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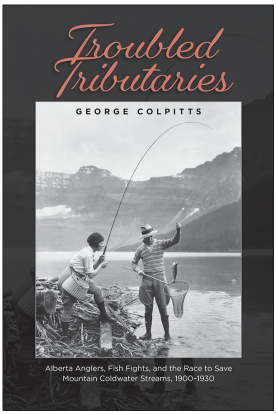

TROUBLED TRIBUTARIES: ALBERTA ANGLERS, FISH FIGHTS, AND THE RACE TO SAVE MOUNTAIN COLDWATER STREAMS, 1900–1930

by George Colpitts

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Saving Calgary's Fish After the Great War

He hid patiently in the bushes, observing and counting before pouncing with his characteristic shock-and-awe tactic to enforce the fisheries laws. Calgarian Frank Kemish was doing his part as a very seriously engaged "honorary" (i.e., voluntary) fisheries guardian in 1921. Most Calgarians would have recognized him in the city or even here, on the Bow River's western upper waters. On most days during the open season (and, one suspects, even during the closed season), Kemish patrolled nearer to home in the city, along the shores of Prince's Island or the popular camping and picnicking spots on St. George's Island.[1] He spent hours along the Elbow and Bow Rivers waiting to catch fish "hogs"—those landing more than their daily allowance or taking fish that were too small.

In 1921, Kemish was poised to realize one of his greatest coups in voluntary enforcement. He had tracked down a Calgary physician, Dr. Dyce, whom Kemish rated as one of the city's top three "hog" offenders. Kemish had discovered the doctor's automobile obscured in the trees on the boundaries of the federal forest reserve far to the west of Calgary. Under a large overhanging willow bush, the physician was busily cleaning some seventy-nine trout that he, his wife, and his fourteen-year-old son had landed. Kemish made his move. He crashed in on the doctor and wrote him up for breaking the law, later writing to Ottawa and the federal fisheries department to report the offence.[2]

In the years immediately following World War I, anglers in Southern Alberta were anxious to see the law respected. Like Kemish, they were willing to voluntarily enforce the regulations; they also deeply divided themselves in debates about the goals of conservation and, by extension, the measures needed to achieve them. Nowhere were issues

so keenly argued than in Calgary. No one questioned the wisdom of placing restrictions of some sort on fishing, and there were quite a few like Kemish who were willing to see regulations enforced. But controversy erupted between competing interests, pitting purists who sought, in the name of conservation, to preserve angling as a skilled sport against those whose vision of conservation led to support commercial expansion. The discord reflected more than just differing priorities, however: since actual fisheries regulations and their enforcement had only recently developed, diverging opinions were natural in such circumstances. But ultimately, debate about fish, fisheries regulations, and enforcement turned on differing understandings of nature itself.

Regulation in its Infancy

The need for improved fishing regulations in Southern Alberta became apparent in the first decade of the new century, given that fishery laws in the region were something of a relic of early territorial administration. The Dominion government had inherited daunting responsibilities when Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory were transferred to its care in 1870. The province of Manitoba—consisting originally of only a small area surrounding Winnipeg—was created that same year and expanded in 1881 to encompass the southern portion of the present-day province. The immediate concern for the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries, which was responsible for regulating fisheries on lakes and streams throughout the West, was to promote commercial lake fisheries on the big Manitoban lakes. The Dominion government sought to encourage large commercial fishing operations to exploit the abundant populations of whitefish and sturgeon in the lakes, with a view to increasing exports to the United States.[3]

By World War I, a similar process to encourage commercial lake fishing occurred in the newly created provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905. The construction of rail links into the northern parkland region of the provinces allowed big companies to ship whitefish to urban markets in eastern Canada and the United States. Rosily optimistic, government officials believed that Canada's northern lakes could feed all of Europe if need be. At the very least, Canadians eating more fish would free greater quantities of meat and poultry that could be shipped to the men fighting overseas.[4]

At the outset, Manitoba's regulations for lake fishing were simply cast, like a huge net, over the entire North-West Territories—a landmass the size of Western Europe. In the following decades when settlers moved into the area, it became clear that this "one size fits all" approach was nonsensical. It was urgent to make fishing "fair" for all involved and create more nuanced regulations better suited to the needs of a very diverse region.

