



by Eddie Bosomworth

## Cascapedia...

**T**HE name "Cascapedia" may be totally unfamiliar to many New Zealanders. It is the name of the most important Atlantic salmon River in Canada. The Cascapedia or to give its proper name The Grand Cascapedia earned its reputation by producing some of the largest and strongest Atlantic salmon amongst the rivers of the North American eastern sea board. There are 23 salmon rivers on the Gaspé Peninsula, and 150 in the Quebec Province, but the fish that return to the Grand Cascapedia are a distinctly superb strain of *salmo salar* [the leaper], the biggest in Canada, or anywhere except Norway's Alta River.

The Grand Cascapedia rises in the Chic Choc Mountains in the interior of the Gaspé Peninsula at an altitude of around 4000 feet, and flows over a distance of eighty-seven miles to the Atlantic Ocean at Baie des Chaleurs. Over its course there are a total

of one hundred and fifty named pools (see attached map), and numerous 'fishing camps' as they are called all of which have a history of their own and have been the summer home to many of the social and business elite of cities like Boston and New York and Washington.

Sport fishing on the Grand Cascapedia is documented as far back as the 1840s, but it didn't really take off until the Marquis of Lorne, the Governor General of Canada from 1878 to 1883, and his wife, Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Louise, steamed down

the St. Lawrence River from Montreal and around the Gaspé Peninsula to the mouth of the river. There they were met by the Micmac Indians who had lived at the river's mouth since time immemorial and during the salmon runs trapped and speared the fish at night by the aid of burning torches. Their settlement was called Gessgapegiag, "Where the River Widens." It is still there to this day, home to 550 Micmacs, Cascapedia is a corruption of the true Indian name.

Princess Louise secured for a few pounds an exclusive ninety-five-year lease of the river for the governors general, and a fancy fishing camp called Lorne Cottage was built for the couple fourteen miles up the river. The record salmon is still the 54-pound fish caught in 1886 by R.G. Dun, of Dun and Bradstreet, the New York credit-checking firm. With salmon from the Grand Cascapedia averaging nearly 10Kg., and frequently exceeding 20Kg, a rod, reel, and tackle of the highest quality was absolutely essential.

The New York reel makers Edward and Julius vom Hofe, two sons of Frederick vom Hofe who had arrived in America in 1847 were producing by the late 1800's, a range of fishing reels of exceptional quality. The vom Hofe brothers working as separate entities produced in addition to a comprehensive range of multiplying reels for both sport and game fishing, a number of fly reels both with single and multiplying action. Initially it was reels such as those that were preferred by

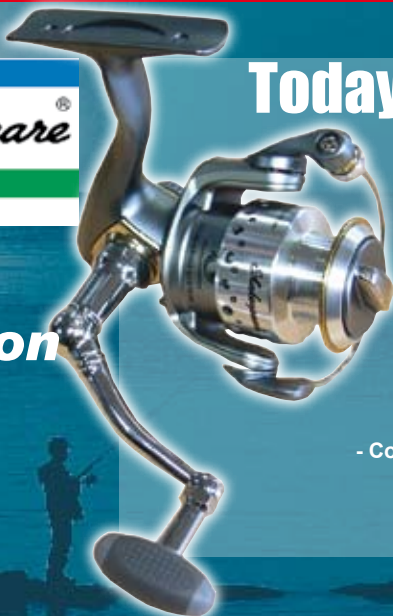


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tackle via their agents to both America and Canada. Forest of Kelso were famous for their salmon flies and indeed it was said, "if you are not using flies tied by Forest's you are hardly likely to catch a fish." Being in such a northerly latitude, the salmon fishing season was of course quite short. The rivers were frozen over during winter and the ice break-up did not occur until around the latter part of May, so it was usually June before the rivers became fishable, and July before the first big runs of salmon appeared. Traditionally fishing was done from a canoe manned by an Indian guide who knew every turn and twist of the river, and where the salmon lies were situated.

