Clayton H. Hamilton was born on 27 June 1901 in New Gloucester, Maine. He was the son of George Henry and Carrie Florence Hubbard Hamilton. In 1920, Clayton graduated from Edward Little High School in Auburn, Maine. Five years later he married Lilian (a.k.a., Lila) Gautier and the couple had one child, Robert W. Hamilton. Clayton worked for 27 years at Hahnel Brothers Roofing and Sheet Metal Company in Lewiston, Maine. Robert also worked at Hahnel Brothers, and together father and son gained experience in working sheet metal and in roof construction. Around 1955, Clayton (53 yrs. old) and Robert (28 yrs. old) left Hahnel Brothers to form Hamilton and Son, Inc. With the years going by, now was the time for Clayton to strike-out and start his second business. Hamilton & Son, Inc. was a sheet metal fabrication and roofing company with Clayton as the Company’s President and Robert as the Vice President. Early on in his business venture, Clayton and Robert began designing and manufacturing fishing tackle to cater to the New England fishing community. Their most successful product was a series of fishing lures that were designed to mimic the movement of small fish. These lures became known as the “H & J Fishing Tackle” and were widely popular among fishermen. Clayton and Robert continued to operate their business until retirement in 1994.
the company was located in the north end of Auburn on Center Street, and in the early 1960s moved to Industry Avenue (off of Minot Avenue in the southwestern side of town).

As for Clayton’s fishing tackle business, it may have started as early as early as 1945, but for sure by 1950 (see purchase order below). This company made and sold a variety of fishing tackle, but specialized in spinners and a jiggling lure, the Leadhead. (The “Leadhead” was not, interestingly, made of lead but of a zinc alloy). At the time Clayton formed the tackle business, he was still working for Hahnel Brothers as a foreman (in Manning’s through mid-1950s). H & J operated out of Clayton’s home in North Auburn. When orders for H & J tackle backed-up, Clayton enlisted the help of family and friends to assemble, pack, and ship lures. At these times, Lila paid the helpers, as the family says, with “pastries and dinners.” In the early to mid-1960s, desiring to have more time for fishing and other outdoor sports, Hamilton sold the tackle business to North Bay Spinner Company in Northboro, Massachusetts. North Bay made and sold 19 lures under the H & J label, including an ice-fishing jig named the “Clayt Hamilton.”

Clayton Hamilton was an active sportsman from his young. As an adult, he owned a hunting camp in Costigan, Maine, on the east side of the Penobscot River north of Old Town, Maine. In the 1930s and 1940s this area had many abandoned farms, providing excellent habitat for deer, grouse, and woodcock. Hamilton liked to go to his camp in November for deer hunting. He did not, however, limited his sporting activities to Maine. According to one newspaper article, Hamilton and a friend, Richard F. Parker, spent a month hunting elk in Montana during 1963. They saw 41 elk and manage to shoot one. While Clayton made mostly trolling spinners, he also

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loved to fly fish. To quote from a 1951 article in the *Lewiston Evening Journal*:

Clayton Hamilton of North Auburn, had a time for himself up at The Forks [on the Kennebec River]. Speckled beauties were rising nicely to dry flies, and he came back with his limit. Clay found out early that the smaller the flies the better. The trout would snap at a lure on a No. 20 hook and disdain the same offering on a No. 12. Who says fish aren’t fussy?

After selling H & J in the early to mid-1960s, Clayton Hamilton spent more time hunting, fishing, and trapping. Robert continued to run the family sheet metal business, retiring in 1980 due to ill health. Robert, like his father, enjoyed outdoor sports, especially fly-fishing.

During his retirement years Clayton Hamilton owned a number of fishing/hunting camps. In an article written in 1987 by long-time friend and outdoor writer Gene Letourneau, Hamilton had a camp at Quimby Pond in the Rangeley Lakes Region, a trailer on the north side at the mouth of the Moose River on Moosehead Lake, and a larger camp next to the Deer Head Farm on the east shore of Moosehead Lake northeast of Mount Kineo. This later camp had a sign on the over the front porch proclaiming: “H & J Fishing Tackle.” Clayton enjoyed many types of fresh and salt water fishing, but was especially fond of catching trophy lake trout (a.k.a., togue) at Moosehead Lake. According to Letourneau’s 1987 article:

He [Clayton Hamilton] and his companions took a string of togue in the 1960 winter season that included two 13-pounders, one each of 18 and 19 pounds, two 20-pounders, and one of 24 lbs. In may never be matched.

