

Notes on "Catching a Trout"

By Richard A. Thomas



Catching a Trout is an N. Currier print. It is based on a painting by Arthur Tait.

Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait lived from 1819 to 1905. Tait's painting was drawn on stone by Otto Knirsch.

It is actually a *Nathaniel Currier* print rather than a *Currier & Ives* print. Currier had hired his brother's brother-in-law, *James Merritt Ives*, as a bookkeeper in 1852, but he wasn't made a full partner and general manager until 1857. The print was published in 1854.

In June 1990, the members of the American Historical Print Collectors Society voted *Catching a Trout* one of the 50 best of the "new" best 50 large folio prints by Currier & Ives. (It's called the "new" best 50, since there was a "best 50" list from 1932. In 1932, it was No. 32 of the best 50 large folio prints.)

Catching a Trout was No. 49 of the "new" best 50 large folios, so it slipped a bit over the years. There are 7,736 known lithographs (of all sizes) published by Currier & Ives, so being No. 49 of the large folios shows it is still one of the more desirable prints.

When the association between the print and Daniel Webster came about hasn't been established; except it was well known that Daniel Webster was a trout fisherman. Perhaps some thought the person in the print bore a striking resemblance to Daniel Webster.



A Currier & Ives print of Daniel Webster appears above, so you can decide whether the fisherman looks like him.

1854 is long after the event (Daniel Webster and the Big Trout) supposedly occurred, and the association of that event with this N. Currier print seems to be of fairly recent origin. Rev. George Borthwick, in his telling of the story (pp. 186-189 in *The Church at the South, A History of the South Haven Church*, completed in 1939 but not published until 1982) makes no mention of the lithograph.

Other evidence appears to demolish the claim that the print shows Daniel Webster catching a fish in the pool below Samuel Carman's mills at Fire Place (or anywhere else, for that matter).

In *The New York Folklore Monthly*, Vol. 20, 1964, p. 159, it is claimed that "the locale of the painting is believed to be **an old estate in Brooklyn.**"

p. 41

Catching a trout, near Tuxedo, 1854. (Old Print Shop, Harry Shaw Newman, N. Y. C.)

p. 159

"The Folklore Scene"

To the Editor,

I note on page 41 of the March issue a picture labelled "Catching a Trout, near Tuxedo, in 1854."

Actually, this is a print of a Currier and Ives reproduction of a painting by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (1819-1905). The locale of the painting is believed to be an old estate in Brooklyn, the owner of which is shown on the left and a man named Clark one of two brothers who were prominent Tammany politicians, is on the right.

Lest this seem only a carping criticism, let me add that we are at work on a biography and checklist of Tait, who spent some 30 years in the Adirondacks. If readers of the NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY have any information about Tait or the present whereabouts of any of his paintings, we would be most grateful to have it.

Sincerely,

Warder H. Cadbury, Research Associate
The Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake

The *The New York Folklore Monthly* was published by the Cornell University Press for the New York Folklore Society.

The source of Mr. Cadbury's information in his letter of 1964 is probably the collector Fred J. Peters, who, on pp. 18-19 in *Sporting Prints by N. Currier and Currier & Ives being a Pictorial Check List and Collation, with many intimate facts regarding the prints* (Antique Bulletin Publishing Company, New York, 1930), states:

Some of the facts which have come to light regarding the various prints on fishing, illustrated in the following pages, will no doubt be of interest to both the fisherman and the print collector. . . .

"Catching a Trout" (No. 186), is a **scene on a private estate in the environs of old Brooklyn** [emphasis added]. The owner of this estate is pictured to the left in the print, having just caught the trout. Mr. Maurer tells me that the fisherman to the right is one of the Clark brothers, who were influential Tammany politicians of their day, but he cannot recall the name of the owner of the estate.

The *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, says that the lithograph "depicts a spirited angling scene, **thought to be on Stump Pond, near Smithtown**," (Vol. 17, No. 4, Summer 1956, pp. 271-272).

Carl Otto v. Kienbusch of '06 has enriched the Library's collection of sporting books by the gift of several items from his important collection on angling. . . .

