PART 3 – INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century Maine was a coveted destination for city dwellers from the eastern U.S.A., and even for some as far away as Europe, wanting to fish, hunt, or simply explore Nature. By the end of the Civil War, Maine had a reasonably well developed transportation system that included steamships for coastal travel; steamboats on lakes and rivers; railroads and stagecoaches to take travelers inland; and buckboards, canoes, and horses for back-woods adventures.

The annual influx of anglers and hunters, called “sports” by Maine natives, created a demand for a variety of services. In addition to transportation, hotels and sporting camps, guiding services, and taxidermy businesses appeared on Maine’s coast and inland. Areas such as the Belgrade Lakes, Grand Lake Stream, Moosehead Lake, Rangeley Lakes, Sebago Lake, and northern Maine where waterways provided good access to the back country. With the sports came a demand for goods to support these outdoor excursions. Mainers adapted quickly and small businesses sprung-up throughout the state with people making a wide variety of sporting goods, including canoes, camping gear, boats, oars and paddles, snowshoes, knives, gun, rods, fishing nets, and fishing flies and lures.

Most of the businesses that provided goods and services for outdoor activities employed only a few people and were frequently operated out of the owner’s home. The number of “cottage businesses” during this time will never be known, but their effect on Maine’s economy, especially in rural areas, was real. To sell the outdoor goods made by these cottage businesses, the number of sporting good dealers and fishing tackle sellers increased rapidly in 19\textsuperscript{th} century
Maine. The rapid growth of the sporting goods industry – specifically fishing tackle – can be seen in these two lists from the *Maine Business Directory* of 1874 (left) and 1890 (right):

With a growing number of retailers across Maine, wholesale dealers in sporting goods soon followed, with the center of Maine’s sporting goods business becoming Portland. In the late 1890s, Maine’s largest city was home to three large wholesale/retail sporting goods dealers.

Edwards & Walker Company, established in 1876, was located on Monument Square (from front cover of Edwards & Walker Catalog [~1908]):

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With a few blocks there was the T. B. Davis Arms Company (see photograph of store online at Maine Memory Network) established two years before Edwards & Walker, and the retail store of John P. Lovell Arms Company. Lovell, a Boston company formed in 1840, first came to Maine in 1894. Lovell had a factory in South Portland and retail stores in Bangor and Portland, Maine. Their Portland store was at 180-182 Middle Street (from *Portland Past and Present* [1899: 181]):

![Author’s collection.](image)

In 1900, J. P. Lovell Company became a subsidiary of Iver Johnson Arms & Cycles Works. Iver Johnson, headquartered in Boston, continued to maintain a Maine presence until the business ceased in the late 1920s. In 1908, yet another large Maine wholesaler/retailer selling sporting goods was incorporated, Rice & Miller Company. Located in Bangor, Maine, Rice & Miller carried an extensive line of fishing tackle. Rice and Miller continued in business well into the 20th century, after the Portland businesses ceased operating.

Following are eight chapters, seven of which are devoted to the major Maine lure makers born on or before 1910. A major maker is one who made four or more type of metal fishing lures. The eighth chapter covers those makers who made only one lure (e.g., Lucerne Lure), or
was a major early distributor of fishing tackle made by others (i.e., T. B. Davis Arms Co.).

The businesses that are the main focus of this book operated, collectively, from approximately 1880 to the late 1960s. Almost all of Maine’s fishing lure makers stamped their metal products, indicating the pride these took in their work. These skilled men and women wanted the public to know, and remember, the makers. Three of the seven majors made and sold flies well before venturing into lures. These were H. O. Stanley, F. E. Bailey, and Bill Burgess. Only two major makers, Bailey and Burgess, made lure manufacturing their main means of financial support during their adult lives. For the other makers, lure manufacturing only supplemented their incomes. Interestingly, the early Maine lure makers were not evenly distributed across Maine. Henry O. Stanley operated his business from the western Maine town of Dixfield, where he was a life-long resident. Stanley was the earliest of the major makers, first making flies and leaders circa 1880. In later years, Stanley also invented, made, and sold four metal fishing lures. Fred E. Bailey was the next oldest maker, initially producing high quality flies. Bailey lived his entire life in Dover and Foxcroft, Maine. In 1922, these two central Maine towns were administratively joined into one town, Dover-Foxcroft. This historical detail becomes important because collectors can use this year to date, when the fly or lure is fixed to a card labeled with the town where made, to estimate the general time when a Bailey produce was made. Bailey later added lures to his inventory, eventually making four types, three lures which were original to him. Bailey and his successors were in business longer than any of the other five major makers, from 1884 until 1948. The last five major makers were all located in southern Maine. Charles H.