While the reels made by both Edward vom Hofe and his older brother Julius dominated the selection of American manufactured reels suitable for fly fishing in the late 1800's and early 1900's, Hardy Bros were

and the decision was made to increase the price of the Cascapedia range by a whopping 63%. Naturally at this price increase, the Cascapedia reels were not going to be a volume seller, but nevertheless a further nine reels of this pattern were made during 1935 and 1936. A new Cascapedia was launched in 1937. A number of changes were made including changing the gear ratio to 1 1/4 to 1 and fitting a single revolving pillar allowing the reel to be used with the rod rings and reel uppermost, this style being favoured by the American and Canadian fishermen. The reduction in production time allowed Hardy's to reduce the price of the 3/0 and 4/0 reels to £7.15/- and £8 5/- respectively. Despite the reduction in price, the sales of the new Cascapedia were to prove disappointing and excepting 1928 when a relatively large batch of reels were made, the start of the second world war effectively ended production of the Cascapedia reel that was primarily made for export abroad.

During a nine-year period one hundred and fourteen Cascapedia reels had been produced, of which seventy-one were with the ebonite side plates, and forty-three were fitted with the anodised duralumin side plates. So from a manufacturing point of view one could say that these Cascapedia reels were more of a custom built run, rather than a run of true production quantity. To look at, the Cascapedia reel in any of its sizes is an extremely attractive reel. The contrast of black anodised side plates with the polished duralumin frame and nickel silver parts together with the three Hardy medallions, one with the company name and size of the reel, the second with the Royal appointment to King George V and the third with the royal appointment to the Prince of Wales gave the reel a very impressive look. It is therefore no wonder that of all the reels that Hardy Bros designed and made the Cascapedia is looked on by reel collectors as the pick of the bunch. Surprising in some respects since hardly any of these reels would have been used in Britain by the somewhat died-in-the-wool salmon fly fishermen of the day.

In England Today the two main auction houses of Antique and vintage fishing tackle generally each hold a Spring and Autumn sale and these are eagerly anticipated by collectors worldwide. Catalogues are printed well ahead of the sale date and in these will appear photographs of the most sought-after items, with reels taking up a major portion of the items being offered. Estimates of the expected sale price are listed with a full description of the item to be sold, and in the case of any Cascapedia reel one can expect the estimated sale figure to go as high as £8,000 to £10,000 if it is one of the scarcer models and in flawless condition. The buyer has to meet the auctioneer's commission over and above the knockdown price and if a resident in the UK, VAT or GST as we know it is also applicable. A keen collector can therefore expect to dig very deep in his pocket if he truly wishes to add one of these beauties to his collection.

the wealthy Americans and Canadians who fished for the Atlantic salmon that annually found their way from their feeding grounds near Greenland to the pools and runs of the Grand Cascapedia and the many other rivers such as the Miramichi and Restigouche in that part of the world. These reels incorporated the use of hard rubber or ebonite as it became known as, for the side plates of the reels. Ebonite for the end plates was produced by vulcanizing the raw rubber with the addition of a percentage of sulphur. German silver or nickel silver for the frame of the reels is the same as that used in the jewellery trade for the manufacture of articles to be plated such as tableware, costume jewellery and hollow ware. The composition of this alloy is 65% copper, 18% nickel and 17% zinc.

The influence of British fishing tackle manufacturers was evident in that companies such as Malloch's of Perth, Forest of Kelso, Foster's of Ashbourne, Allcock's of Redditch and of course Hardy Bros of Alnwick, exported considerable quantities of fishing

no doubt well represented by their 'Perfect' series of fly reels that were proving their worth on the salmon rivers of Britain and Europe at that same time. Hardy Bros introduced in their supplementary catalogue of 1932 a reel that bore strong resemblance to the vom Hofe 'Tobique' series of fly reels. In fact three sizes of Hardy's new model had been made in 1931 in response to a request from their American and Canadian clients. A fourth size 4/0 was also part of the range introduced by the firm. Hardy's catalogue description was comprehensive and informed the reader that the 'Cascapedia', apart from having a drum made from Duralumin also had bearings of the finest polished cast steel which were ground into best phosphor bronze bushings. The 2 1/2 to 1 multiplying gearing was provided by gears 'correctly cut and meshed', which would run silently and last a lifetime. Hardy's were obviously pleased with the excellence of the Cascapedia and concluded its catalogue description by proclaiming it to be a sound practical engineering job of the very highest quality.

In 1932, the reels were priced as follows, the 1/0 at 140/- [£7.00], the 2/0 at 145/- [£7.5/-] and the 3/0 at 155/- [£7.15/-] Perhaps because of the smaller numbers of these reels being ordered, Hardy's could see little point in continuing to sell the reels at such a small profit,