Mr. Kienbusch presented at the same time one of the finest of the Currier lithographs. "Catching a Trout," published by N. Currier in 1854 after a painting by A. F. Tait, depicts a spirited angling scene, thought to be on Stump Pond, near Smithtown, Long Island.---WILLIAM S. DIX

The *Princeton University Library Chronicle* is published by the Friends of the Princeton University Library.

Of course, it is easy to show that Daniel Webster had an association with Sam Carman, since he wrote a letter on his behalf on March 31, 1845, which was reproduced in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

In a *Sports Illustrated Magazine* article, "The Trout and Dan'l Webster," published April 4, 1966, pp. E5-E8, Nicholas Karas wrote:

All that remains today of this historic event are . . . and a Currier & Ives [*sic*] print that shows Webster catching a trout, with a caption that reads "We hab you now, sar."

Different dates are given for when the Big Trout was caught. Some indicate that it was *after* Philip Hone became mayor of New York City, which was in 1826.

The lithograph was *published* in 1854. The painting on which it was based is said to have been done the same year, but in any case, it could not have been painted before 1850, since it wasn't until September of that year that A. F. Tait first arrived in the United States.

There are other publications, all much later than the article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which report the Daniel Webster fish story of the trout caught at South Haven. The story appears in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on Sunday, December 15, 1895, p. 8. (But it is on the same page as an article entitled: "Uncanny Long Island Tales, Ghosts and Wraiths That Are Said to Haunt Certain Localities," so it can't be said the story of Webster and the Big Trout is true. It does at least firmly establish that Daniel Webster and Sam Carman knew each other well. However,

Webster's letter to Samuel Carman is dated 1845, and the trout story is supposed to be from an even earlier time, around 1823 to 1827, so it doesn't provide evidence of an earlier association.)

The fish story could be true and the print could even be of Daniel Webster catching a trout and both could still be describing events at different times and places, since Daniel Webster went trout fishing from the time he was a child and he is known to have fished at more than one location on Long Island, but we now know that none of the persons depicted is Daniel Webster.

Nicholas Karas probably got his information from Stephanie S. Bigelow, who compiled information of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society which she published in 1968 in *Bellport and Brookhaven, a Saga of the Sibling Hamlets at Old Purchase South*.

On p. 31 of her book, an image of the N. Currier print appears with the caption, "*Currier & Ives print depicting Daniel Webster's famous catch.*" Also on p. 47 appears the following:

Frank Forrester [sic], non de plume of Henry William Herbert had been in South Haven with Daniel Webster in 1827. He is portrayed in the Currier and Ives [sic] print of Webster, catching the famous trout at Carmans Mill pond. Forrester [sic] is sitting in the bow of the boat, Daniel Webster in the stern, and Apaius Enos, the colored man, at the oars.

Frank Forester (Henry Herbert) writes of having heard of the taking of a large fish at Fire Place, but he never makes any mention of having been present.

Henry William Herbert was born 03 April 1807 and did not graduate from Cambridge until 1830, so he would not even have been in America at the time the incident is said to have taken place, so he could not possibly have visited Samuel Carman's mill pond at Fire Place in the 1820s. He did emigrate to the United States in 1831 (according to Wikipedia) "to escape his debts."

The information upon which Stephanie Bigelow relied must surely have been incorrect. (Forester, in addition to making no claim to having been present, also does not attribute the catch to Daniel Webster.)

From: *Frank Forester's Fish and Fishing in the United States and British Provinces of North America*. by Henry William Herbert, Author of "*The Field Sports of the United States and British North America*" "*Frank Forester and his Friends*," Etc. London: Richard Bentley, Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty, 1849.

Salmonidæ.

The Brook Trout. The Common Trout. The Troutlet.
(Section begins on p. 105.)

Weight of Trout, p. 117.

"There is, I am aware, a tale that many years since a Trout of eleven pounds was taken at Fireplace; and a rough sketch of the fish is still to be seen on the wall of the tavern bar-room. I know, however, that this fish was considered at the time, by all the true sportsmen who saw it, to be a Salmon, and the sketch is said to bear out that opinion, though I do not myself understand how a mere outline, not filled up, can convey any very distinct idea of the species intended."

"Trout Fishing" (Chapter begins on p. 332.)