In 1906, Alberta's fisheries inspector, Harrison Young, wrote to Edward E. Prince, the commissioner of fisheries for the Dominion government, about the need for better regulations. Young included in his report comments from settlers and officers of the North-West Mounted Police, as well as the particularly alarmist views from the editor of Calgary's *Eye Opener*, Bob Edwards. Edwards had informed Young that a single party of fishers had taken some six hundred trout from Nose Creek, then flowing from a short distance into the heart of the city. And yet, as Young well knew, not a single guardian had been appointed south of the Red Deer River. Understanding that "it is in the proximity of the town that most reckless fishing is done," he recommended a guardian be appointed in each town in the province.[5]

Meanwhile, sports fishers were beginning to press for regulations better suited to the fish that were swimming about in local rivers and lakes. Arguing that cold-water trout required special consideration, Calgary's anglers insisted that the foothills needed different regulations. In part, they needed regulations to protect "sporty" fish from the depredations of what were, in the opinion of anglers, less desirable species.

At the time, relatively little was known about the species composition, spawning and behaviours of trout in the magnificent mountain streams running up and down the Eastern Slopes. Trout spawning dates, alone, were not well understood. The members of the Alberta Fish and Game Protective Association (AFGPA), recently founded by Robert Darker, differed in their views on such matters.[6] During the association's very first meetings, some members, undoubtedly accustomed to early seasons in eastern Canada, had proposed April 1 as a fishing season opening date. By the end of their deliberations, however, those with more experience fishing mountain streams had greater sway. The group recommended July 1 instead. This later start would better respect the spring spawning times for cutthroat, but the problem was

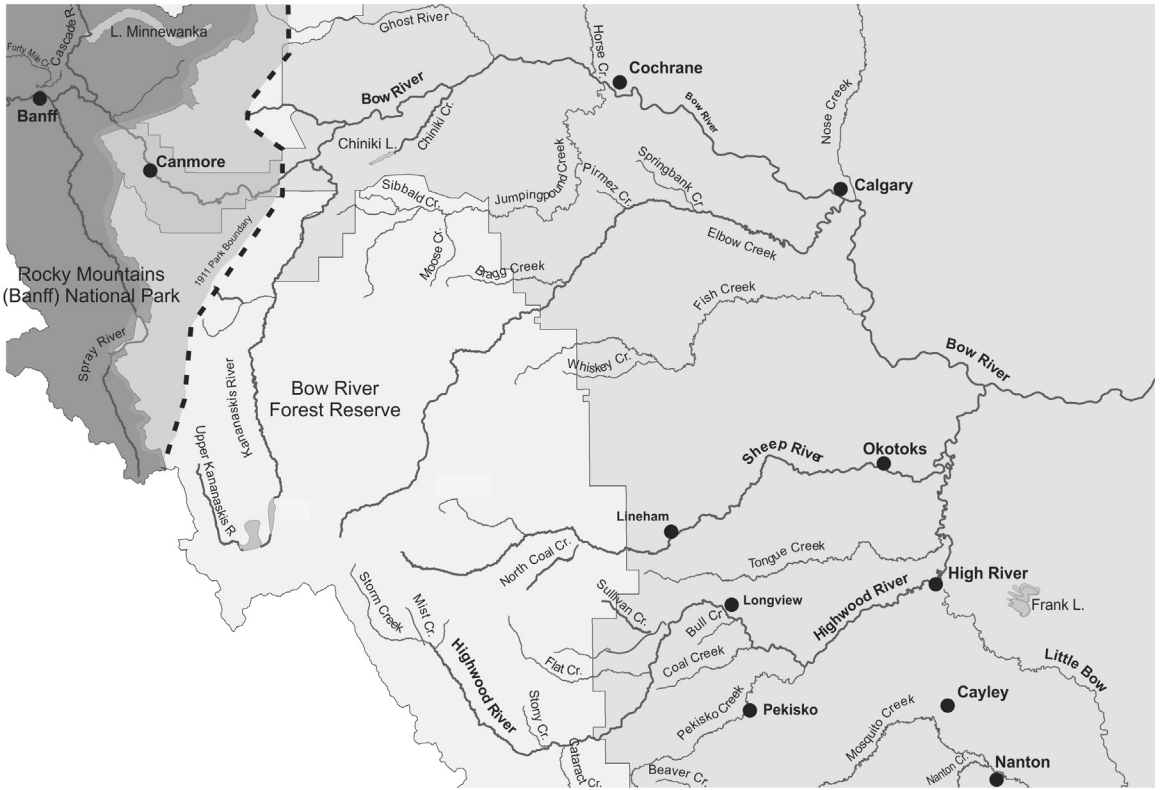
that no one really knew when precisely that occurred.[7] Even by 1908, Darker asked the government to appoint an inspector "who will keep data and records" to precisely nail down when trout were in spawn. He and other anglers had such wide-ranging experience, he himself could not exactly tell.[8]

