

game preserves, probably in southern Ohio, where more land can be purchased more cheaply than in other parts of the state. It will provide for the establishment of forest, bird and set aside approximately \$25,000 of the proceeds from the hunters' license fees for the purchase of territory for the preserve.

The commission had hoped to put the project into effect this year, supposing that money from this fund could be used for such a purpose, but the attorney general's department ruled that specific action by the legislature would be necessary before the money could be so used.

Some months ago the agricultural commission appointed a committee consisting of H. C. Price, member of the commission; Charles E. Thorne, director of the Wooster state experiment station; J. Warren Smith, chief of the weather bureau station at Columbus; John C. Speaks, state fish and game warden, and B. W. Gayman, secretary of the commission to investigate reforestation, and this committee has reported in fa-

vor of the establishment of a preserve to provide for this and for fish and game propagation.

THE BIGGEST MUSKALONGE.

State Fish and Game Warden John C. Speaks failed, last week, to secure for mounting and preserving what is believed to be the largest Muskalonge ever taken in Ohio waters. The fish was taken by the Post Fish Co. of Sandusky, in a trap-net by Cassidy and Welch, two Kelley Island fishermen, near Kelley's Island. It measured four feet, five and one-half inches in length and weighed just 43 pounds. Years ago muskalonge were taken frequently in the bays of Lake Erie, but lately they have been rarely found. There is no record of a fish of this size, however, and General Speaks, to whom the matter was reported, was anxious to secure the specimen for mounting and preservation, but before his request reached the fish company the monster had been sold to a caterer in Sandusky, who served it at a dinner.

History of the Kentucky Reel



In a small and dingy room up a narrow stairway in Lexington, Ky., an old and gray-haired man once told me the story of the Kentucky reel. The room was littered with the machinery and the debris of the metal-worker's craft, the stair-

way was not overly clean, and the faded little blue sign which informed us that J. L. Sage dwelt above gave small promise to my two friends and myself of anything extraordinary. Yet I found something which was quite new to me, at least, and which in some of its features may be new to readers of *Forest and Stream*.

"They tell us, Mr. Sage," said we, "that you know something of the life and adventures of the Kentucky reel. Is that so?"

"Well, supposing it is?" said the old gentleman.

"Why, we want to know all about it, and if you don't mind answering a few questions, we will just trouble you for a little while, for the sake of a paper that loves good reels of all kinds."

The old gentleman laid down a reel which he was finishing—for he himself was a maker of fine reels of a sterling local reputation—and took off his hat. "If you will just be still," said he, "and let me begin at the beginning, I will tell you all about it."

"We promised, and although our eagerness often interrupted him, he went on, beginning as he said, at the beginning.

"A good many people," said he, "have the idea that the Kentucky reel is the product of one man, or at most the product of two firms, and that there is a patent covering a certain definite form of it. This is not the case. There are several parties who have made or are making the Kentucky reel, and these reels are nearly as good one as another. Their general resemblance in mechanism is a matter of following a type. This type was established long ago, and there has not been so much change in it as you might think.

"In old times, you know, things were different from what they are now. Tradesmen worked about from place to place more, and a man

of any trade often did parts of work belonging to other trades. Thus the old-fashioned silversmith used to make and repair clocks, and mend watches, and do pretty much all sorts of fine tinkering. It was a silversmith who made the first Kentucky reel, and indeed the making of the best specimens of that reel has pretty much always lain with workmen, skilled in the watchmaker's trade. That is why they are so fine and delicate and accurate.

"The man who made this first reel was named Sneider, and he was a silversmith watchmaker, probably from Switzerland. The Clay family, over around Paris, in Bourbon County, were all great fishermen, and I reckon it was some of these Clays who first got Sneider to make a reel.

"That was in 1837. Then Sneider got to making reels for the Blairs, the Bibbs, the Morrisseys, McCurdys and Holemans, all Frankfort men. There are some of these old reels there and in this town yet. I can show you a Sneider reel to-day that is as good a casting reel as you need ask, although it is a good deal more than forty years old. You men talk about a reel wearing out in two or three years, so it has to be fixed or be worthless; I tell you a good reel will outlive a man, and if you don't believe it, you can try one of these old reels yourself.

"Well, Sneider made good reels, and he died. Bear in mind that to him is due the credit of the first Kentucky reel, and that it was well and honestly made.

"Sam Ayres was a Lexington watchmaker, and after the fashion of his kind, he had to move, and so he went over to Danville. Jonathan F. Meek was apprenticed to Ayres, and learned his trade there. Then Jonathan Meek left Ayres and went over to Frankfort and worked for Loomis. Meek was a fisher himself, and loved the sport. At that time the Kentucky river was a pure and undammed stream, and the fishing for bass and jack—or pike, I suppose you Northerners call them—was all that could be asked. This was in 1839, and about this time Meek left Loomis, rented a little shop, and set up a watchmaking business for himself.

"Old Judge Brown and Meek used to go out hunting and fishing together a great deal, and one day the old Judge said: 'The fish are biting splendidly, Jonathan, I reckon I'll have to send over to Sneider and get another reel. But tell me, why can't you make me a reel? You're a pretty good workman.'

"Jonathan Meek did make the Judge a reel, and it was a mighty good one, a better one than Sneider made. It was a very small and long reel, and you will remember that was the old form of the Kentucky reel. Meek cut out his own driving-wheels at Frankfort, but he had to go back over to Danville to get at a machine to cut his cogs. He finished up the reel with his watch tools.