In progress of this subject, I take the liberty of quoting, from Dr. Bethune's very beautiful edition of *Walton's Angler*, the following paper, which was drawn up and contributed to that work by myself, on the Trout-fishing of Long Island, at the request of the accomplished author. It contains everything that I know or could collect at that time on this branch of the subject; and as I rest well assured that my borrowing it will in nowise injure or interfere with that beautiful and admirable work, while I feel that it would be useless and absurd to re-word the same ideas and opinions, and so render it pseudo-original, I do not hesitate to extract it entire:—

p. 339

"Another fish or two of the like dimensions have been taken in Liff. Snedecor's and in Carman's streams; and it

is on record, that at Fireplace, many years since, a Trout was taken of eleven pounds. A rough drawing of this fish is still to be seen on the wall of the tavern bar-room, but it has every appearance of being the sketch of a Salmon; and I am informed by a thorough sportsman, who remembers the time and the occurrence, although he did not see the fish, that no doubt was entertained by experienced anglers who did see it, of its being in truth a Salmon."

p. 349

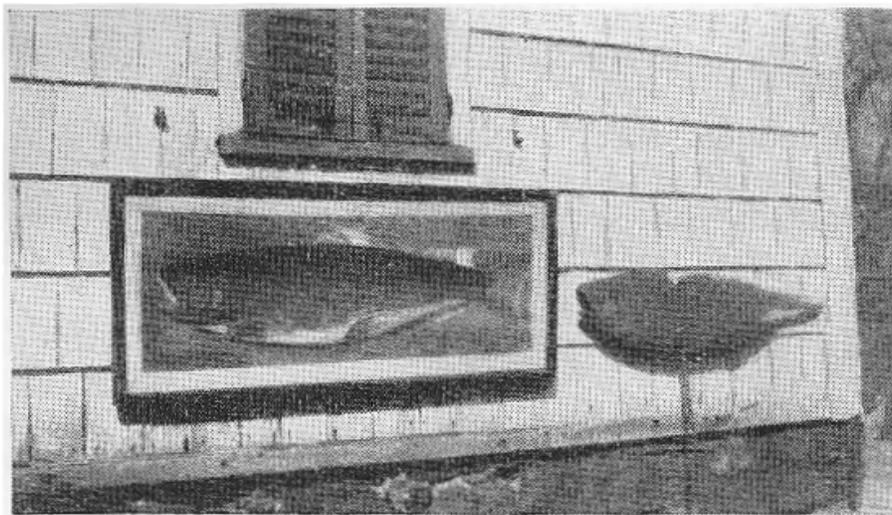
"It may be worth while here to mention, for the benefit of strangers, that the houses kept by Snedecor and Carman are by no means country taverns, at which nothing can be obtained, as is often the case in the interior, but hard salt ham and tough hens just slaughtered. Being frequented by gentlemen entirely, they are admirable hotels in every respect."

[Bryan F. LeBeau in *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001, 380 pages) makes the same false claim on page 318, saying that "Frank Forester is pictured as one of the two fishermen (on the right)." So even the Smithsonian Institution Press may sometimes publish information of very doubtful veracity.]

Edna Valentine Trapnell, in her telling of the story in *Field & Stream*, May 1933, p. 19, gives a different identity for the servant:

Well, on this warm, sunny morning, just before church, one of Uncle Sam's [Carman's] darkies---it may have been Ephraim, but I think it was Lige---came to his master and Mr. Webster . . .

She does include a painting that illustrates her story, but it is *not* the N. Currier print or the painting on which it was based. It is instead a very large painting of a single brook trout. She makes no reference to any Currier and Ives print.



In 1950, Paul Bailey comments on the oft-told story that Daniel Webster had fished on Quantuck Creek (between Westhampton and Quogue) in his column, "Historic Long Island," published in a Huntington, NY, newspaper, *The Long Islander*, on 23 March 1950, p. 10:

A Currier and Ives print which shows Webster in the act of bringing a trout to boat is said by some art students to represent that very day's fishing on Quantuck and that the other occupants of the boat are Mr. Howell and his negro servant, who is at the oars. Nevertheless, the late Harry T. Peters, America's leading Currier and Ives authority, maintained that this painting was founded on an incident at South Haven and that Webster is accompanied by Samuel Carman and the latter's handy man.

This is the earliest reference found so far (March 1950) that associates Daniel Webster with the N. Currier print based on A. F. Tait's painting.

