

Thomas H. Chubb and the Henshall-VanAntwerp Reel

By Ron Gast

There are few vintage casting reels that garner the immediate attention of both advanced and novice collectors as the "Henshall-VanAntwerp" reels.

"Wow, that's a really cool looking reel" is often the reaction when one is shown this reel for the first time. The obvious high quality of the reel with its uncommon thumb break lever and rim mounted click mechanisms make it stand out from the crowd of vintage casting reels. Thomas Chubb's 1887 patent for this reel was a culmination of about 17 years of successful rod and tackle manufacturing.

A little history of this great inventor is appropriate. Thomas Henry Chubb was born on Nov. 4, 1836, in Charleston, Massachusetts. In 1849 his parents and family moved to Galveston, Texas. There, he married Isabel Mason on Sept. 1, 1859. After managing the family's plantation, he worked his way up through the ranks of the Confederate Navy and captained three different ships as a Union blockade runner. He was eventually captured by Union forces and forced to pay a large sum for his release. Chubb returned to Galveston after the war and worked in the shipyard.

In 1868, Chubb moved his family to Post Mills, Vermont, a small village outside of Thetford. There he joined in a partnership with William Marston and bought a mill factory to make shovel and rake handles. Chubb was inspired to make a better fishing rod after seeing the often poor quality of rods that were available at the time. He bought out Marston and went into the rod building business. His company "Thos. H. Chubb" was then established in 1869.

304 THE AMERICAN ANGLER [NUMBER 10, Vol. IV.]

LARGEST FISHING ROD FACTORY IN THE WORLD.

AND THE ONLY ONE WHERE AMATEURS AND ROD-MAKERS CAN GET SUPPLIES OF EVERY DESCRIPTION FOR ROD-MAKING.

BEST OF SEASONED STOCK,

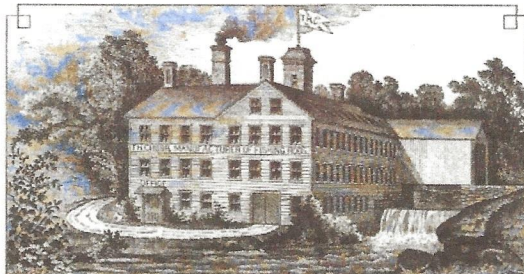
Either Turned, Planed or Square, in Ash, Lancewood or Greenheart!

—ALSO—

MATERIAL FOR SIX STRIP or HEXAGONAL SPLIT BAMBOO RODS.

Complete Sets of Brass, Nickel-Plated and German Silver Rod Trimmings.

Ferrules,
Guides,
Funnel or
Ring tops,
3-Ring tops,
Solid Metal
Plugs,
Patent
Solid Metal
Reel Seats,
Butt Caps—
Solid
and Screw,
Reel Bands,
Dowell
Ends,
Rod Rings
and
Keepers,



Brass and
German
Silver
Sheet
Metal,
Brass
Rods and
Wire,
Shellac and
Gum
Varnishes,
Whiting,
Pumice
Stone,
Cloth
Cases or
Sacks for
Rods,
&c.

We would call your attention to our increased facilities for making

LIGHT CASTINGS IN BRASS OR GERMAN SILVER,

AND ARE PREPARED TO SUPPLY

REEL-MAKERS!

—WITH—

The Various Parts for Making Reels,

EITHER CLICK OR MULTIPLYING, SUCH AS SPOOLS, PLATES, HANDLES, &c., &c.

We make a Specialty of Manufacturing Tools and Machinery for Amateurs and Rod-Makers.

Also, Japanning, Tinning, Nickelizing, Polishing, &c., &c.

PAPER BOXES AND ROD BAGS FURNISHED TO THE TRADE.

Finished Rods Supplied to the Jobbing Trade Only.


Send for Illustrated Catalogue and Price List of Amateurs and Rod Makers' Supplies.

THOMAS H. CHUBB,

Post Mills Village, Vermont, U. S. A.

Dec. 20, 1882.] THE AMERICAN ANGLER

Chubb's Patent Reel Plate and Rod Trimming



AMATEUR ROD MAKERS SUPPLIED.

with Rod Trimmings of every description, either in Brass, German Silver, or Nickel Plated, such as Ferrules, Guides, Top, Ring Tips, Rings, Reel Bands, etc., etc.