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Morse, the Murray brothers, and H & J Fishing Tackle operated in Auburn, Maine, whereas William H. “Bill” Burgess worked from his home in Poland and from a shop in nearby Minot Corner, and Lee (a.k.a. Abenaki) Spinner Company was located in South Berwick, Maine. I have no explanation as to why the Auburn/Minot area had a concentration of early lure makers. Perhaps it was Auburn’s long-time tradition as a center of shoe making and textile manufacturing that developed a core of people familiar with machines and manufacturing.

Before presenting a brief overview of each of the major manufacturers, I wish to note that many of the fishing lures invented and made in Maine were named for lakes, especially lakes in the Rangeley Region of western Maine. In addition to the Cupsuptic and Rangeley spinners invented and first made by H. O. Stanley, there was the Rangeley Lake Troll, Richardson Lake, Bill’s South-Arm [of Richardson Lake], and Bill’s Umbagog [Lake]. Bill Burgess conceived and produced the preceding three spinners, along with the North Twin [Lake] and Pennessseewassee [Lake]. The Lake Auburn, which was first made by Charles Morse around the turn-of-the century, was yet another early Maine spinner. The Moosehead [Lake] Troller invented and made by Fred Bailey of Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. Clayton Hamilton, founded H & J Fishing Tackle and invented and manufactured both the Belgrade [Lakes] Spinner and the Sebago [Lake] Twins – a double-bladed spinner. Franklin W. Hobbs of Bangor, while not a major maker, did patent and produce the Lucerne [Lake] Lure in the late 1920s. Then there is a Sebago Spinner produced in the 1930-40s by at least three makers, including T. B. Davis. This spinner was simply a Stanley-Lowe Cupsuptic Spinner given another name. Finally, there is the Mooselook Wobbler,
named for Mooselookmeguntic Lake in western Maine. This lure, which is still widely used, was invented in the late 1930s by John A. Selinki. Originally from Maine, Selinki changed his last name to Greene and in 1938 formed the J. A. Greene Company in Massachusetts to make the Mooselook Wobbler. Originally produced in Sutton, Massachusetts, today the Mooselook Wobbler is made by Brecks Inc. in Quebec, Canada.

Now for brief overviews of the major Maine makers. Charles H. Morse, who apparently worked alone, made and sold the Lake Auburn Trolling Spoon. His spoons were made in at least three shapes. Another southern Maine maker, William H. “Bill” Burgess produced flies as well as a greater variety of lures than any other Maine maker. The Murray brothers of Auburn produced fishing spinners and weights, as well as sold tackle made by others. Richard W. Murray and John L. Murray continued the tradition of Charles H. Morse and made a high quality copper trolling spoon similar to Morse’s. One of the new lures the brothers made was Murray’s Aluminum Minnow, invented and patented by their father. The Murray brothers later transferred the rights to the Minnow to a manufacturer in Massachusetts, and in late-1960s J. Lee Murray Company ceased operations in Auburn (although Murray lures continued to be made elsewhere). H & J, the third Auburn-based maker, was founded and operated by Clayton H. Hamilton. Hamilton was a skilled sheet metal worker and roofer by trade and an avid angler by avocation; his lure making business combined these two interests. Finally, Leroy “Roy” M. Applegarth, a tool and die maker, owned Lee (a.k.a. Abenaki) Spinner Company for about a decade in the 1950s. Applegarth operated his lure business from his residence in South Berwick, Maine.
Burgess, the Murray brothers, Hamilton, and Applegarth continued the traditions of Morse by making high quality trolling spoons in a variety of sizes similar to the Lake Auburn. Lures made by these businesses, however, clearly moved Maine’s lure manufacturing from a hand-made, one-at-a-time process, to a mass production, machine-process. The use of machines to cut and shape spoons and spinner blades resulted in the per unit cost of lures being significantly reduced. The end result of this mass production to the collector is that Morse and Burgess spoons and spinners, in general, are harder to find than those made by the most recent makers, especially J. Lee Murray, Clayton H. Hamilton, and Roy M. Applegarth (see Price and Rarity).

While men founded each business chronicled in this book, we must not forget the key roles that women played in the history of Maine lure making. We know that Stanley and Burgess both hired women to tie flies, cut and assemble leaders and lures, and inventory and ship products. Burgess employed a neighbor’s 19 year-old step-daughter as a “fish tackle forewoman” to supervise the local women he employed. Fred Bailey’s wife, as well as Gardner Percy’s wife, worked in their husbands’ businesses. Mrs. Percy was a skilled maker of fishing flies tying flies at their Portland home when the business was first starting. Mrs. Bailey, along with her daughter-in-law, even ran the Bailey business for seven years after Fred died.