[Quogue lies on the west bank of Quantuck Creek and Quogue on the east. A Presbyterian meeting house was erected at Quogue in 1832. It replaced the meeting house located farther west in Ketchaponack that had been erected before 1758.

The 305-acre Quogue Wildlife Refuge, established in 1934 as a nature preserve, now lies at the headwaters of Quantuck Creek. (In April 2006, the refuge lost its funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and is now managed by a non-profit, the Southampton Township Wildfowl Association.)

Dammed ponds exist along Quantuck Creek, the most southern of which averages three feet in depth, with a maximum of five feet. The creek then flows over a spillway at the south end of the pond before flowing into Quantuck Bay.]

In his 23 March 1950 column, Paul Bailey refers to Harry T. Peters, the author of *Currier & Ives: Printmakers to the American People* (Vol. II, Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931, 404 pages). Harry Twyford Peters was definitely an authority on American lithographs and their makers, but no reference has yet been found in which Harry T. Peters maintains that *Catching a Trout* shows Daniel Webster fishing at South Haven, as claimed by Paul Bailey.

Fred Joseph Peters, on the other hand, does give a locale for the painting ("a private estate in the environs of old Brooklyn"), as was noted above, and he identifies the person on the right as one of the Clark brothers and identifies the person who has just caught the trout as the owner of the estate.

Surprisingly, although Arthur Tait rarely left any record of who the people were in his paintings, in this case he did!

In *Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait: Artist in the Adirondacks / An account of His Career by Warder H. Cadbury, A Checklist of His Works by Henry F. Marsh* (Univ of Delaware Press; First Edition March 1986, 344 pages), on page 36 is written:

Apart from John Osborn, Tait's most important patron at this time was James H. Clark, a Tammany politician who worked in the auditor's office of the Brooklyn Customs House and who, with his brother, was an enthusiastic sportsman. He paid Tait the princely sum of \$450 for *Trout Fishing [sic]*, and then permitted its publication by Nathaniel Currier with the subtitle, "We hab you now, Sar." **This is one of the very few instances where Tait has identified the persons in his paintings: "Portrait of Mr. Mosher, JH Clark [on the right] & Paulos Enos (Darky)."** [emphasis added]

With the approach of the annual exhibition at the Academy in the spring of 1854, a note in the press reported that "Mr. Tait, who has rapidly risen to occupy the very first rank as a painter of animals and game, will contribute a number of sketches to the Academy. Mr. T. is an Englishman born, but a "yankee" for all practical intents and purpose."

If this report of what A. F. Tait recorded is accurate, then Stephanie Bigelow did correctly state one of the last names of the men in the N. Currier print. The person holding a pole with one hand while netting the fish with the other has a last name of Enos, but, according to the painter, he is Paulus Enos rather than Apauis Enos. [It is odd that Cadbury and Marsh in the paragraph above refer to the painting as *Trout Fishing* instead of *Catching a Trout*. A. F. Tait did paint a scene which was made into a print by Currier in 1856 with the title *American Winter Sports: Trout Fishing, "On Chateaugay Lake."* In that painting one man fishes through a hole in the ice while another man, said to be a self-portrait of Tait himself, sits crouched in the background.]

An Enos family did live in Quogue and many Enoses are buried in the Quogue burying ground.

South Fork Cemeteries by Clement M. Healy, p. 25:

Few blacks lived in Quogue, the first of whom were slaves. There were four slaves in the hamlet in the 1790 census. Among the earliest African Americans here were members of the Arch, Enos, and Hawkins families.

Coming through Smoke and the Dreaming: Selected Poems, Ron Welburn, 2000, 102 pages, p. 102:

Shinnecock Arms: Like many coastal Native families, the Enoses were fishermen. On December 29, 1876, six Enos brothers, Poosapatuck-Shinnecock-Narragansett according to Madge, were aboard *The Circassian*, a vessel floundering in a terrific storm. All six lost their lives.

Daniel Webster is said to have fished on Quantuck Creek, near Quogue, so it is possible that other prominent or wealthy men, such as Mr. Mosher and James H. Clark, traveled from New York City to fish there also. Not only did a family named Enos reside in Quogue, but there is even a reference to a Paulus Enos.