Also CHUBB'S PATENT REEL PLATE, above or below the hand, for Fly, Trout or Bass Rods.

Also turned stock of the very best of seasoned Ash, Hornbeam and Lancewood. Butts whipped with our Patent Strapping for 25 cents each. Send for Price List and Catalogue.

THOS. H. CHUBB, POST MILLS, VT.

*** Unless otherwise ordered, goods will be sent C. O. D. ***

Above, November 1883 "The American Angler" magazine ad

At left, December 1882 "The American Angler" magazine ad

T.H. Chubb received 10 fishing related patents and one design specification in his lifetime. The year 1880 was when we first see evidence of



The First Model Henshall-VanAntwerp Reel



Chubb's innovative capabilities. In that year he received 4 patents. Three were for reel seat designs for rods and the fourth was for a sinker or float line attachment. In the following three years he received 4 more patents related to rod design. Chubb didn't start advertising in the sporting publications until the early 1880s. These advertisements were targeting amateur rod builders that he intended to supply building materials. He also provided component parts like spools, plates and handles made out of brass or German silver to reel manufacturers.

In 1883, Chubb received his first patent for a reel. This patent was for a single-action fly reel which included a folding foot, a click and a spool end play spring design. His 1883 Design Specification clarified the patent to include the convex end plates we see on his fly reels.

By 1885, a mutually beneficial friendship between Thos. Chubb and Dr. James A. Henshall had developed. Chubb was advertising the "Six Strip Split Bamboo Henshall Rod" and the "Henshall-VanAntwerp"

\$1.50

Buys our New Style
80-yard
CLICK REEL.

\$7.50

Buys our Split Bamboo
Henshall
Black Bass Rod
Ready for Ringing
and Varnishing.

THE "BOSS" LATHE.
Designed and made for Amateur Rod Makers.

Suitable for Turning, Drilling and Brass Finishers' general use. This Lathe is of our own make, made by practical machinists. It is free running, but not loose and shaky, well made in all its parts to a thorough and workmanlike manner. Size of bed 30 inches; distance between centers, 17 inches; swing 6 inches. Hollow steel spindle with 3/8-inch hole. Hardened steel centers, hard bronze mount boxes, with hardened steel cone-nuts. Price, \$15.00. Will furnish foot wheel with crank when desired; price \$5.00 to \$6.00. Fine Drill and Wire Chuck, all kinds of Lathes, as shown in cut, price \$7.00. Centers, Spur Gears, Sockets, Bore, and all kinds of small tools furnished at reasonable prices. Send for Price List of Rod Stock and Trimmings to

THOS. H. CHUBB, Post Mills, Orange Co., Vt.

August, 1885 "Forest and Stream" Magazine Ad

Black Bass Four-Multiplying Reel.

Designed and made expressly for the "Standard Henshall" Black Bass Rod, which has the reel above the hand. This Reel has our new Lever Drag (patent applied for), as shown in the engraving, by which the line can be stopped when casting at any point in an instant, simply by the pressure of the thumb. And also when the fish is hooked the tension can be regulated by the thumb from a free running to a light drag, or a heavy drag to a complete stop. This Reel also has an Adjustable Drag and Adjustable Click. It is made of the very best of German Silver, has steel gears and steel pivots throughout; is handsome, substantial and well made in every way. This Reel is warranted just as represented, and if not satisfactory can be returned and money will be refunded. Price \$3.00.

OUR HEXAGONAL SPLIT BAMBOO
"Standard Henshall" Black Bass Rod,

Which has the endorsement of Dr. Henshall, and from the large number of orders received this season, proves it to be the black bass anglers' favorite. Length 5 ft. 3 1/2 in.; weight 8 oz.

Send for Price List of Trout and Bass Fly Rods, also Rod Trimmings and Anglers' Supplies to

THOS. H. CHUBB, Post Mills Village, Orange Co., Vt.

May, 1885 "Forest and Stream" Magazine Ad

reel. Meanwhile, Henshall was extolling in his publications the benefits of the rod and reel named after him. The first advertisement for the Henshall-Van-Antwerp reel is seen in 1885.

