walleyes, the emerald shiners, and larger rainbows?

**Tony Bonavist** 1:06:18

Yeah, what happens with sawbellies and people don't realize this ... they're plankton feeders and when baby walleyes and baby rainbows and baby emerald shiners are flitting around when they're coming off

the egg sack and they're little tiny things, the alewives are scarf and all of that stuff up and they clean out the plankton populations and rainbows also Mike Gant, who was a fisheries manager in New Paltz, did some surveys ... surveys on the stomach analysis of rainbows. They feed extensively on daphnia, which are little tiny [unintelligible] that come through the tunnel and they ... and even I had them in Lake Gleneida in Carmel and that's what those fish fed on. They're ... they're ... they're plankton feeders are rainbows. You go to the Great Lakes and out west, your rainbows are grown to twenty pounds because they're fish eaters. Over here are stocked rainbows are mostly feeding on that kind of food they're not feeding on ... on bait fish. I mean, you could go down in Lake Gleneida and ice fish with shiners or whatever and you'd never catch a trout through the eyes.

**Male Voice** 1:07:23

I hardly ever catch a rainbow last year. A lot of brown ... rainbows are working hard to get some streams from me and tell you to talk about the rainbows eaten plankton coming out in a portal.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:07:33

Right, exactly.

**Male Voice** 1:07:33

I talk about that in the first mile or so.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:07:35

Another ... another rainbow fishery that's evolving pretty rapidly is that the Tuscarora Club over on the creek that runs into Pepacton. Those rainbows finally after, I don't know, 50-60 years. They're up by Margaretville and all the way up in the East Branch now. They've ... they've started their own population in Pepacton Reservoir and they're moving all around that system. So, that's a good thing.

**Mark Loete** 1:07:59

There's also been a big revelation and I'm part of the change of the trout rigs is now you can fish year-round. There is no trout season. You can only kill a fish from April 1st to October 15th. Consequently, there have been a lot of people, not me, but mainly younger people who have been fishing for those rainbows. Late February, early March, and catching a lot of big rainbows that ... Yeah, well, so it's a revelation that ... that spawning begins a lot sooner in the year than any of us really realized.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:08:24

Moving in.

**Beth Waterman** 1:08:31

I just want to go back to the glory days for a minute because there are some areas that we haven't touched on quite and one of them is Folkerts. So, in this book by Paul O'Neill, which is one of the classic books about the Esopus and it's in our collection, you can borrow it from the library by Paul O'Neill. There's an introduction by Ernie Schwiebert and it says, "The Folkerts Emporium was operated by twin brothers, Dietrich and Herman Folkerts, who looked so much alike that fellow citizens could not tell them apart." Until Herman began parting is here in the middle, perhaps in homage to Edward Ringwood Hewitt ... Hewitt. Folkerts was actually a country store with a newsstand, soda fountain,

sandwich counter, gun cabinet with ammunition, fishing tackle and flies, bus stop, and the optimal place to get current fishing reports, shooting and fishing licenses, and pharmacy. It became the undisputed social center of the entire watershed and sold surprisingly good fishing tackle in his golden years, including trout flies dressed by the celebrated Esopus expert, Ray Smith. So, for those of you who grew up here, you probably remember the soda fountain and the other aspects of Folkerts. I couldn't find any photos of it. I went to the historical museum, but I couldn't find any photos. But if you might just help fill in a little more of the colorful details about Folkerts or any of you who ... yes.

**Male Voice** 1:10:17

I've been a fisher for a very long time. I just turned 90 the other day.

**Beth Waterman** 1:10:22

Oh, congratulations!

**Male Voice** 1:10:27

I was down in Folkerts. I was just beginning to learn how to fly-fish. I was about 12 years old and my mother had given me a dollar and I was ... I started to tie flies. I was tying nibs. They were most ungodly things you ever want to imagine. I was just learning. I hadn't learned on how to tie dry flies yet, and so I was ... came to Folkerts ... my mother gave me a dollar. I think the flies ... this was back like in the early forties, I was in Folkerts and had a dollar and I think the flies were a quarter apiece and I may be a little wrong on that, but that's all I had. So, I picked out four flies and I picked out four different flies: some dark, some light. I don't remember what they were. I had no idea anyway and there was a guy standing there and one of the Folkerts ... they're like that article. I couldn't tell one from the other who could care less. But he said, "Ask this guy what flies you should have because I've had picked out four." Well, the guy said, "Well, you should never buy one of any fly." He said, "That's very stupid to do that because you've got a fly that works, then you lose it." That's the end of it. You're not taking it anymore. Buy ... you couldn't buy. You can have four. You got money for four by two. He said, "Two of them and two of them." They were too dark and too light. So, I did. Give him a dollar left. It went well. Then, one of the Folkerts said to me, "You know who that was?" I said, "I have no idea. I was a kid, you know." He says, "Ray Smith." I said, "So what?" I went back there. A friend of mine, a neighbor of mine, had built a campground where I learned how to fly-fish, and so [unintelligible] were a creek and he had a camp there. So, I went back and I told him ... man that I was ... I bought 4 flies and he said, "I said there was a man there that told me to buy only 2 of each, not buy 4," and I said his name was ... I think it was Ray Smith. Do you know who Ray Smith is? I got a real lecture on who Ray Smith was. It has a little story I should tell.