The Game-Birds of the Coasts and Lakes of the Northern States of America. A Full Account of the Sporting Along our Seashores and Inland Waters, with a Comparison of the Merits of Breech-Loaders and Muzzle-Loaders, by Robert B. Roosevelt, Author of "The Game-Fish of North America," "Superior Fishing," "Country Life," Etc., Etc. (New York: Carleton, Publisher, 413 Broadway, 1866). From "CHAPTER III. BAY-SNIPE

SHOOTING," p. 66.

The man relies upon himself, and himself alone; he it is that must, with quick observant eye, catch the faint outline of the distant flock, and with sharp ear distinguish the first audible call; his experience must determine the nature of the birds, his powers of imitation bring them within gun-shot, and his skill drop them advantageously from the crowded flock. To excel in all this requires long patience, much experience, and great qualities of mind and body; **and few are the sportsmen who ever deserve the compliment paid by old Paulus Enos of Quogue** [emphasis added], when he remarked, "Colonel P. is a werry destructive man—a werry destructive man in a flock of birds."

If it is indeed Mosher, Enos, and Clark fishing on Quantuck Creek, then Mr. Maurer mis-remembered when he informed Fred J. Peters sometime before 1930 that the locale of the painting was "old Brooklyn."

Cadbury and Marsh published the identities of the three men in the painting in 1986, according to the identities that had been recorded by the painter himself.

Karas was apparently not aware of this new information and did not, in either his book *Brook Trout*, published in 1997, or in *Brook Trout: Revised and Updated*, which appeared in November 2002, alter his account that the N. Currier print shows Daniel Webster catching a large trout at Samuel Carman's mill pond.

The earliest retelling of the *Daniel Webster and the Big Trout* story that I have found in print is a story that appeared in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on Sunday, December 15, 1895, p. 8.

The surprising thing about the story, as told in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1895, is that **Daniel Webster did not catch the fish!** He only *purchased* it from Samuel Carman. (See attached.)

In the many writings by Daniel Webster himself, although he did write about trout fishing, he never claimed to have *caught* the largest brook trout on record, or any other huge fish. Biographies of Webster, although stating that he was an avid fisherman, also make no mention of it.

It would appear that the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* got their story from the lawyers who were defending the rights of the Suffolk Club against Egbert Tangier Smith. So the lawyers likely heard the story from members of the Suffolk Club, who had leased fishing rights and purchased the land for their Club from Samuel Carman.

The lawyers may also have spoken to the son of Samuel Carman, Jr., Henry W. Carman.

Henry W. Carman was born in April 1835, so he would not even have been alive when the event took place, but he would have almost certainly have heard it told by his father. If the lawyers were relying on the information given to them by the 1895 members of the Suffolk Club, the information may have been second or even third-hand.

(If any of the eye witnesses made a record of the events that took place on the day the big fish was captured, they have not been found. It may be that the eye witnesses, like the apostles, never bothered to write down what they experienced.)

There are a number of references to a big fish (usually said to be a trout) being caught in the Carman's River at Samuel Carman's place that were printed much earlier than the *Brooklyn Eagle* story, but these earlier references (before 1895) make no reference to Daniel Webster at all. One early reference is the *Niles Weekly Register*. As this article appeared within a month after a 13.5 pound trout was caught at Sam Carman's place, I expect it is no less accurate than any contemporaneous newspaper article.

The mayor of New York (in 1826), Philip Hone, who was a friend of Daniel Webster did keep a diary which was later published. In his diary, he records, on several occasions, going to "Sam Carman's at the Fire-Place" to fish for trout.

Unfortunately, Mr. Hone's published diary begins on May 18, 1828, which would have been after the events of the Big Fish story. Mr. Hone does record in his entry for June 24, 1842 (Vol. II, p. 133) that he had fished at Sam Carman's for about 45 years, so he certainly *could* have been present when a Big Fish was caught in the 1820s.

I don't know when the N. Currier print became connected with the fish story. *Works that discuss Currier & Ives and N. Currier prints seem to be unaware of any Webster connection.*

A recent book on trout, Nick Karas's *Brook Trout*, (New York: Lyons & Burford, c1997). devotes Chapter 1 to Daniel Webster and his "Devil Trout." The chapter is based on an article he wrote in 1966 for *Sports Illustrated* and which

was republished in *Modern Article Writing* (1967) by George L. Bird of the School of Journalism, Syracuse University. Nicholas Karas had been a student of Professor Bird.

