

The History of Sarah McBride

By Michael R. McNulty

The McBride family settled in Caledonia in the 1840's. John McBride ran a tackle shop in Caledonia and sold flies internationally. Sarah learned the art from her father and won international competitions for her skills. In 1877 Sarah published what may be the first entomology for fly fisherman in the United States. This entomology was based on her work in Caledonia Creek, as Spring Brook was once known. (Caledonia Creek has a distinctive ring to it. I wonder if there's a chance of returning to the old name. The Oatka was named Allan's Creek after an early settler; thankfully that name has changed.)

There is some evidence that Caledonia Creek was fly fished from the early 1800's with brook trout of up to three pounds being caught. Historically it may be one of the earliest sites in our country for fly-fishing.

Reading through the entomology there seems to be good evidence that the insect population today isn't much different than it was in 1877. Sarah refers to the "bright fox" hatching in the first week of May and as being the most abundant mayfly in the stream. I have often wondered about the origin of the name and was delighted to find that it goes back to at least the 1870's. I suggest anyone using the name Sulphur to describe this wonderful hatch on this stream be repeatedly corrected. Reading through Bill Sutton's work on Spring Brook it is interesting to note that the leading entomologists in the country can't quite agree to a species name for this mayfly only that it belongs to the *empemerella invaria* group and that the group needs revision. So bright fox it shall remain.

Sarah also refers to the Gammaridae (scuds) in the stream being the reason for giving the *Salmo fontinalis* (brook trout) their peculiar color, flavor and abundance.

I have a copy of Sarah's entomology that was sent to me by Ed Van Putt who did ten years of research to write his book "The Beaverkill", in my opinion the most thoroughly disciplined book written on the history of the fishing in the Catskills region. If you don't know about Ed I believe he is one of the most important characters presently living in the Catskills. This article was published in The Rod And Gun and American Sportsman on March 3, 1877. It was originally published in the Rochester Express.