PART 12 – PRICE AND RARITY

I have been asked numerous times: So, what is this old fishing lure worth? While a seemingly simple question, a direct answer is seldom possible when the lure is rare and the pool of potential buyers is small because, under such conditions, prices can vary greatly. As most of the tackle mentioned in this book is uncommon to very rare, and the pool of buyers of Maine fishing lures is limited, I made no attempt to place dollar values of these flies and lures. I will comment, however, on three of the major variables affecting price – condition, variants, and rarity.

The condition of an object generally has a direct effect on price, that is, the better the condition the higher the price. So all other factors equal, collectors should strive for flies and lures that are unaltered (e.g., unpainted if so made), complete (box swivel present if so made), and look like new (no or minimum wear, original condition). The next issue is that of variants, or lures that were made with slight differences from one and other. The Stanley Aluminum Smelt, for example, was made in at least eight sizes, can be found with and without the front clip (an issue of completeness), with and without an extra hole drilled in the front (apparently sometimes made with two holes), with and without feathers (of differing patterns), with deep or shallow stamping of the patent dates, and with one or two patent dates (the former being the first year of manufacturing and hence very rare). Which variant is preferred by a collector at any given moment, and hence the most valuable, is largely a matter of personal preference. That is, what “hole” does the individual collector want a specific lure, or variant of that lure, to fill in his or her collection?

Value is driven by each of the above factors, and these factors combine in many ways for any one lure and for any one collector. Also, too few of the possible combinations of these factors for any of the lures discussed herein have been found and sold to make an objective assessment of value possible. Thus, the old saying that “Something is worth what someone will pay,” is in "Maine Fishing Lures" by Wm. B. Krohn - 149
many ways an appropriate answer for an admirer, or seller, of early Maine fishing lures.

Value is also effected by rarity, with rarity meaning how difficult is it for someone to find a particular fly or lure (i.e.; the harder to find, in general (but not always), the higher the value). Given enough experience, rarity can be judged. Thus, I used my experience, and the experience of other long-time collectors I consulted, to rate the relative rarity of the major lures discussed in this book. The rarity classes used were modified from page xvii of Jeff Kieny’s 2008 book, Patented Hooks, Harnesses, and Baited-Holders – Identification and Value Guide with Collections. The Whitefish Press, Cincinnati, Ohio.). I used four classes of rarity as follows:

- **Unknown** – known to have existed based on advertisements in periodicals or catalog listings, but no recent examples are known to the author or collectors I consulted.
- **Very Rare** – less than 6 examples know to the author or collectors consulted.
- **Rare** – best of luck finding one, and if you see it, get it.
- **Findable** – uncommon, but if you search hard you will find one.

These ratings are not absolute, but are designed to give the novice collector a relative idea of what early Maine fishing lures are easier to find than others, and to help inform the new collector when an exceptionally rare items has been found. The following listings are ordered by the individual manufacturers as arranged presented in this book. The asterisk (*) after an item means that this item must be in its original mount on a card, or in an unaltered box, to be reliably identified as to maker. While many of the Burgess spoons and spinners are stamped, some are not, requiring one to compare the in-hand lure to catalog illustrations for positive identification. While the names of spoons and spinners produced by the Murray Fishing Tackle Company are known for one time period from a company catalog, most Murray lures are unstamped making positive identification impossible unless the lure was found in an envelope. Thus, many Murray lures are not listed below by their names (for names, see the Murray chapter above), but only by general categories.

*Maine Fishing Lures* by Wm. B. Krohn - 150
Relative Rarity of Early Maine Fishing Lures by Manufacturers

Henry O. Stanley
- **Fly on a card**: Unknown
- **Rangeley Spinner in a box**: Unknown
- **State of Maine Spinner**: Very, Very Rare
- **Stanley Aluminum Smelt**
  - One Patent Date (1895): Very, Very Rare
  - Two Patent Dates (1885 & 1896): Rare
- **H.O.S. Cupsuptic Spinner**
  - Original: Rare
  - Improved: Very Rare
- **Cupsuptic Lure Box**
  - H. O. Stanley & Son: Very Rare
  - Frank Stanley (Cupsuptic box): Very Rare