Karas indicates that the print is indeed of Daniel Webster and Philip Hone and was intended to commemorate the catching of the fish -- even though published after Daniel Webster's death and with much artist license applied.

The following refers to a story that appeared in *The American Angler* magazine in the April 1919 issue. This interesting letter appeared in the next issue, May 1919.

***The American Angler*, Vol. IV, No. 1, May 1919, p. 481**

"The Big Trout of Carman's River"

THE article in the April number of *American Angler* about the "Big Trout of Carman's River" has been read with interest. Some years ago I tried to get at the facts of its capture and was told that the wooden outline of the trout had been lost, after acting for years as a weather vane, on the Brookhaven Church. According to the tale, as I learned it, down at Brookhaven, the big trout was left by the outgoing tide in a shallow spring hole and was not caught by fishing. The account of the rush of the congregation from the church agrees with what I heard, but Daniel Webster, who had frequently come down to Carman's River after trout, was notified of its capture and came down post haste and, purchasing it, returned with it to New York, where it was enjoyed at a banquet. Its weight was said to have been over fourteen pounds. It was spoken of as the "Daniel Webster trout."

Carman's Pond must have been the pond now controlled by the Suffolk Club, and the spring hole was just below the dam on the south side. As a member of the Carman's River Club for many years I was naturally interested in the tradition of the capture of this big trout. My son took a three-pound speckled trout in the river on April 5, 1908, and I took one of two and three-quarter pounds on April 15, 1911. Both of these were taken with worms. I have taken trout up to two pounds in the river on the fly, but early in the season the "worm" was the favorite fly.

Robt. B. Lawrence.

Robert B. Lawrence was of the famous, and wealthy, Lawrence family of Mastic. His father was Joseph Bayley Lawrence and his mother Elizabeth Woodhull Nicoll. The Lawrence family bought their property from an heir of the Smith Estate, Charles Jeffery Smith.

Robert Lawrence doesn't say when he "tried to get at the facts," only saying that it was "some years ago," nor does he reveal with whom he spoke or what articles he may have researched.

A more embellished version of the story had appeared thirteen years earlier, in 1906.

***Forest and Stream, A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, Vol. LXVI, No. 25, Saturday, June 23, 1906.**

"Sea and River Fishing." (Section begins on p. 997.)
p. 999.

The Webster Trout.

The thriving little city of Patchogue out on Long Island is the center of a trout district that before the day of private preserves could not be beaten either for big fish or ease in getting at them. Even now sport can be had there if one knows where to go. Almost every male in the town is a trout fisherman, but the chief by common consent is Judge A. H. Carman, president of the Carman River Fishing Club. [Joseph Knapp was also a member.] The Judge can tell a good story well, as witness the following:

"This region was the favorite fishing ground of Daniel Webster. He would begin at the bay and fish our streams back to their source in the middle of the island, ten or twelve miles. Henry Clay sometimes fished with him. There was a big trout in Carman's River they could never get to take the hook; neither could any one else, though scores had seen him. and according to the stories told he was as big as a small whale.

"One hot June day, when all the townspeople were at church and the minister had just got to his sixthly, Carman's little n----r [letters purposely omitted] boy rushed in, mouth open, eyes bulging, one hand holding up

his baggy trousers, and yelling, 'The big trout is in the hole! The big trout is in the hole!' All knew what hole was meant. It was a spring under a big willow tree, where Carman's dairy house had once stood, and sent a little brook into the river. So every man and boy in the house was on his feet in an instant.

"Hold on, brethren," shouted the parson, who was a fisherman himself, 'let's all have a fair start.' Then they made a rush across the fields for the old spring hole, the women and girls tagging after. Arrived there, their first thought was to stop up the entrance, then they got out Carman's old menhaden seine that hadn't seen the water in ten years and was full of holes, and wrapped it round and round the sides and bottom of the hole, while the big trout made the water boil as an accompaniment.

"At last, having him hard and fast, they went back and completed their devotions. Next day some one sent a telegram to Webster, and he sent back a check of ten dollars for the trout, and ordered him held alive until he arrived. He came as soon as the stage coach could bring him, and in his presence the trout was taken out, laid on a broad oak plank and his outline carefully drawn with chalk. From this a weather vane was cut out and swung on Sam Carman's mill for years, or until a West India cyclone came up the coast and split it so it fell. It is still in existence, however, and you will find it in the shop of Nathaniel Miller, one of our oldest residents.