The first advertisement for the Henshall-VanAntwerp reel is seen in 1885.

The design of the Henshall-VanAntwerp reel included a thumb brake drag and a click. The drag could also be adjusted by rotating the knob on the front plate below the thumb break. The click was engaged by rotating the knob at the top of the front plate. The reel also came with adjustable pivots for spool end play.

The serial numbers for the first model Henshall-Van Antwerp reels range from 98 to 183 based on personal records and Lang's Auction catalogs. More feedback is required to better quantify the serial number range for this model. Another aspect of the serial number range is the type of gears in the reels. Based on personal

observations, the gear teeth design was changed from straight spur to spiral helical designs somewhere between serial numbers 98 and 183. This changeover may have been the result of Chubb's learning that B.F. Meek had introduced spiral helical gearing to reels in 1883.



The spiral helical gear in the Henshall-VanAntwerp Reel serial number 183

The Henshall-VanAntwerp reel design concepts were attributed to Dr. James A. Henshall and to Dr. William Van Antwerp of Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. The implementation of these design concepts into an actual real design was made by Chubb himself. His name alone appears as the inventor on the September 27, 1887 patent of the reel. The patent drawing actually shows the second model of the reel with a rim mounted click lever

Six-Strip Split Bamboo HENSHALL ROD,
Made according to dimensions given us by Dr. Henshall and endorsed by him as the "Standard Henshall Rod." Length, 8 ft. x 3-10 inches, weight 8 oz.; has solid metal reel seat, anti-friction guides, three ring tops, hexagonal cap and welt ferrules made waterproof, no dowels, solid metal stoppers, put up in fine grooved wood form all in cloth case. Price, German Silver trimmings, \$13.00.

Henshall Van Antwerp Reel.
This Reel was designed by Drs. Henshall and Van Antwerp, and is a fit companion for the Henshall Rod. It is a Four Multiplying Reel, German Silver, Steel Gears and Steel Pivots, Free Running, has Adjustable Click and Adjustable Drag; also has our new Lever Drag, which is operated by the thumb. It is handsome, substantial and first-class in every respect. Put up in fine Sole Leather Reel Case. Price \$15.00.

SPECIAL OFFER.
Will send this Reel and above Rod to one address, when ordered at the same time, for \$25.00. Satisfaction guaranteed in every case, or money will be refunded. Address

THOS. H. CHUBB,
The Fishing Rod Manufacturer,
Post Mills, Orange Co., Vt.

Send for Catalogue of Trout and Bass Fly Rods of Split Bamboo or Lancewood, Flies, Hooks, Lines, Leaders, etc.

July 1886 "The American Angler" Magazine Ad

In 1888, the design of the Henshall-VanAntwerp click design was changed to look more like that in the 1887 patent. This model was called the "Improved" reel. The thumb brake was also moved to the rear end plate and the click was now engaged by moving the lever located on top of the front or rear end plates. These reels are referred to as the second model. Variations in this model with click lever location have been seen. This model is shown in the Chubb catalogs and magazine advertisements from 1888 to 1891.

