

Netherton, Cliff. *History of the Sport of Casting: People, Events, Records, Tackle and Literature, Early Times*. Lakeland, Florida: American Casting Education Foundation, Inc., 1981. Pp. xiii, 385. Index, notes, illustrations, records, photographs. \$14.95.

In 1977 author Netherton gave us the highly useful, *Angling and Casting: A Manual for Self and Class Instruction*. This "How To" approach was designed for the individual interested in teaching or learning about casting. Now Netherton provides a historical synopsis which will be of interest to sport historians, teachers, and anglers. A member of the American Casting Association's Hall of Fame and a past president of that organization, Cliff Netherton has taught thousands of students the techniques of casting. His depth of knowledge and love of the sport are reflected in this historical treatment.

Essentially sequential in structure, the time frame for the author's scrutiny is 1860 to the 1950s. The work concisely traces the evolution of the sport of casting, in many ways paralleling the development of sport-fishing and the technological advancements in the manufacture of tackle. From the traditional, two-handed fly rod of the European continent, to the lighter, single-

handed fly rod popularized in North America, to the “Kazoo” casting rod, the place of each rod is noted in the record of both formal and informal casting tournaments. Netherton’s text traces changes in the rules and organization of casting tournaments and presents a rather complete enumeration of records set in various events and casting categories.

Important linkages between the sports of angling and casting are drawn. These are achieved through the biographical sketches of personalities who participated in casting events and who simultaneously contributed much to the sport of fishing. Many of the luminaries who emerged as champions, or at least competitors, were also active in the conservation movement. The writings of E.R. Hewitt and George LaBranche are well known to contemporary American anglers. Seth Green’s influence on the hatchery movement is long familiar within fishery management circles. “Dot” Henshall and Arbogast are hallowed names within the bass fishing fraternity. These, along with less noted figures, are identified. John and Robert Roosevelt, uncles of Teddy, were champion casters; the latter, while in Congress, helped establish the U.S. Fish Commission. Hardy and Leonard (well known for split cane rods), Milam and Meek (noted for their casting reels), Shakespeare (a major contributor to the development of American fishing tackle manufacture), and William Mills plus the famed Abercrombie and Fitch (noted merchandisers of fine fishing tackle and field equipment) all have their roles clearly established. One of the fascinations of Netherton’s treatment is the emergence of famed families. The biographical sketches and well chosen photographs of individuals and sites provide strength to the book.

Among the diverse sources cited are THE AMERICAN FIELD, FOREST AND STREAM, OUTING MAGAZINE, tournament programs, score books, tackle catalogs, and a rich mix of primary treasures. The “Acknowledgements” (pp. xi-xiii) are an impressive compendium. A brief introduction gives the reader a sense of the chronology of angling and casting here and in Europe. By the time one reaches the development of the National Association of Angling and Casting Clubs (NAACC 1939) a cogent grasp of the institutionalization of the sport and the development of the casting business has been achieved.

Some historians may be initially distracted by the format of the book; e.g., records, names, dates of tourneys, etc. However, an interested reader will find valuable information such as definitions of “experts, professionals, and sportsmen,” ladies records, and an account of the first international tournament in 1883. Those interested in the World’s Fair of 1893-4 will be pleased by the detailed account of Sportsmen’s Day” and the role of the American Fisheries Society at the Angling Pavilion. One problem in the book is the emphasis on persons active and manufacturing equipment, while people who only manufactured gear but did not compete, are not stressed. From an histor-

ical sense, author Netherton might have referred to the 1830's CABINET OF NATURAL HISTORY AND AMERICAN RURAL SPORTS and the development of fishing clubs like the Schuykill. Nonetheless he has pointed the way to further research with his fine primary sources; i.e. to explore, via the personalities sketched for us, the relationship between angling and conservationists. In one volume, Netherton has successfully filled a void in both the historical and contemporary literature of angling.

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