Albertans got some of their first tailor-made regulations after an inquiry took place in 1910 and 1911. Headed by a trio of federal appointees, a commission travelled through Alberta and Saskatchewan, enduring "arduous, often perilous experiences" as they journeyed to "remote waters usually difficult of access, and to be reached only by dangerous trails abounding in muskeg, or by ascending swift rapids."[9] Wherever they travelled, the commissioners held public hearings in a genuine effort to draw from local opinion on fish-related matters. Fisheries commissioner Edward E. Prince headed the inquiry. An impressive Scottish fisheries expert and a prolific scientific writer on all things aquatic, scion of St. Andrews in Scotland and its experimental marine station tradition, Prince was one of the new, pioneering specialist fisheries scientists who were emerging in the years preceding World War I. Prince had already devised substantial portions of the commercial regulations in other parts of Canada, from British Columbia's coastal waters to Nova Scotia's lobster grounds.[10] Travelling with him was a medical doctor from Calgary, Euston Sisley, an ardent amateur natural historian.[11] Sisley came recommended by no less than Arthur Lewis Sifton, Alberta's premier. Sisley served as president of the Alberta Fish and Game Protective Association and had, according to Sifton, a fine scientific mind. He once had "extensive trout-breeding ponds of his own in Ontario," credentials Sifton maintained would serve him well on an inquiry into restoring and maintaining Alberta's fish populations.[12] Travelling with them was a man of the law, the respected jurist Judge Thomas H. McGuire.[13] A long-time territorial magistrate, McGuire had gone on to serve as a jurist in the Supreme Court of the North-West Territories.[14]

The three commissioners toured Alberta and Saskatchewan, stopping not only in railway towns, but also travelling by canoe and along rough roadways to remote boreal forest communities. In three short months, before moving to the northern areas of the provinces, they visited Regina, Saskatoon, Wynyard, Prince Rupert, Battleford, Bresaylor, Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, Red Deer, Lacombe, Calgary, High River, and,

MAP 2.1

The Bow and Highwood Rivers, with Tributaries. Map by author.



finally, Banff.[15] They filled up two dozen leather-bound notebooks and wore down to stubs several dozen lead pencils as they heard testimony from local informants. Given the rugged travelling conditions of the time, it is perhaps not surprising that Sisley and McGuire each charged to the government two bottles of scotch whisky. Prince, a staunch Presbyterian and teetotaller, did the trip completely dry.[16]

In addition to writing up new regulations, the commission provided a public forum in which townspeople could air grievances, rally their communities around fish protection, and draw attention to the impact of industry, ranching, and other activities on populations of fish.[17] Townspeople complained of waterways fouled by sewage and other pollutants, of settlers throwing manure and domestic animal carcasses into streams, of irrigation works not sufficiently screened, and of haphazard stream diversions killing fish in the droves. They bemoaned city folk heading up streams for "holidays," taking more fish "in one day than they could reasonably make use of," and leaving large piles "rotting on the bank."[18] One Springbank rancher lamented the recreationists "coming out here from Calgary for the week-end and boasting that they caught a couple of hundred fish or half a sackful as the case may be."[19] During the commission's Calgary meetings, convened over two days at the Board of Trade building, Darker's association seized the opportunity to press the government to establish a hatchery. Their membership and other associations in British Columbia had already urged the fisheries department to begin investigating Banff as a location for such a facility.[20]

The ensuing regulations, announced in 1912, reflected in large measure the views of community members who had testified at the public hearings. They also marked a turning point in the history of Alberta's fish conservation, bringing the region more firmly into the larger tradition of regulation in the western United States and in the provinces of Québec and Ontario. The regulations continued a system introduced in 1907 whereby British citizens would pay a dollar annually for an angling permit, whereas non-British visitors (it went without saying that almost all of them were American) would pay $5.[21] Waters frequented by trout and mountain whitefish (or "grayling") were protected, but others were left without regulation, and fishing their waters required no permit. The vagueness of the term *trout*, problematic from the start, was indicative of anglers' perspectives at the time. The

legislation did not specifically mention bull trout at all, and, in terms of catch limits, referred only to cutthroat and rainbow (the latter still limited at that point to a small indigenous range in the Athabasca River watershed) as well as to mountain whitefish. Town anglers had clearly influenced the commissioners' final report, which reflected the popular view that the bull trout was a weedy fish unworthy of protection. High River anglers considered the bull trout a "game fish," but most anglers in Fort Macleod and Calgary viewed it as a pest that should be exterminated to save the cutthroat.[22]