"Along about 1839 Jonathan's brother, Benjamin F. Meek, was also apprenticed to Ayres. Ben was a prodigal son, and went wild. After a while he went over to Frankfort, and Jonathan took him into the business with him. Jonathan worked at the watchmaking trade, and put Benjamin at working the reels, for which there began to be a demand. They worked this way along about 1842. They followed the Sneider pattern of reel pretty closely. It was about this time that Jonathan made a reel, the end plates of which were silver dollars.

"In 1843 there was, up in Louisville, a silversmith by the name of Hardman. He was a good workman, but he was a visionary fellow, what you call 'cranky,' I believe. He was an inventor, and if he happened to take a new notion, he would drop his work and everything else, and sit and study; then when he got a thing half worked out, as like as not he would throw it away and never finish it. Hardman made a few reels. He made a 3-bar reel, shorter by one-third than the old Sneider model. He ornamented his reels. The Kentucky reel of to-day is practically the same thing as the old Hardman reel. That is the existing type.

"It was about now that the Kentucky river was dammed and locked. The boats used to lie up at a lock, and the passengers would get out and go fishing. A great many of these used the Hardman reels. Benjamin Meek, thus happened to see a Hardman reel. He dropped the old Sneider model, and at once began to follow the Hardman model. Benjamin Meek made a perfectly finished reel. He put on a knurled rim to his plates. But he made a 5-bar reel, and he did not screw through the plates into the bars, as Hardman did. Barring that, the best reels of to-day are practically Hardman reels. These older reels nearly all had the "click" made of a piece of goose-quill. This makes a pretty good olick, but one that will only wear about a month.

"Benjamin Meek made reels in the firm of J. F. and B. F. Meek at Frankfort, till 1850. Then the boys failed in business, and had to give up their old shop. Jonathan went to Louisville to work at his trade at watch repairing. Benjamin took in B. F. Milam as a partner at Frankfort. Milam was formerly an apprentice of Loomis, afterward worked for Benjamin Meek and then became his partner. In the new firm Meek made the reels and Milam made the watches, but Milam made poor watches, so they traded work, and Milam made the reels.

"Things ran on in this way till 1864, and then Benjamin Meek and Milam dissolved partnership. Milam went on making reels, and Meek kept up the jewelry business. At length Benja-



Where Lake and Mountain Meet.

min Meek went to Louisville, selling out his shop to Milam. That was in 1883.

"Now how about yourself, Mr. Sage?" we asked. "You are leaving yourself and your reel out."

The old gentleman smiled. "Well," said he, "you can see my reel for yourself. As for myself, I was apprenticed as a gunmaker and maker of fine mathematical instruments. I worked at such work as this at Frankfort until in the '50's. Then I went into the gas and water works, and did rough work, like gas-fitting, from 1853 to 1865. Then I went to Paris, and with Mr. Jeffrey, whom you know, built the gas works there. I went back to Frankfort then, and worked as United States gauger. You see I have led a varied life. It was 1848 when I made my first reel. I was making some of the old Morse telegraph instruments then, and I used my tools on the reel work. In 1883 I went regularly into reel-making, and you can see some of the reels I have made here. I followed the old Hardman type in general form. Some of my old reels are in Frankfort now, and they will run, sir—they will run!"

"How about putting jewels in a reel, Mr. Sage?"

"Well, jewel points are no hurt to a reel, but they are not the benefit that it is commonly thought they are. Most people don't know how these reels are made, and think the full bearing

is jewelled, or that the spindle of the reel works on jewels. That is not the case. You see this little plug, that screws in. Its tip just rests against the point of the spindle. There is very little friction at the end of the spindle; that comes mainly on the sides, where the spindle rests in its bearings. Now, the jewel is put right in the end of this little plug. All it can ease is the end-friction, and that is not so very great a saving."

"What is it, then, that makes the best reels run so smoothly?"

"Nothing but the perfect workmanship, and the perfect material. The steel used is of the best and finest tempered. Of course you know the steel spindle works in a brass box. One hard and one soft metal together is the rule in machinery, you know. They will wear longer together than two hard or two soft metals."

I asked Mr. Sage about the advisability of using oil on the bearings of a reel, having in mind a friend who has bored a hole in the end plate of his reel, and carries a little oil can in his kit. "That is all nonsense," said he, bluntly; "you should never use oil on a fine reel, or not oftener than once a year. A reel that heats and sticks from a day's use, no matter how hard, is simply a badly made reel. The perfect reel has no provision made for oiling without taking the reel apart, nor should it have. It is true you oil

a threshing machine, but you don't oil a watch very often. Well, you should compare a good reel to a watch, and not to a threshing machine."

"That's so," said one of my companions. "I oiled my reel once, and it wouldn't run at all. It clogged right up."

"Exactly, so would a watch or a clock. Oil should be used on a reel only with the greatest care, and very rarely."

I had noticed also that the balance-handled reel, so universally popular in the North, was little seen in the stocks of reels I examined in the South, and that there seemed a prejudice against it among Southern anglers. I asked Mr. Sage about this.

"Well, I suppose that is largely a matter of fashion," said he. "Our anglers think a single-crank reel looks less awkward. It doesn't make much difference in the running of a reel. When I cast with a reel, I turn the handle upward with a turn of the wrist toward the end of the cast. The plates thus lie parallel to the earth, and the gravity of the handle doesn't cut so much figure, so that the reel runs easier that way."

I think that most anglers who have used the balance-handled reel will prefer it to the single-crank, however; while as to the side turn of the reel in the cast, that is beyond the amateur. He will have quite enough to do with his thumb, without watching his wrist.