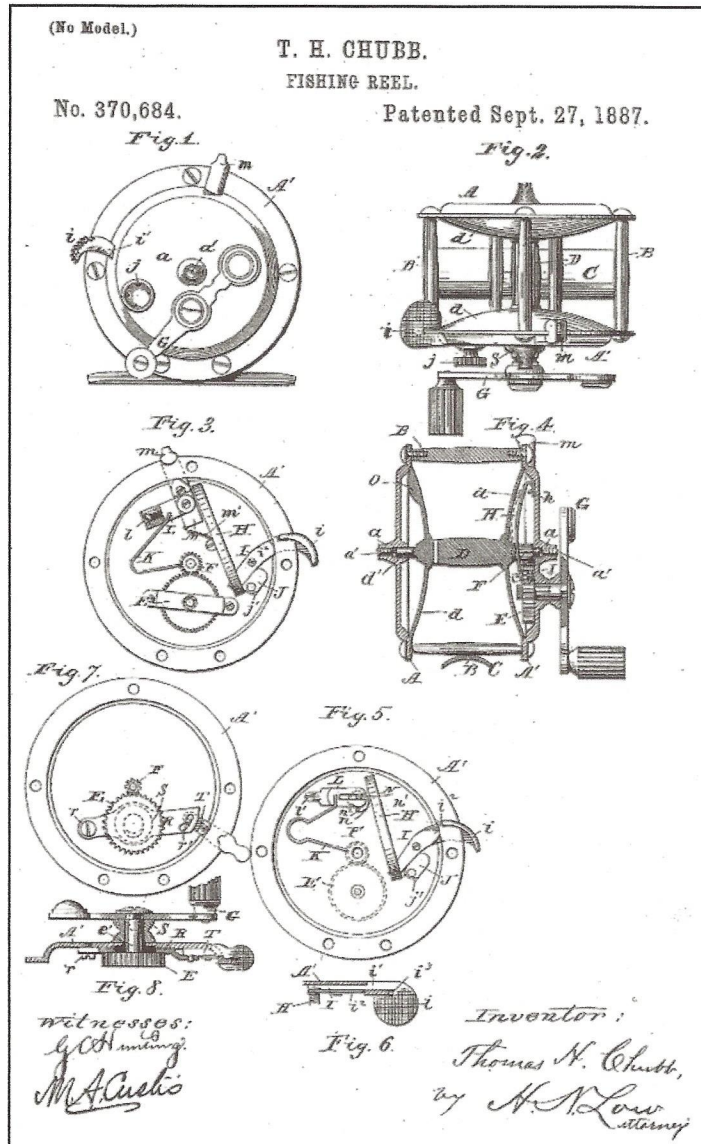
Henshall-VanAntwerp
Four-Multiplying Black Bass Reel.
This reel was designed by Drs. Henshall and Van Antwerp, and is the Black Bass anglers' favorite. Made with Crank or Balance Handle as desired. Put up in nice sole leather reel case.

PRICE, \$15.00.

For description of this reel and Catalogue of Anglers' Supplies see Chubb's New Illustrated List for 1887. Send for one.

THOS. H. CHUBB,
The Fishing Rod Manufacturer,
POST MILLS, ORANGE CO., VT.

February 1887 "Forest and Stream" Magazine Ad



The Thos. Chubb September 27, 1887 Patent

Serial numbers for the second model with thumb brake on the left side and click lever on the right side range from 217 to 278 based on personal records and from Lang's Auction catalogs. Serial numbers with the click lever moved to the left end plate, range from 322 to 442. Once again, more information is needed to better define these ranges.

In February 1891, a fire destroyed the Thos. Chubb factory. The \$20,000 insurance policy would not cover his estimated \$65,000 in damages, but Chubb tried

THE CHUBB FACTORY FIRE.—Thousands of anglers will sympathize with Mr. Thos. H. Chubb, of Post Mills, Vt., in the serious calamity which has come upon him in the destruction of his factory by fire on the 28d ult. The loss is put at \$65,000, with an insurance of \$20,000. Mr. Chubb is a man of grit and stout heart, as the immense business built up by him testifies. In a letter just received from him he tells us that he has set up in an empty mill what little machinery was saved from the wreck, and hopes soon to get into shape again. He is filling retail orders, and while the stock holds out he naturally hopes that his friends may not be deterred by the reports of the fire from sending their orders. We have received and will notice next week the Chubb catalogue for 1891.

March 1891 Forest and Stream article



Henshall-VanAntwerp Second Model Reel



to maintain the business the best he could.


Shortly after the fire, Chubb decided rather than rebuild, he would sell the company. He had developed a great reputation as a rod and tackle manufacturer and had no trouble finding a buyer. Montague City Rod Company bought Chubb's company and changed the name from "Thos. H. Chubb" to "T.H. Chubb Rod Co."

The Henshall-VanAntwerp reel design was to change once again after Montague bought Chubb's company. The reel now no longer has a thumb

brake or a rim mounted click lever. The reel now resembles the more common design of the times with two sliding buttons for the click and drag. The 1893 T.H. Chubb Rod Co. Catalog shows the new design.

The fourth and final model of the Henshall-VanAntwerp reel was made for Montague by Julius vom

FISHING RODS. XVII



The Chubb Eight-Strip Split Bamboo Rods

Are pronounced by Anglers to be the "*King of Rods*;" they are unexcelled for quality of material, workmanship, beauty and balance. Printed guarantee with each Rod which *warrants* it for one year. Rods are put up in an elegant case.