The most important feature of the regulations, however, was their designation of season dates based on still poorly understood spawning times of preferred sporty fish. The law set aside the area from Bow River waters to the US border as spring spawning waters, while the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan Rivers were designated as fall spawning waters. This exercise in "state simplification" drew major differences in the dominant fish populations of these streams and would go a long way toward dividing Alberta's waters, quite literally, into separate and thus more easily managed, areas.[23] To align with their designations as spring and fall spawning areas, respectively, the Bow opened later in the season, July 1, the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan opened earlier, with matching fall closing dates. Season dates on lakes also differed, as did minimum landing size and creel limits. The rules allowed a nine-inch minimum for trout (fifteen inches for lake trout), and a maximum daily catch of twenty-five "cutthroat, rainbow and mountain whitefish." (Again, the omission of any reference to bull trout was significant and would soon haunt the Department of Marine and Fisheries.) Where they were fished, a maximum of twenty-five pike (*Esox lucius*) and pickerel (walleye, *Stizostedion vitreum vitreum*) per day was allowed.[24] To modern readers, these seem like high daily catches, but anglers, it was understood, usually shared their creel with family members and friends, and the larger community upon their return from fishing excursions. Fish, after all, constituted a significant element of local diet.[25]

But even after the formal adoption of these regulations in 1912, Calgary's protective association, with Arthur G. Wolley Dod now president, found enormous holes in enforcement. That year, Calgary anglers were concerned that "everyone is fishing" in the city and nary but a few seemed even aware of the regulations. Euston Sisley tried to distribute copies of the legislation but sporting goods stores selling tackle, rods,

and other items were refusing to post them since even local newspapers had yet to publish any legal notice of the Act's passage. The NWMP, meanwhile, had received no formal instructions and knowing "nothing about the regulations," they were unwilling to make convictions.[26] The Department of Marine and Fisheries sent the association more copies of the official Fisheries Act of 1912, but its suggestion that anglers wanting licences should apply to the fisheries inspector, E. W. Miller, at distant Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, was not helpful at all.[27]

Whatever initial concerns for their enforcement, the regulations and increased vigilance by fisheries overseers did nevertheless make some difference. Calgary's overseer saw officials following up on the commission's concerns about pollution: "the mills in the district were visited and sawdust, &c., found to be satisfactorily disposed of."[28] In the ensuing years, the regulations were becoming generally known and fairly observed by many Calgarians.[29]

Calgary's Divided Angling Communities

By the end of the war, however, even the commissioners' regulations seemed woefully out of touch with the realities of the times. This was particularly the case in cow-town Calgary. There, pot fishing had increased during the war while angling as a form of recreation had risen as a palliative for the stress of life, work, economic insecurity, and the war itself. In 1915, the Calgary *News-Telegram* noted the widespread popularity of angling, particularly fly fishing, which it termed "the pastime of the gods." Calgarians were for the most part still wet-fly fishers, the newspaper reported, casting downstream to reel back their streamers against the current. But the newspaper did note gaining adherence to dry-fly fishing, and with it, casts upstream.[30] If there was a manner of fly fishing better suited to Calgarians looking forward to new economic opportunities just after the war, it was one that cast flies upstream to catch fish coming their way, rather than after fish had passed them by.

And it was just after the war when anglers, sensing an urgent need to regulate fishing more effectively, had themselves appointed as "honorary" guardians and applied the law, sometimes fearlessly, on their own. Frank Kemish is a good case in point. Born in Southampton, England, and having learned the engraving trade in Toronto, Kemish subsequently moved to Calgary where he became an ardent hunter and fisher, as well as a dedicated gardener. His home's ornamental gardens at

1719 13 Avenue SW became a showcase attraction in the city.[31] Just after the war, Kemish became intent on improving the skill and sportiness of Calgary's fishing. He did so in his honorary guardian appointment, conferred by the Calgary fisheries overseer. By 1924, D. A. Richardson approved twenty members of a city angling association to "watch the prohibited areas" and "also check up on those fishing without licenses."[32] These guardians were usually assigned a circumscribed "jurisdiction" to focus on, but that did not stop Kemish from keeping an eye on city anglers who were fishing far from the city. Kemish himself was shocked by the rough ways of settlers who, rather than pursue sport on their leases and quarter-section farmlands, still regarded fishing merely as a source of food, and was enraged when one rancher "cleared out" Whiskey Creek with a potato sack "made into a trawl-net."[33] Like most city anglers, he believed that citizens should do their part. A good citizen ensured regulations were obeyed by everyone. This sense of direct action mirrored provincial politics at the time. The progressive platform of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) swept the party to power in 1921, with promises to unite all classes and occupations in common economic prosperity based on co-operation. This grassroots revolution had its beginnings in the depressed town and rural economies. UFA locals run by both women and men rejected the old nostrums and empty words of what now appeared to be war-profiteering Conservatives and inconsistent, manufacturer-friendly Liberals. Under Henry Wise Wood, the UFA and its close backer in social reform, the United Farm Women, led by Irene Parlby, promoted the idea of co-operative rather than competitive politics and the need to achieve a just, equitable society in the face of interest groups, monopoly businesses, and eastern manufacturing consortia.[34]