In the two or so decades that H & J Fishing Tackle existed in Maine, they created a large amount and variety of trolling spoons and spinners, leaders, and trolling keels (both aluminum and lead). Lure names include the Belgrade Spinner, Sebago Twins (a double-bladed spinner), *Maine Fishing Lures* by Wm. B. Krohn - 102
and Trout Spoon. According to printing on the cards these spinners come on, one could buy blades with a pearly fish scale, hammered brass, copper & brass, copper, tin – copper, brass, and chrome. H & J Diamond Series consisted of, from smallest to largest, The Jack of Diamonds, Queen of Diamonds, and the King of Diamonds. They also made the Duck Cove Wobbler, a heavy spoon that was most commonly either copper or nickel finished. Less common, is a Duck Cove Wobbler stamped “H & J” or one with it’s underside painted in bright red.

H & J was especially well known for their Leadfish (really a zinc-fish). These later lures where shaped like little fish, silver or gold in color, and were used for jigging with a larger variety designed for casting (simply called Cast Baits). Clayton did not make the Leadfish himself but instead they were manufactured for H & J by Down-East Sportscraft, Inc. (a.k.a., Peterson’s Machine Shop). Fred Peterson, second generation owner of the shop, remembers the day when Clayton Hamilton came into his father’s shop with live minnow. Fred’s father, Fritz, and Clayton sat down and traced the little fish, still wet, so that they had the proper shape, locations of the fins, and so on. The drawing was used in making the die-casts from which Leadfish were, and still are, molded. Now in it’s third generation of Peterson ownership, this company is best known today as the maker of the Down-East Rod Holder. Down-East started in 1946 and continues operating out of it’s original location in Lewiston, Maine. Down-East still is makes the Leadfish, and instead of having raised “H & J” letters, today’s lures are marked “D E.” Five types of Leadfish are currently available (Demon Bait, Little Minnie, Dodging Sucker, Little Sunny, and Spinning Minnow); they come coated in nickel, gold, or copper. (For

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photographs and more information, see: http://www.down-east.com/website_013.htm).

In addition to spinners and jigs, H & J also sold a variety of leaders, both with and without hooks, different lengths and breaking strengths, and some for specific types of fishing (e.g., fly fishing for Atlantic Salmon). Breaking a long running tradition of Maine lure makers, H & J did not make neither the Cupsuptic nor the Rangeley spinner. (H & J’s successor in Massachusetts, however, did make the Rangeley Spinner). They were, however, the only early Maine tackle maker that made a tip-up for ice fishing.

H & J spinners and spoons can still be found mounted on cards, with many of these cards reading: “Created And Fashioned By Fishermen Who Fish.” Cards in the Diamond Series of spinners read: “\textbf{H}appy \textbf{F}ishing \& \textbf{J}oyous Results” (bolding and underlining added for emphasis), leading some to speculated that this is the source of the company’s name, “H & J.” However, according to Hamilton’s oldest grandson, Clayton initially had a partner, Charlie Joy. Joy, who lived in Lewiston, was a salesman and drove a Hudson Hornet. Thus, the first letters of the founding partners’ last name formed the company’s name: H & J. Although the partnership was short-lived, Clayton continued using H & J and added “Happy Fishing & Joyous Results” as a slogan on some lure cards and in his fishing tackle catalog.

Clayton fished, hunted, and trapped into his late 80s; he shot his last buck on the shore of Moosehead Lake when approaching his 80th year. In June of 1994, after a long illness, Clayton died at his home on North Auburn Road. This property was his long-time residence, and is located only 1 ½ miles south of where Charles H. Morse, the father of Auburn lure making, is at

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H. A. Manning Company. Compiler and publisher. *Manning’s Lewiston and Auburn Directory*. [Issues of 1944 through 1977 were searched; found information about the Hamilton’s metal fabrication business, but no mention of H & J Fishing Tackle].


A purchase order from H & J Fishing Tackle requesting 5,000 snaps from a Pennsylvania company that were needed “at once.” At the time this order was placed in June of 1950, Clayton H. Hamilton was still working as a foreman for a metal working and roofing company in Lewiston, Maine. It was five years after this order was made that Clayton and his son, Robert, established their own metal fabrication company. H & J Fishing Tackle may have been only a part-time enterprise for Hamilton (his obituary states that he worked on tackle “in his spare time”), but based on the quality of the fishing tackle, it was work he took great pride in doing.
The cover of an 8-page catalog that is heavily illustrated with high quality, black and white drawings of H & J products. Note the ‘Catalog “A” ’ printed on the bottom center. Catalog B was published by H & J Fishing of Northboro, Massachusetts. Because Hamilton sold his Auburn enterprise to the company in Northboro, Catalog A is probably the only fishing tackle catalog ever published by Clayton H. Hamilton.
Except for the Diamond Series of H & J spinners that are stamped (right and left above), stamped H & J spinners are uncommon. Finding H & J spinners that are unstamped, and not on a card, makes positive identification of the maker uncertain. Thus, collectors generally strive to find lures that are either stamped (as above) or on unaltered cards (next page).