Fred E. Bailey
- **Fly on a card**: Rare
- **Rangeley Spinner**: Findable
- **Bailey Spinner**: Findable
- **Moosehead Lake Troller**: Very Rare
- **Trolling Gangs**: Rare
- **Lure on a card or in a box**: Very Rare

Charles H. Morse
- **Lake Auburn Trolling Spoon**
  - Cooper spoon: Rare
  - Brass spoon: Very Rare

William H. “Bill” Burgess
- **Fly on a card**: Rare
- **Trolling spoons**
  - State-O-Maine: Findable
  - Bill’s Combo: Very Rare
  - Bill’s Salmo: Rare
- **Spinners**
  - Cupsuptic: Unknown
J-H-M Special Salmon  Unknown
North Twin  Unknown
Maine Spinner*  Unknown
Bill’s Rino  Unknown
Rangeley*  Rare
Rangeley Lake Troll  Very, Very Rare
Richardson  Rare
Bill’s South-Arm  Unknown
Bill’s Tad Poll  Unknown
Pennesseewassee  Unknown
Penobscot  Unknown
Bill’s Umbagog  Unknown
Bill’s Combo Hooks*  Findable
Bill’s Snelled Hooks*  Findable
Bill’s Swivels*  Findable
Lure on a card or in a box  Rare

Murray Brothers
Murray’s Aluminum Minnow  Rare
Murray Bail Co.
Brass spoons  Very Rare
Copper spoons
metal beads (early)  Rare
plastic beads*  Rare
Cupsuptic Spinner  Unknown
Rangeley Spinner
In box*  Very Rare
In envelope  Rare
Murray’s Unnamed Lure  Very, Very Rare
J. Lee Murray spoons and spinners*
In envelope, early  Findable
On card, later  Findable

Clayton H. Hamilton (H & J)
Trolling Spoons (on cards)  Findable
Spinners (on cards)  Findable
Duck Cover Wobbler (on card)  Findable
   Duck Cove Wobbler – stamped  Rare
   Duck Cove Wobbler – red underside  Rare

Maine Fishing Lures by Wm. B. Krohn - 152
Leadfish & Casting Baits Findable
Leaders, weights, etc. Findable

Leroy “Roy” M. Applegarth (Lee, Abenaki)
Abenaki Minnow Trolling Rig Very Rare
Cupsuptic Spinner Rare
Rangeley Spinner Findable
Trolling spoons, spinners, etc. Findable

Other Manufacturers
F. W. Hobbs (Lucerne Lure) Very, Very Rare
Percy Rangeley Spinner*
   In box Rare
   On card Findable
T. B. Davis
   Rangeley Spinner in box* Rare
   Sebago (= Cupsuptic) Spinner in box* Very Rare
Dunlap Spring Hook Very Rare
Old Glory Fish and Animal Trap
   First version Very Rare
   Second version Very, Very Rare
Johnson Fish Hook Very, Very Rare
Kismet Casting Hook
   Single spinner Findable
   Double spinners Rare

— In assigning rarity classes, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dan Leroux and Ron Goddard. However, as the author, I made all final decision and am more than willing to alter assignments pending new information.

Of course, finding any of the above lures in an original box or attached to an original card, makes for an extra special find. The earlier the maker, the more special the find. For example, H. O. Stanley made four lures and each is known to have been sold in boxes (and some also on cards and in envelopes). I know of no collector who has found all four of Stanley’s lures in boxes.

Maine Fishing Lures by Wm. B. Krohn - 153
Concluding Observations

Imagine you are standing on a mall balcony and on the floor below you, ordered by the date each item was first produced, are examples of each of the fishing lures made by the early Maine manufacturers. By examining this assemblage of lure making that spans almost nine decades, what patterns emerge?

Henry O. Stanley was one of the earliest Americans, if not the first, to make an American fishing lure out of aluminum that was patented. Hinkley’s “Silver Bird” Fish Phantom was a rotating-head, aluminum lure patented in 1897. Stanley’s Aluminum Smelt, in contrast, was first patented in 1895, two years before Hinkley’s lure. (The Joliet Spinner Bait was another early aluminum lure made in America, but based on advertisements I found, was a decade or so after the Stanley Aluminum Smelt). Stanley also used aluminum to fashion a dead bait spinner. This lure – similar to an earlier English dead minnow spinner – was not patented so it’s initial year of production is unknown. However, because the State of Maine Spinner and Aluminum Smelt were advertised together, they apparently were both made in a similar time period.