Like their contemporaries who sought to change society for the better through greater grassroots engagement and direct democracy, most of the city's anglers were intent on seeing the underwater worlds around them improved and the fish within them conserved. While the city yearbook for 1919 assured readers that "the Bow and Elbow and the mountain streams abound with trout and grayling" and that "one does not have to go out of the city limits to successfully cast a line," it also admitted that "the larger game fish are caught further up stream, and the fisherman's slogan is 'the farther you go for them, the bigger they are.'"[35] Especially coming from a promotional publication, this qualifier

speaks to the changes perceived in Calgary's own environs. Indeed, in 1919, Charlie Hayden, the *Calgary Daily Herald*'s news editor and future president of the Alberta Fish and Game Association, perceived the urgent situation around him. Confident about Calgary's growth before the war, he now saw the cattle industry, the grain futures market, and the retail trade in peril. Like many Albertans now facing uncertainty, he expressed his alarm about the "vanishing game fish" of the region in a letter to the Department of Marine and Fisheries. Drawing on ten years of angling experience on the Bow River, he wrote that "the situation is absolutely desperate" and that "unless the Federal Government takes measures to improve it game fishing will soon be one of the lost sciences so far as Alberta is concerned."[36] Hayden began inserting stories about conservation, natural history, and angling into the pages of his daily newspaper. Fishing stories appeared in sections on automobiles, recreation, and Banff attractions. By the late 1920s, the paper boasted a special section dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation.

The times certainly emboldened anglers like Kemish to act with greater purpose. With pot fishers now lining Calgary's Bow River, Kemish was particularly concerned that some city folks were asking for an earlier start to their fishing to please tourists and boost the post-war economy. As Kemish knew, an earlier season would protect the more numerous but less sporty mountain whitefish populations in streams and might be fine for some anglers, but it would not suit an accomplished fly fisher like himself.[37] His priority was to see spring-spawning cutthroat trout thrive. So concerned was Kemish that mountain whitefish were displacing cutthroat, he devised, quite illegally, an experiment to compare the growth rates of both to demonstrate that mountain whitefish, if protected, would menace cutthroat in their native habitats. He secretly transplanted about a hundred of each species into a beaver pond outside of Calgary and then measured their growth over a three-year period, catching and releasing as he went. Kemish did not leave a record of his results.[38]

Fly Fishing and Calgary's Prized Fish

Calgarians committed to the fine art of fly fishing were in complete agreement with Kemish's priority to preserve a trout sport fishery. There was quite a bit at stake. Their sport tested their fly-tying abilities, heightened their sensitivity to nature, and refined their command of the

FIGURE 2.1

All that was needed: bamboo split rod, reel, basket, net, and a canoe to get around. Maligne Lake, Jasper National Park, 1928. E011073174, RG 84, 1960-124, box 2249, album 11-20, Library and Archives Canada.

art of casting. Spurning the tourists lined up along riverbanks, many trudged far up streams to remote and secluded pools to land their trout. By the 1880s, fly fishers were divided between adherents to dry and wet-fly fishing. The most challenging, and long regarded as *the* sport for elites, dry-fly fishers typically cast upstream toward rising trout and depended on carefully selected attractor flies, those that through careful tying resembled the insects on which trout feed. Bow River master fly fisher, Jim McLennan, called the myriads of strategies, techniques, and considerations going into successful dry-fly casting, "the fly-fisher's chess match."[39] In western American mountain streams, anglers began abandoning smaller, exquisitely tied eastern fly patterns when they recognized the different demands of western trout in their very different aquatic habitats in fast-moving mountain streams. Fly fishers saw cutthroat snapping at giant salmon flies (some growing as large as two inches long), olive-coloured common stoneflies, green stoneflies, and

grasshoppers. In turn, the flies fishers tied struck the "duns and drabs and sober greys" of patterning that Rudyard Kipling commented on in his fly-fishing trip in Wyoming and Colorado in 1889.[40] With time, western fly fishing became unorthodox, indeed, relying on the woven animal hair flies popularized by Franz Pott, later the bulky Bunyan Bug, carved out of wood by Norman Edward Means.[41] The other change was that true sport could be had in wet-fly fishing, using streamers. Long disdained by purists, some of them calling wet-fly fishing mere poaching, the technique of casting downstream with sinking bait attractors, whether feather wingers or furry bucktails, to emulate leeches and minnows gained its appreciation and respect among western fishers.[42] With long silk lines now replacing clumsy, braided horsehair, flies of whatever sort could be cast long distances and then danced, hopped, or dropped into the water's surface or current, mimicking the natural behaviour of a fish's prey. Other key developments were split-bamboo rods—bamboo planed along its length six ways, split apart and glued back together, and then buffered smooth—and more sophisticated reels, which allowed for greater precision in playing the line.