Price, each, \$15.00.

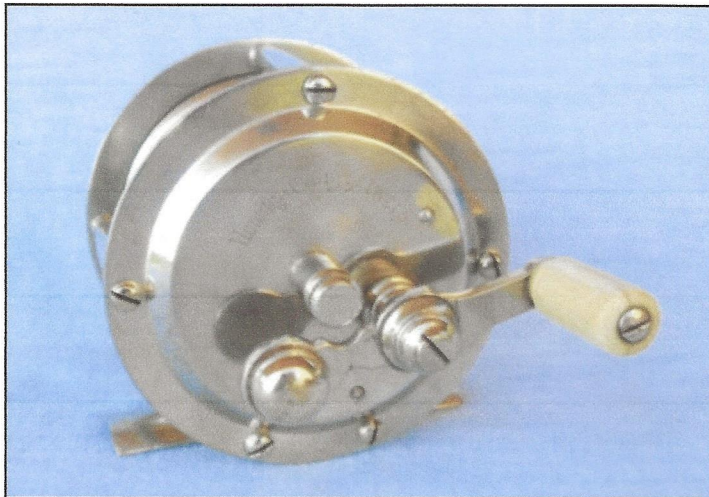
All lengths, weights and styles of Split Bamboo Rods are described in our *New Chubb Catalogue of Fishing-Tackle for 1892*. The Catalogue also contains elegant *Lithographic Plates of Split Bamboo and Luncewood Rods*, and over 100 varieties of *Artificial Flies* in colors, and describes, illustrates, and gives prices of Fishing-Tackle used by the Anglers of *to-day*.

Send 2c. for Catalogue. This may be deducted from first order for goods amounting to One Dollar or more, by enclosing Coupon which accompanies Catalogue. Address,

T. H. CHUBB ROD CO., **Post Mills, Vt.**

Please mention SPORTSMAN'S DIRECTORY.

1892 "The Sportsman's Directory" ad

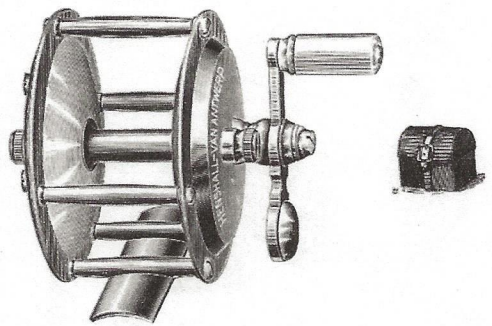


The Henshall-VanAntwerp Third Model



The Reel News

70 T. H. Chubb Rod Co., Post Mills, Vt.



"Henshall-Van Antwerp" Black Bass Reel.

Patented September 27, 1887, No. 370,684.

Designed by Dr. J. A. Henshall and William Van Antwerp. Four multiplier; German silver; steel pivots; adjustable click; very free running.

Put up in leather case. Price, \$15.00.

"Henshall-Van Antwerp" Par Excellence Reel.

The general appearance of this is the same as the original "Henshall-Van Antwerp." The change is mainly in the interior construction. The bearings are agate, so there is no possible chance for wear. The gear is made of gun metal and the pinions of hardened steel. By removing the handle side-plate, which is done by removing four screws, the spool can be withdrawn, leaving the frame of reel intact, thus avoiding any displacement of parts in putting reel together again, which sometimes happens with anglers; in fact, the reel cannot get out of repair with ordinary use, and ought to and will last a lifetime.

Four multiplier. Price, \$25.00.

1893 T.H. Chubb Rod Co. catalog page

Hofe. It varies from the third model in that it has the commonly seen Julius vom Hofe reel design features. The reel has just a sliding click and no drag, a spring washer under the rear plate end cap for the adjustable pivots, and the characteristic hole in the center of the reel foot.

For those interested, you can see more Henshall-VanAntwerp reel photos on my web page at <https://luresnreels.com/chubb.html>.

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www.amff.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/1980-Vol07-No4web.pdf

2. The Thetford, VT Historical Society Website, "Thomas Chubb's Fish Rod Factory," <http://thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/Chubb.html>