Henry O. Stanley was not the only Maine lure makers to use aluminum. A few decades after the development of the Stanley Aluminum Smelt, William O. Murray of Auburn, Maine also invented an aluminum minnow lure. Murray’s Aluminum Minnow, patented in 1910, appears to have been fashioned after the Phantom Minnow, an English lure imported and widely used throughout New England. Finally, aluminum trolling keel were made and sold by both the Murray Bait Company, and later, by H & J fishing tackle.

Maine Fishing Lures by Wm. B. Krohn - 154
William Murray’s two sons went on to experiment with jointed wobblers and plastics as a material for constructing fishing lures. The Murray brothers, while continuing to make the aluminum minnow and heavy-duty copper trolling spoons in the style of Charles H. Morse, improved on Stanley’s Rangeley Spinner by making the hooks detachable. Bill Burgess also had a Rangeley Spinner with changeable hooks, but the Murray brothers claimed, on a printed lure box, that they had “The Improved Rangeley Spinner With Detachable Hooks.” Burgess (who also continued to make Morse-type trolling spinners) never made such a claim, suggesting the Murrays were first. Richard and John Murray were also the first of the Maine makers to develop single spinners with clips. The label on the enveloped for Murray Bait Company’s Lake Troller reads: “MURRAY’s / Lake Troller / (Detachable) / This String of Spoons can be taken apart, / and used singularly or in any combination. The / middle wire may be used as a trace or leader / as desired.” Thus, these spinners could be joined together to make twin spinners and even larger, more complex trolling gangs. Burgess, in contrast, made a great variety of single and a few double spinners, but never developed a line of spinners designed to be clipped together. He did, however, develop an extensive line of hook configurations that could easily be used on his different types of spinners. These pre-made hook unit included single as well as treble hooks tied together in many different and unique patterns.

With the use of powered cutting and stamping machines, spinner blades could be mass produced in numerous shapes and sizes. Both Clayton Hamilton (i.e., H & J Tackle) and Roy Applegarth (i.e., Lee Spinners) took advantage of these new machines – along with the lighter, Maine Fishing Lures by Wm. B. Krohn - 155
thinner, and stronger metals available to them – to mass produced spinners. Both of these makers perfected the idea of single spinners that could be easily slipped together in various configurations from simple double spinners to double spinners to multiple-bladed trolling gangs with variable spaced spinners. Trolling gangs, in turn, could be used for surface trolling by those interested in catching land-locked salmon in the spring. Lead keel weights could readily be added to this trolling gang and used for near-bottom trolling by those fishing for lake trout in the summer. In short, by changing spinner blades, weights, and hook arrangements, the angler could make their own lure for the specific species of fish, time of year, and conditions they were dealing with.

The patterns discussed above are not discrete, but tend to blur over time. Because the time periods in which Maine lure makers lived and worked overlapped greatly (see pages 8 & 9), and some of these makers lived relatively close and knew each other, a new improvement to a lure could spread quickly. Take the Rangeley Spinner, for example. In Stanley’s day this spinner was built around a light gut leader. But this quickly gave way to braded gut leaders, and then to light brass cables as leaders. Heavier metal cables soon followed and after Dick Murray retired he went on to use tempered wire as the leader for his improved Rangeley Spinner.

Leaders were made from the intestines of silkworm caterpillars and used on flies, hooks, and lures from Stanley’s time, to Fred Bailey’s day, and throughout Bill Burgess’ time. And while Bailey and Burgess changed with the times and used metal cable instead of gut in many of their lures, they both continue to find uses for gut leaders throughout their lives. But this changed
during the tenure of Clayton Hamilton. While the early H & J leader cards have boxes that were checked for either a “Nylon” or “Jap Gut” (i.e., silkworm gut) leader, H & J quickly went to selling only “Improved Leaders.” These leaders were made of nylon and the H & J leader cards now simply proclaimed that their improved leaders required “No Soaking.” The choice between nylon and gut was no longer offered, and so ended the use of leaders made from the silkworm’s digestive tract in the manufacturing of Maine fishing lures.