In general, Maine lure makers did not avail themselves to the power of advertising in national sporting journals like The American Angler and Forest and Stream. While Henry O. Stanley did run an ad about the Stanley Aluminum Smelt in the spring and summer of 1895 in Forest and Stream, he made no sustained national advertising effort. A lack of national advertising was also
true for the other Maine makers. Instead of advertising nationally, those Maine lure makers that
did advertise used Maine-based publications. For example, Stanley ran ads in *Carleton’s
Pathfinder and Gazetteer of Hunting and Fishing Resorts of the State of Maine* (1899) (Stanley
and Carleton were friends, having worked together as fisheries commissioners for the State of
Maine) as well as the *Maine Sportsman* (1909, 1910). Bailey occasionally ran advertisement
promoting his flies and lures, and almost always used periodicals associated with his home-
base of Dover-Foxcroft (examples shown in the Bailey chapter). Stanley, Burgess, and the
Murray brothers each had tackle catalogs printed, but based on their rarity today, never in large
runs. Advertisements of lures made by Stanley, Bailey, Burgess did appear in T. B. Davis
catalogs as well as other wholesalers, but never on a regular and sustained basis. From a national
perspective, Maine-made fishing lures were never extensively promoted marking these lures
little known among today’s collectors.

Perhaps in part due to a lack of national promotion, only five pieces of terminal fishing tackle
invented in Maine gained national reputations among American lure collectors. Two of these
pieces were spring hooks, or fish traps, among the first patented and made in America. These
were Dunlap’s Spring Hook invented by Ephraim L. Dunlap of Eustis, Maine; and the Old Glory
Sure Catch Fish and Animal Trap, patented by Jacob Cartier of Biddeford, Maine. The other
Three pieces of terminal tackle that gained national reputations among American collectors were
the Stanley Aluminum Smelt, and the Cupsuptic and Rangeley spinners. These three lures were
invented and initially manufactured by Henry O. Stanley. Stanley was not only Maine’s first

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maker of more than one type of metal fishing lure, but he also was the State's only lure maker who's fishing spinners were produced nationally by many manufacturers, including almost all of the early makers from his home state. The Cupsuptic and Rangeley spinners remained highly popular among anglers even after Stanley’s death as can be seen in this 1930 list of fishing lures recommended by the Maine Development Commission (an agency devoted to promoting Maine tourism):

![BAITS, FLIES, and LURES for Maine Waters](image)

To give the reader an overview of Maine’s major makers of fishing lures, the years of the makers’ birth and death, their main business associates, and the years they were in business are summarized below. The major makers are ordered by their birth years (in bold below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tackle Maker</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Died</th>
<th>Business started</th>
<th>Business ended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry O. Stanley</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. O. Stanley Sporting Goods</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. O. Stanley &amp; Son (George P.)</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Stanley</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred E. Bailey</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. E. Bailey &amp; Son (Carl R.)</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary A. Bailey</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles H. Morse</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. “Bill” Burgess</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-O-Maine Tackle</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>~1945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Bait Company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard William Murray</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lee Murray</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Lee Murray Company</td>
<td>~1947</td>
<td>~1967</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lee Murray</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold G. Parker</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H &amp; J Fishing Tackle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton H. Hamilton</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (a.k.a. Abenaki) Spinner Company</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy “Roy” M. Applegarth</td>
<td></td>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1960</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Morse could have started making his Lake Auburn trolling spoon in the late 1890s, but no conclusive evidence for this was found. He was first listed as a “guide” in the 1914 *Auburn Business Directory*, having ended his career as a minor league ball player.

- William Murry (occasionally spelled without an “a”), father of Richard and L. John Murray, received a patent for the Murray Aluminum Minnow on June 21, 1910. However, the Murray brothers are not listed as lure makers in *Manning’s Auburn Business Directory* until 1935.

- After the J. Lee Murray Company ceased its Auburn operations in 1967-68, different ownership moved the company to Lisbon Falls, Maine, and later to Arundel, Maine.

- The author’s collection has a Lee Spinner Company display card dated “9/13/48/.” The ending year may have been a few years earlier, based on an interview of company owner Roy M. Applegarth conducted in the late 1980s by Harold F. Porter.

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Anonymous. ~1927. *T. B. Davis Arms Co. – Jobbers of Fine Fishing Tackle. Catalog No. 45*. Portland, Maine (publisher not give). [The first 66 pages of this 76-page catalog are about fishing tackle; page 54 has a chart of Morse’s Lake Auburn Spoons; and page 55 is devoted to Rangeley spinners.].