Two unusually stamped H & J lures: a Jack of Diamonds Spinner that was double stamped (right) and an H & J Trolling Spinner with a stamping so deep that it almost went through the blade. For the collector with a sharp eye, there is always one more variant to find in almost any large series of fishing lures.

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Individually packed, this lure was called the Trout Spoon. Note the similarities between these spoons and Morse’s Lake Auburn Spoon and Burgess trolling spoons. Specifically, note the blade has two colors on the upper versus bottom surfaces (copper – tin); a long, heavy-duty shaft; and metal beads. These spoons could readily be clipped together to form a large trolling rig. This card measures 4 7/8 X 7 7/8 inches.

Two spinners in H & J’s Diamond Series, so named for the shape of the dimples on the blade. Note the saying, “Happy Fishing & Joyous Results” (perhaps the source of “H & J” after the Hamilton-Joy partnership dissolved), immediately below the spinners name. These cards measure 2 ¼ X 6 ½ inches.

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A set of H & J spinners mounted on their standard card (i.e., 2 ¼ X 6 ½ inches). From top to bottom: Sebago Twins, the Belgrade Spinner (top and bottom views), and the Trout Spoon. Note the printing and check-off boxes in the lower right corner of the bottom spoon. H & J sold their spinners in greater variety of surfaces than any other Maine maker.
The above is a thick, cooper spoon designed for deep trolling. While the above lure is unstamped, the Duck Cove Wobbler can be found stamped “H & J” (see illustration below); stamped versions of this lure are rare, as are versions with a bright red underside.

Illustration from the Hamilton’s H & J Fishing Tackle Catalog (bottom of page 6) showing the proper method for rigging a Duck Cove Wobbler. This spoon is heavy and made for deep trolling, but had to be carefully assembled on the angler’s line to have the proper action when trolled through the water.

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A salesman’s display case featuring H & J Fishing tackle. On the left are Diamond spinners whereas the right side shows how individual spinners were clipped together to form complex trolling rigs. Lee (a.k.a. Abenaki) Spinner Company in South Berwick, Maine – a contemporary of H & J (see chapter about Lee Spinner Company below) – also used this modular method to increase the variety of spinners offered for sale.
A sample of H & J’s Leadfish; these jigs are molded with a zinc alloy. According to Clayton H. Hamilton’s 1994 obituary, “The H & J Leadhead Jig is still used by many fisherman today.” The row of Leadfish on the left side of the above illustrates the manufacturing sequence: the Leadfish comes out of a mold flat (left top); it’s coated and bent into shape (middle left); and finally a snap and treble hook is added (left bottom). Leadfish come in five basic varieties with a variety of colors.

H & J’s Cast Baits, shown on a store display card (or counter card), were used more for casting than jigging. Like the Leadfish, Cast Baits were made of a zinc alloy solid lead (an unpainted example on the far right), and painted in a variety of patterns (the “Bass Finish” is shown above). The above card measures 6 ¾ X 9 1/4 inches.

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H & J Fishing Tackle made many types of snelled hooks (upper illustrations) and leaders (lower illustrations). Unlike the leaders made of silkworm gut used to make leaders by Stanley, Bailey, and Burgess, H & J leaders were made from nylon and required “No Soaking.”

Note the address on the above card. When in his early to mid-sixties, Clayton H. Hamilton sold his tackle business to a company in Northboro, Massachusetts. After some two decades of making fishing tackle, H & J Fishing Tackle ceased operations in Maine.

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Clayton H. Hamilton (left) and Richard F. Parker (right) holding 24 lbs. and 17 lbs. 6 oz. lake trout, respectively; both fish were caught through the ice on Moosehead Lake. Hamilton was an avid sportsman, and fished and hunted his entire life with family and friends. Dick Parker was one of Clayton’s regular sporting partners.

Lila Hamilton, Clayton’s wife, with the 17 lbs. 6 oz. lake trout that won the 1947 Moosehead [Lake] Derby. Like her husband, Mrs. Hamilton was an avid angler; she also helped with H & J Fishing Tackle. This photograph appeared in the Parade Magazine (p. 23), published by the Portland [Maine] Sunday Telegram on 10 August 1947.