"Webster took the trout to New York, invited in all his friends and made a grand banquet of it in the Astor House, where he always stopped when in the city. The feast was held in the northeast room, second floor, the Vesey street and Broadway corner. . . . C. B. T.

This 1906 story attributed to Arlington H. Carman of Patchogue has begun to get embellished with more and more details that do not appear in the original story printed as printed in the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 1895 or as told by Robert Lawrence in 1919. (Arlington Carman was only very distantly related to the Samuel Carman family, if at all.)

[The later apocryphal gospels are similar, written two generations later, they try to fill in the details --- since Matthew 2:13 – 2:15 says "After they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to look for the child to kill him." Then he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and went to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died," one of the apocryphal gospels, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, tells what the Holy Family did while in Egypt.]

The April 1919 article in the *American Angler*, written by Eugene Connett, has "two distinguished looking sportsmen" arriving at Fire Place from New York City on the Sag Harbor stage on a Saturday evening. Instead of going to church the next morning, the two go fishing and succeed in catching the giant trout. Their excitement then wakens the "ragged little colored boy snoozing in the sun" at Carman's blacksmith shop, who then, after running down to the river to find out why the two men are so excitedly jubilant, dashes up to the church, and runs in and tells the congregation and pastor the exciting news, who all then rush down to the river. He adds the further detail that a "picture of the fish was painted by one Nellie Stone of Morristown." This is presumably the picture in the illustration in Edna Trapnell's article. In Connett's version, the trout is neither killed nor eaten. It is instead placed in a water pen at McComb's Dam north of New York City.

It is not at all surprising that a fish would be taken to New York City. "In that day, market wagons fitted with large water tanks set out for New York along the route of the Sag Harbor stage coach line and stopped at each trout pond to take trout to New York City for sale."

The story as we know it today includes some elements of the Arlington Carman version of 1906 along with modifications arising from the story published by Edna Sarah Valentine (b. 31 Aug 1882 in Brookhaven, d. 23 Jul 1971, Santa Monica, CA). She was the daughter of Jacob Lewis Valentine and Sarah Baldwin Barteau.

Connett never identifies the "distinguished looking sportsmen," but one of the two, or the two together, catch the fish.

Edna Valentine Trapnell wrote that Daniel Webster was present, but it wasn't known whether it was he or one of his companions who caught the fish, but she goes on to say, that whoever it was who caught the fish, it was Samuel Carman who *netted* the fish! (She seems to have felt no obligation of making the story conform to the N. Currier print, so at that time, there must not yet have been an association between the print and the story.)

In the later stories, the fish is *caught* by Daniel Webster rather than being merely *purchased* by him from Sam Carman. There was, however, an odd and unexpected deflation in the value of the fish to Daniel Webster between 1895 and 1906. In the *Brooklyn Eagle* story he paid \$100 for the fish but in A. H. Carman's telling, he paid only \$10.

While the fish is not eaten in the Connett (1919) version, in other versions it was taken back to New York and served at the Astor House (A. H. Carman, 1906) or at Delmonico's (Borthwick, 1938), or at an unnamed restaurant or banquet (*Brooklyn Eagle*, 1895; Lawrence, 1920).

In the Edna V. Trapnell version (1933), the fish was kept in a pen at South Haven for two weeks, then prepared and served to the New York City sportsmen at Carmans, "with nine kinds of pickles."

If it is the same big fish that was reported in the newspapers in 1821, it would have been impossible to serve it at Delmonico's.

[There have been several Delmonico's in New York City (all founded by the same family) with, some say, as many as four at the same time. The founder was a Swiss-Italian sea captain who first came to New York in 1825 and returned in 1827 with his brother Peter. The first Delmonico's was established "soon after" the brothers arrived together in 1827, so a fish could have been served "at Delmonico's," perhaps before 1828, but not before 1827. The first restaurant was on William Street and was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1835. They then opened a restaurant on Broad Street while building a new one, the "down-town" restaurant that opened in 1837, at the junction of Beaver Street and William Street. Sometime before 1853, the Delmonico's established a restaurant at Broadway and Morris St. (opposite the Bowling Green). This was Delmonico's Hotel and restaurant. And in 1876, a Delmonico's restaurant was established at Madison Square.]