Anonymous. 1929. *Edwards & Walker Company – Sporting Goods, Cutlery, and Sportsmen’s Specialties*. Portland, Maine (publisher unstated). [The first 97 pages of this 237 page catalog are devoted to fishing tackle; a few Bill Burgess spinners included in this catalog.].

Anonymous. ~1930. *T. B. Davis Arms Co. – Jobbers of Fine Fishing Tackle. Catalog No. 46 (??)*. Portland, Maine (publisher unstated). [The first 77 pages of this 88 page catalog are devoted to fishing tackle; many Bill Burgess lures are illustrated in this catalog.].

Anonymous. ~1930. *Edwards & Walker Company – Sporting Goods, Cutlery, and Sportsmen’s Specialties*. Portland, Maine (publisher unstated). [The first 87 pages of this 210 page catalog are devoted to fishing tackle; a few Bill Burgess spinners included in this catalog.].


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Demeritt, Dwight B., Jr. 1997. Maine Made Guns & Their Makers. Friends of the Maine State Museum, Augusta, Maine. [This book documents that many of Maine’s early gunsmiths also pioneered the development of fly-fishing tackle. This is an enlarged, revised revision of the same title published in 1973].


Stewart, Robert D., and Jerry Girard. 2015. F. E. Thomas: The Man & His Rods. The Two Curmudgeon Press, Bend, Oregon. [The definitive work about Fred E. Thomas, his business, colleagues, times, and bamboo fishing rods].

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A Gallery of Illustrations Related to Late 19th and Early 20th Century Fishing in Maine

A folder of post cards from the early 1920s (upper left) and a brochure from 1930 (upper right) along with a booklet of photographs from the early 1900s (lower illustration) promoting outdoor tourism in Maine. Publications such as these, published by the State of Maine and railroad companies, extolled the availability of exceptional fishing and hunting in Maine.

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An illustration from F. M. Johnson’s *Forest, Lake, and River: The Fishes of New England & Eastern Canada* (1902, vol. 2, p. 328). The trout, salmon, bass, and pickerel inhabiting New England waters readily strike the types of spinners and lure (i.e., an artificial minnow, bottom of the drawing) shown here. Thus, these baits have been manufactured and fished throughout the region. For example, the Rangeley Spinner is the upper right of this illustration was invented by Henry O. Stanley of Dixfield, Maine in the 1880s. Stanley continued making this spinner until he gave up his rights to the lure in 1906-07.
Two anglers, and their guide (holding the bow of the Rangeley boat), unload their catch at Billy Soule’s camp on Pleasant Island in Cupsuptic Lake, western Maine. Trolling with baits and lures, using the kind of rods and reels shown above, was a popular fishing method in Maine, especially on lakes and ponds during spring and fall. (Note the heavy overcoats, and lack of leaves on the tress in the background; probably spring). This photograph is from The Woods of Maine series taken by Edwin R. Starbird, Brunswick, Maine.
The kind of catch that New England anglers dreams about. Most of the above fish are land-locked salmon (with spots across the top of their back). The bright fish in the foreground (and in the upper right corner) is a large brook trout. Both salmon and trout can be readily caught on spinners and spoons, the primary type of fishing lure produced in Maine during the late 1800s through early 1900s. This photograph is from The Woods of Maine series taken by Edwin R. Starbird, Brunswick, Maine.
A mailing enveloped (12 ¼ X 9 ¼ inch) used in the early 1940s by the Wells Sporting Goods Company, Auburn, Maine. The Company’s motto, “Here’s Health and Happiness,” was similar to the one later used by H & J Tackle, “Happy Fishing & Joyous Results.” Wells Sporting Goods sold fishing lures made by Henry O. Stanley (based on a 1911 newspaper ad) and the Murray brothers (a Murray Bait Co. spinner was found in this envelope). Because the Wells Sporting Goods was located in Auburn, and existed from around the turn-of-the century until 1943-44, it likely sold the products of the other fishing lure makers in southern Maine, namely C. H. Morse (Lake Auburn Spinners) and Bill Burgess (State-Of-Maine Tackle). Wells Sporting Goods Company, however, predated both H & J Fishing Tackle and the Lee Spinner Company.
Trade catalogs, such as the ones shown above, are a useful source of information about early fishing tackle and their makers (although not all makers sold their tackle through the large dealers). In many instances, trade catalogs are undated leaving the users to have to estimate dates based on prices and types of lures being offered. With a large enough series of catalogs, however, reasonable estimates of publication years can be made. Approximated publication dates on the above catalogs, from top left to bottom right are as follows: ~1910, 1919 (so listed in Catalog), ~1927, and ~1936.