**Everyone** 1:13:08

Thank you.

**Male Voice** 1:13:11

There was ... there was one way to tell between Dick and Herman. Dick was a lot grumpier than Herman. That's how I ...

**Beth Waterman** 1:13:21

Any other recollections of Phoenicia and the glory days?

**Female Voice** 1:13:24

Yeah, there's some work there when he was like 10 or 11 years old ... which was ...

**Beth Waterman** 1:13:32

Herman? Yeah. Well ...

**Tony Bonavist** 1:13:38

One thing about Folkerts was the window displays. They changed it seasonally.

**Everyone** 1:13:43

Yeah.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:13:43

So, they ... they always had these fantastic window displays. People would just stand there and look at it. It was always amazing to go and see when they change it. Oh, you go over and see ...

**Mark Loete** 1:13:55

Is that the same window displays I have in here today?

**Male Voice** 1:13:57

I just wanted to mention something. Tony probably would know this. I remember very well back when that storage places be imposed on the Schoharie and like ... you said, "It was a stupid idea. It was stupid, then it will be stupid now." But I just wanted to say ... this guy sitting here, right next to me. It'll stop chatting. We're both members of the original chapters ... Trout Unlimited Catskill Chapter. This guy here ... I can't remember exactly and people do things over the years and they're just forgotten because people die, passed away. This guy here spent at least two years of his life, fighting that damn thing and he won and I remember the time he put on that ... then I got all the times he did that. I kept saying to Guy, "When do you go home?" You know, he was fighting that for all these years. I tell you. I want to applaud somebody. Give him some applause.

**Mark Loete** 1:15:15

I said, "Chuck is an inducted member into the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum Hall of Fame and also an author of not one but two books in memory of his fly-fishing experiences on the Esopus Creek."

**Beth Waterman** 1:15:30

So, we have some books including an ... a copy of "Outdoor Life," where Ed's article, but the Charmed Circle first appeared from our collection that I brought down from upstairs. Oh, sorry. Anyway for those of you who haven't visited the collection upstairs, you have a little time to do that now and have a look at the ... at the Anglers Parlor. I want to thank ... oh, I also want to mention that today is Joan Wulff's 97th birthday and anyone who would like to sign the card is welcome, 97 ... and please come up and

sign the card if you'd like and I'd especially like to thank our speakers for coming today and Brett for doing the sound work. Mark wants to announce the next Trout Unlimited meeting.

**Mark Loete** 1:16:38

For the Ashokan-Pepacton Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Our next public meeting is October 26th, Thursday, seven o'clock at the Emerson and the speaker is Danny Davis. Danny Davis is the leading hydrogeomorphologists for the New York City Department of Environmental Preservation and he's one of the few people who knows every single rock in the Esopus drainage and what he will be talking about is the ... the history of turbidity in the Esopus Creek, as Tony was talking about, and the amount of ... amount of research being done to ameliorate the turbidity, the amount of investment. New York City has put into ameliorating the turbidity and also, the results of all this work, all this research, all this investment on the fishery and the macroinvertebrate insect population in the Esopus Creek, so this will be the definitive information dump on what's happening in the turbidity in the Esopus Creek. October 26th, following Thursday, seven o'clock at the Emerson Great Room. Everybody's invited.

**Beth Waterman** 1:17:48

Thank you.

**Female Voice** 1:17:49

Can I speak a minute?

**Beth Waterman** 1:17:50

Sure.

**Female Voice** 1:17:52

I spent a lot of my childhood in Phoenicia. I just happened to be passing through today. My grandfather came here in the early thirties, a German American. He was a trout fisherman and a hunter and he and his friends originally stayed in the Waldorf Hotel, which was, you know, right up 28. So, they got together and they all ... many of the houses on South Street were built by them and my family sold the house in the early sixties, but I got to spend all my summer and teenage years here and its home. So, this is my annual pilgrimage, but I'm lucky.

**Beth Waterman** 1:18:45

I'm glad you could make it today.

**Tony Bonavist** 1:18:48

I have a question. When this geomorphologist shows up at your meeting, ask him ... how long the upper basin of the Ashokan Reservoir is going to last? Because that's a settling base and that's why that reservoir has 2 basins. That's forbidden. He has been going in there. Yeah, it's been silting up forever.

**Female Voice** 1:18:48

Yes.



**Beth Waterman** 1:19:06

Does any ... are there any more questions? If not, we'll ... we'll adjourn and you're welcome to go upstairs and hang around for a while. Thank you.

**Brett Barry** 1:19:20

Thanks to the Catskill Watershed Corporation, New York City DEP, and Phoenicia Library for their support. Recorded by Silver Hollow Audio.