Despite the increasing technological sophistication of the sport, anglers wielding this delicate new equipment regarded fly fishing as an art. It required an intimate familiarity with a stream's environment, its remote pools and peculiar eddies, as well as an almost trance-like intensity of focus. Movements of the water, breaths of wind, and flashes of sunlight all had to be contemplated before a fly was cast intuitively and only precisely to where air or water carried it to where a fish was holding, feeding, or taking refuge.[43]

Anglers' solitary contemplation of trout behaviour, feeding, and breeding made them confident experts on the Bow River's natural world. Expert anglers could speak at length on the fine behavioural distinctions and appearances of fish in their local environments. The most exalted trout, in their estimation, was the native westslope, or black-spotted, cutthroat, *Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*, known for its large mouth and the long slash of red under its jaw. Described by Euston Sisley as "a very beautiful and gamey fish," he and his fellow commissioners in their 1910–11 inquiry agreed that the cutthroat was "as graceful in form and in its silvery hues as it is bold and strenuous in game qualities": "Of all the indigenous fish of the western streams," they wrote, "none are more worthy of preservation

. . . than this highly esteemed and beautiful trout."[44] In his guide to the fish in Rocky Mountains Park, Banff artist and fish guardian Sidney C. Vick, declared that the cutthroat was "without doubt the game fish of the mountains"—a "strong and swift swimmer" that "takes the fly in July and August with a snap that thrills the angler with delight." But this angler's delight was also notoriously finicky about what it took: "He is a dainty chap and if you do not cater to his taste you simply get no fish."[45]

Anglers were aware of another, larger fish—the bull trout, *Salvelinus confluentus*, sometimes referred to as (but not to be confused with) the Dolly Varden trout, *Salvelinus malma*. The fall-spawning bull trout is a comparatively large and heavy fish, providing a modicum of sport to the relatively unskilled angler. Before the extensive fishing that occurred during the pioneer period, and before stream habitats were significantly altered by logging, industrial pollution, and irrigation schemes, the bull trout had a massive range in Alberta. It was probably one of the most widespread trout in Alberta, swimming in almost all the major Eastern Slope drainages, surviving even far into the Badlands areas, with especially large populations in the North Saskatchewan, the Red Deer River, and in the lower Bow and Oldman Rivers. With its large mouth, capacious body, and hefty appetite, it was known to consume everything from rodents to other fish (most commonly, mountain whitefish) and could, in prime locations, grow to a weight of seven to eight kilograms.[46] It tended to swim, some said, more like a shark, turning its belly fully up before swallowing another fish.[47] Among anglers, the bull trout was a crowd pleaser because it was comparatively easy to catch. "This trout is a most accommodating creature," Vick wrote, "for no matter how many times you may lose him, he will always come back and have another crack at it." He claimed that the bull trout could be caught by "anyone who can hold a rod."[48]

Others were less polite in their estimation of the fish. An early report on the Rocky Mountain fisheries dismissed the bull trout simply as a poor sport, "an awkward country cousin . . . of insipid flesh."[49] Following the testimony of local anglers during its public hearings, the 1910–11 Alberta and Saskatchewan Fisheries Commission had condemned the bull trout as a cannibal fish, contrasting it with the cutthroat, which, with its more insectivorous habits, was viewed as more virtuous. The bull trout, the commissioners wrote in their report, "has not the fine shape, active behaviour, determined gaminess and fine

table qualities" of the cutthroat; it is "most voracious, feeding greedily on its own and other species, and usually skulks at the bottom of pools or behind a stone ready to pounce upon any passing fish." Its weakness was its appetite: "it requires no skill to secure and on that account has some popularity among anglers of little ambition or experience." As local anglers informed them, tourists "are pleased with bull trout as nine out of ten don't know the difference between it and a good game fish."[50] If overfished or "weeded" out as a coarse variety, the bull trout could be eradicated in certain areas, and, in the long run, dam building and other environmental changes to streams would extirpate it even from headwaters and doom it to threatened status in Alberta.[51]

Kemish, for one, had little use for the bull trout. He wanted to hold fast to a later fall closing date on the understanding that it helped contain fall-spawning mountain whitefish that were "destroying" cutthroat trout spawn in the spring. A later date also kept at bay the bull trout, which, like the grayling, spawned in the fall. To Kemish, keeping the fall fishery open, as opposed to caving into populist pressures in favour of grayling, was more in line with what he regarded as true sport.[52]