New machines, new materials, new processes, and new ideas all continue to make fishing lure manufacturing an ever-changing art and science. Contemplating this change while looking down from our balcony on an assemblage of items representing almost a century of human ingenuity is one the main joys of collecting fishing lures.
## INDEX
*(bolded = book chapters and major sections)*

Abenaki spinner; see Lee Spinner Company

**Applegarth, Leroy “Roy” M.**                        6, 10, **116-127**
Abenaki Minnow Trolling Rig                        125, 153
Abenaki spinners                                           120-122

Bailey, Carl R.                                          38-40
Bailey fishing flies                                38, 40, 44
**Bailey, Fred E.**                               4, 10, **37-50**
Bailey, Mary A.                                      38, 41, 50
Bailey, Mary H.                                       38
Bailey Moosehead Troller                            39, 45, 48, 151
Bailey’s Rangeley Spinner; see Rangeley Spinners
Bailey Spinner                                        37, 45, 49, 68, 151
Bailey Trolling Gang                                 47, 151
Belgrade Spinner (H & J)                             110, 152
Bill’s Best Fly Dope                                  69
Bill’s Cupsuptic Spinner; see Cupsuptic spinners
Bill’s Combo Hooks                                   78, 152
Bill’s Rangeley Spinner; see Rangeley spinners        74-75, 152
Bill’s Six Ball Swivels                              79, 152
**Burgess, William H. “Bill”**                       **65-81**

Campbell, A. J.                                           vi, 11-12
**Cartier, Jacob M.**                                  **141-145**
Casting Baits (H & J)                                  113, 153
**Classic & Antique Fly-Fishing Tackle**               vi, 11-12

Cupsuptic spinners

" " , Bill Burgess’                                      74, 151
" " , Lee (Abenaki)                                    117, 119, 124, 153
" " , Stanleyª                                         20-21, 33-36, 153
Sebago (= Cupsuptic) Spinner                          128-130, 150

Daniels, James B.                                       iii, vi
**Davis, T. B.; Arms Company**                         **3-5, 8, 11, 18, 134-138**
Demeritt, Dwight B.                                    vi, 12
Diamond Trolling Spinner (H & J)                       108-109, 152
Duck Cove Wobbler (H & J)                              103, 111, 152

*Maine Fishing Lures* by Wm. B. Krohn - 158
Dunlap, Ephraim L. ............................................................... 139-141
Dunlap Spring Hook ......................................................... 138, 147, 148, 153
Edwards & Walkers Company ............................................ 2, 3, 11, 18
Fred E. Bailey & Son .......................................................... 10, 37-40
Freer, Arthur T. ................................................................. 88, 89
F. E. Thomas: *The Man & His Rods* ................................ vii, 12

H & J Fishing Tackle; see Hamilton, Clayton H.

Hamilton, Clayton, H. ....................................................... 100-115
Henry O. Stanley & Son ..................................................... 9, 20-21, 25-29, 100-106, 115

Hobbs, Franklin W. ........................................................... 128-131

J. Lee Murray Fishing Tackle (see Murray Bait Company below)
Johnson, Herbert L. ........................................................... 145
Johnson Fish Hook ............................................................. 145

Kismet Casting Hook (spinner) ............................................ 145, 146, 153

Kismet Manufacturing Company ......................................... 145-147

Krohn, William B. – citations for technical fishing lure articles:
  Dunlap’s Spring Hook .................................................... 148
  Johnson Fish Hook / Kismet Casting Hook ......................... 148
  H. O. Stanley & Son ...................................................... 24
  Lake Auburn Spoon (C. H. Morse) .................................. 56
  Lucerne Lure (F. W. Hobbs) ........................................... 148
  Murray’s Aluminum Minnow (Wm. Murray) ....................... 89