Edna Valentine's story was published in the **May 1933 issue of *Field & Stream* magazine**. (Edna Valentine married a Thomas Trapnell in 1909 and divorced him in 1922, but kept her married name.) Nick Karas appears to have relied heavily on her version of the tale in his retelling of it in *Brook Trout*.



Above: Edna Sarah (Valentine) Trapnell, about 1911, with her son, Valentine Coles Trapnell. Edna Valentine, born 31 August 1882 in Brookhaven, was the daughter of Jacob Lewis Valentine and Sarah Baldwin Barteau. Edna Valentine Trapnell and Thomas Tidball Trapnell were divorced on 19 August 1922. On 16 November 1940, she married Alfred William Bruce.

Her story says that Webster caught the trout the first time he saw it, in **1823**. Others say he first saw the huge trout in 1823, but didn't catch it until **1827**. "Webster, Hone, Browne, Van Buren, and John and Edward Stevens were there." Who caught the fish isn't clear. Sam Carman "landed" the fish with the net, not "Lige" or "Paulus Enos" as in the N. Currier 1854 print by Arthur Tait.

Rev. George Borthwick says that the fish was caught in 1827 and taken to Delmonico's where it was eaten.

A much early reference in *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, Vol. X, January and February, 1839, reports that a fourteen and a half pound trout was taken in the "mill tail" of Carman's pond in **1831**, but an examination of the actual report in the March 1831 issue (p. 343) reveals it to say instead:

"As to trout fishing, in the year 1812, on the 11th of March, Alderman B. and myself, killed in Carman's pond, at the Fire place, 68 miles from New York, 46 trout in two hours, which weighed rising 70 lbs.; the largest 3 lbs., **and one *has since been taken in the mill tail, at the same place, which weighed 14½ lbs.***"

The sentence states only that a trout weighing 14½ lbs. was "taken" sometime between March 11, 1812, and the date of the letter to the editor, Jan. 30, 1831.

According to Edna Valentine Trapnell: The fish was not immediately eaten, but instead kept alive in a water pen for two weeks "to satisfy the curiosity" of the neighborhood.

Edna Valentine Trapnell even identifies who had the weather vane made and had it gilded. She claims it was Philip Hone, who, if her date of 1823 is correct for the "catch," would become mayor of New York City three years later. "Uncle Sam Carman had it placed against the wall and an outline drawn. Philip Hone, copying this outline, had a weather vane made, one-third larger than the trout." Carved and gilded, it was set up on top of the church spire.

In 1919, Connett had written more simply:

"The Big Trout" was laid out on a board in the blacksmith shop, and its outline traced; the board was then sawed out, and sent to a wood carver in Bond Street, New York, to be properly finished up. . . . The wooden effigy was used later as a weather-vane on the South Haven Presbyterian Church, and years later was given to the oldest living member of the church, Ellen C. Miller. Today the wooden duplicate of "The Big Trout" hangs over the doorway of Clinton Miller in Brookhaven. . . .

(The Miller house is just east of the cannon at Fireplace Neck Road and the Valentine house is north of that, at the corner with Chapel Ave.)

[Ellen (Carman) Miller was the wife of Nathaniel Miller and mother of Clinton and George Miller. She was the daughter of Samuel Carman Jr. and Catherine Homan. Her husband was the son of Dr. Nathaniel and Sarah (Havens) Miller. Her husband died Dec. 23, 1896.]

The fish in the painting by Nellie Stone of Morristown, as reported by Eugene V. Connett III, although difficult to make out, does indeed look very much like the carving. (See above.)

Each version of the story also has its own weight for the fish, with the later stories giving a weight of more than 14 pounds. Borthwick says it weighed 14.5 pounds. That is indeed a very very large brook trout. Many have said it was some other type of fish (a sea trout or salmon trout). However, on July 21, 1916, a brook trout weighing 14.5 pounds was caught on the Nipigon River in Ontario. It was confirmed by an ichthyologist in Toronto, who examined the skin for the fish's right side, to have been a brook trout, so, although exceedingly rare, brook trout of that large size have been verified to exist.