Angler Purists Versus Civic Promoters

Kemish was by no means alone in his views about conservation. A lot of the membership of the Calgary Fish and Game Protective Association (CFGPA), but also the group's anglers who formed the Southern Alberta Angling Association (SAAA) in 1919, agreed with Kemish. Darker served as president of the SAAA, redoubling his efforts to see all farmers and townspeople in Southern Alberta joined in the work of conservation and end stream pollution and the still-prevalent dynamiting of streams by hungry settlers and miners.[53] John F. Eastwood, the president of the CFGPA, likewise wanted to encourage anglers to save their streams. Eastwood corresponded far and wide with other provincial sportsmen, hustled to raise money to gather fisheries statistics and launch aquaculture experiments. He even proposed that his association publish the equivalent of the government's annual blue book reports on the health and status of Alberta's fish.[54]

Although urban anglers agreed on the need for conservation, they by no means agreed on the best approach to protecting the fish in the streams. In fact, so divided were Calgarians that the chief fisheries officer, looking to them for guidance on appropriate regulations, lamented,

immediately after the war, that "no two bodies of fishermen appear to the hold the same views," with the result that the measures they suggested were often at variance.[55]

He likely had in mind those challenging the conservation ethic of Eastwood's CFGPA. An alarming number of newcomers were arriving to cash in on an always expected and seemingly imminent boom economy. They were, in turn, anxious to promote Calgary and foster its growing reputation as both a western metropolis and an angling paradise for tourists. Some of the conditions and infrastructure in the vicinity of Calgary helped them in their efforts. The city's fish contended with terrific seasonal flushes and ice jam flooding.[56] The city's Bow River weir, built just below Prince's Island in 1904 and raised further by the CPR in 1912, diverted water into the company's western irrigation district canal and threw up a barrier to spawners. The weir in other respects seems to have provided good fishing immediately below it. Indeed, before the weir was finally replaced by the Harvey Passage in 2012, anglers knew that biggies could be landed in the churned-up eddies just downstream from the infrastructure where fish were congregating.[57] Then in 1928, Calgary Power raised the Ghost Dam 60 km upstream to wreak further havoc. After its construction, winter river flows slowed dangerously to imperil fish survival. In most of the year, the dam would discharge every night at 7 pm. The Bow's water levels in Calgary, dropping in the drawdown during most of the day, suddenly rose some four feet by 7:15 pm. City anglers usually strategized accordingly. During the drawdown, some easily waded out to one of the many little islands on the river in city limits to fish from there; some even got marooned after the dam's discharge raised a torrent of water around them.[58] All the same, the Ghost Dam's flush, pouring down a drawndown river, did create its own possibilities for good fishing. Calgarian Harold Edward Horne, who owned the Glengarry Service Station, had a favourite fishing spot from an island on the Bow at Shepard, 24 km downstream from city centre in the 1920s. After the Ghost Dam's construction in 1928, he realized that the fishing was best after the dam discharge raised water levels there some eighteen inches to two feet.[59] The river flushing continued until the city built the Bearspaw Dam in the mid-1950s to finally regulate the Bow's flow. Until then, fish likely seized opportunities to find their places and migrate in a flushing stream, or they responded to nutrients suddenly released in the Bow's

FIGURE 2.2

Calgary's Alex. Martin Sporting Goods ad, 1913, *Calgary New-Telegram,* 14 August 1913. Glenbow Library and Archives.

already highly-altered hydrology amid dam barriers and irrigation diversions.

More than dam discharge was flowing in Calgary's waters. By the 1920s, massive amounts of raw sewage entered the Bow from the outtake at city centre. The sewage boosted the river's biotic capacity and likely improved fishing, at least at that time, thus promoting Calgary's reputation as a great fly-fishing destination. But fisheries officials soon learned from farmers living directly below the city's sewer that the fish were "not fit for food."[60] One individual felt that "the fish caught in the river for miles below the mouth of the sewer had a bad taste something like gasoline."[61] D. A. Richardson, reporting on the situation, confirmed the "bad, oily taste" of fish downriver from the city's sewer.[62] Even after the Bonnybrook treatment plant opened in Calgary in the 1930s,

Calgary's sewerage continued to boost the Bow's productivity for ironic effect. As Armstrong, Evenden, and Nelles pointed out in their history of the Bow River, "the Bow below Calgary was dirty, smelly, and coated in places with a dark grey slime; on the other hand, the fish seemed to be enjoying this state of affairs." By the 1950s, before yet more urban population growth required significant expansion of the Bonnybrook facility to save the river's fish, the Bow's unnaturally boosted biotic productivity ensured that "more trout were to be found in the stretch of the river from Calgary to Carseland than in any comparable trout stream in Canada."[63]