Lake Auburn Spoon (C. H. Morse) .................................... 59-63, 109, 151
Leadfish (H & J) ................................................................. 103, 113, 153
Lee Cupsuptic Spinner; see Cupsuptic spinners
Lee Spinner Company; see Applegarth, Leroy “Roy” M.
Lee Rangeley Spinner; see Rangeley spinners
Leonard, Hiram L. ............................................................. vi
Lovell, John P.; Arms Company ......................................... 3, 12
Lowell, George F. (Kismet Casting Hook) ......................... 145-147
Lucerne Lure (Franklin W. Hobbs) ................................... 128-131

Maine Made Guns and Their Makers .................................. vi, 12
Moosehead Lake Troller (Bailey) ........................................ 45, 48, 151
Mooselook Wobbler .......................................................... 5-6
Morse, Charles H. ............................................................ 50-64
Murray’s Aluminum Minnow ............................................. 6, 83-85, 89-92, 152

*Maine Fishing Lures* by Wm. B. Krohn - 159
Murray’s Unnamed Lure ................................................. 92, 152
Murray Attractor (Trolling) Spoon .................................. 84, 96, 98, 99, 152
**Murray Bait Company** ........................................... 82-99
Murray, John Lee ...................................................... 83-84, 93, 95
Murray Rangeley Spinner; see Rangeley spinner
Murray, Richard William ........................................... 82-83, 87-89, 91, 93
Murry Artificial Bait; see Murray’s Aluminum Minnow
Murry (a.k.a. Murray), William .................................. 83-85, 91, 93, 152

19th Century Fishing Lures ........................................ 92

“Old Glory” Fish and Animal Trap ................................. 141-145

Page, George S. ......................................................... iii, 22
Page, Theodore L. ....................................................... iii
**Patented Hooks, Harnesses, and Baited-Holders** ........ 134, 138, 148, 150
Pelletier, Arthur G. .................................................... 141-143
Percy fishing flies ................................................... 132-133
Percy, Gardner A. ..................................................... 131-134
Percy, Gardner A.; Jr. ................................................ 132
Percy, Lisle C. .......................................................... 132
Percy, Mildred M. ..................................................... 131
Percy Rangeley Spinner; see Rangeley spinners
**Percy Tackle Company** ........................................... 131-134
**Price and Rarity** (also see Rarity) ............................ 149-153

Rangeley spinners
" " " , Bailey’s ......................................................... 49, 151
" " " , Burgess ......................................................... 74, 75, 152
" " " , Davis, T. B. .................................................... 135-136, 153
" " " , Lee ............................................................... 117, 123, 153
" " " , Murray ......................................................... 97, 99, 152
" " " , Percy’s ......................................................... 133, 134, 153
" " " , Stanleya ........................................................ 20, 27, 32, 33, 151

Rarity (a table with listings by maker and lure) ............... 151-153
Rice & Miller Company ................................................ 3, 10, 18
Richardson Lake Spinner ........................................... 76, 152

Sebago (= Cupsuptic) Spinner ..................................... 136-138, 153
Sebago Twins (H & J) ................................................ 102, 110, 152
Stanley Aluminum Smelt .......................................... 7, 8, 29-31, 33, 151

*Maine Fishing Lures* by Wm. B. Krohn - 160
a – Henry O. Stanley invented and manufactured the Cupsuptic and Rangeley spinners. Both of these fishing lures were highly successful and continued to be produced after Stanley’s death in 1913 to the present.

b – Stanley’s State of Maine Spinner was much earlier, and different, than the Maine Spinner and State of Maine spinners made by Bill Burgess and Crusader (Winchester), respectively. Whereas Stanley’s spinner looks somewhat like an Archer Minnow Rig, both the Burgess and Crusader versions resemble a Rangeley Spinner. Burgess’ Maine Spinner (blade unstamped), however, is a heavy-duty Rangeley and in this regard is similar to the Bailey Spinner (blade stamped “BAILEY”).
William B. Krohn, Ph. D., is a retired wildlife research scientist. Born and raised in northern New Jersey, Bill has been an avid angler since boyhood. He especially enjoys fly fishing and has angled from Maine to Alaska, from the Bahamas to Labrador and northern Quebec, and many places in between. Krohn has lived and worked in Maine for much of his adult life, and has collected and studied Maine lures and their makers for over two decades. Many of his technical findings regarding Maine’s early fishing lures have been published in the two magazines of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club.