Toward the end of the war, a formidable second force of anglers mobilized to promote Calgary tourism and expand angling opportunities on their river. Their priorities differed diametrically from those of the SAAA and the CFGPA. Calgary fisheries overseer, J. S. Hoad, yielded to their pressure in 1917 to recommend the department pull back the season dates. The 1912 regulations had started the season July 1, but Calgary boosters convinced Hoad that tourists would be pleased with an even earlier start.[64] Hoad, in turn, recommended that the season begin June 1 and end October 1. Fisheries commissioner Edward E. Prince took no time to quash the idea. Such an early start would harm spawning cutthroat. Worst still, ending the season earlier in the fall would protect bull trout. Better to keep season dates where they were, effectively reducing bull trout populations and keeping down mountain whitefish numbers, which were "devouring" cutthroat spawn in the spring.[65]

But having nixed Hoad's proposal, the department had to deal with an even more radical one to follow. That spring, Alex Martin Sporting Goods, in Calgary, sent a petition signed by no less than 885 city anglers demanding to fish as early as May 15. Such an early start on "the Bow River and its tributaries" was being pressed "in the best interests of preservation of all trout and of the sport of Angling."[66] Although the Winnipeg-based chief inspector, G. J. Desbarats, rejected the demand, the size of the petition prompted him, his Calgary staff, and Banff hatchery officials to decide on a compromise. The department opened the season that year on June 15.[67]

This hardly satisfied booster Calgarians and by 1921, they organized a rival fishing club, the Calgary Angling Association (CAA). The association was officially dedicated to improving the "character" of

fishing in Alberta and to encouraging a more intensive approach to fish management. But it was clear that the chief purpose of the CAA was to lobby for an earlier spring start to the fishing season. In the view of the CAA, June 15 was still too late, and it pushed again for much of what Calgary petitioners had asked for in 1917: a May 24 start date.

The CAA was also annoyed by the growing clout of angling purists, notably those in nearby High River, who had recently helped persuade fisheries officials to raise the price of a fishing permit from $1 to $2 and were pressing for the closure of tributaries to protect native cutthroat. This had resulted in the first closures in 1919, which are discussed at length below. As the CAA saw it, nothing squelched tourism more effectively than tributary closures and elevated permit fees. In January 1921, its membership passed resolutions stating that closures led to "over congestion" on the main streams and illegal fishing on the closed ones. They also urged that fishing start earlier to allow for more cutthroat fishing, and likewise close earlier, to encourage larger populations of the fall-spawning mountain whitefish, or "grayling," which were popular with tourists.[68] As for the menace of bull trout protected by an earlier closure to the fishery in fall, the CAA had a solution: simply exterminate bull trout through a concerted open- and closed season attack on the fish.[69]

Early in 1921, the CAA membership met with the visiting G. S. (George) Davidson, the department's central division chief inspector posted in Winnipeg. The members urged him to open the season on May 23, claiming that cutthroat had finished their spawning well before that date. To Davidson, the group seemed composed of "fishermen of equal experience and knowledge" as those organized by Robert Darker's SAAA and, finding himself "overwhelmed" by their arguments (and sheer numbers), he complied with the request. Although Darker and others had tried to explain the folly of the decision, Davidson ended up "siding with the opinion of the majority."[70]

Celebrating the very early start that year, the CAA membership organized a Calgary Victoria Day fishing derby. Prizes totalling $300 were disbursed among those landing the biggest fish or the heaviest overall creel. The day's festivities must have evoked memories of bygone days on the Bow River when, with little or no regulation, anglers were bagging the river's bounty almost effortlessly. One of the big winners that day: "Old Bill" Huskins, who ran the Grain Exchange cigar shop. His

deft hand and experience as a former game warden clearly gave him an edge, or at least an extraordinary sense of where large cutthroat and mountain whitefish swam—although Huskin kept their whereabouts strictly secret except to his closest friends.[71]

Whatever fun CAA anglers were having, Davidson soon regretted pulling back the start date. In the next few months, Calgary's fisheries officer, D. A. Richardson, began inspecting streams west of Calgary to determine exactly when cutthroat spawning ended. Whatever experience CAA members claimed to have had, they were dead wrong about cutthroat spawning times. As Richardson reported to Davidson in November, he had found cutthroat spawning well into early June.[72] Experienced anglers of the SAAA already knew what Richardson had confirmed. With their association still outraged by the earlier start to Southern Alberta fishing, Davidson admitted that the May 23 date was "far too early."[73] And so, in 1922, the likely deeply embarrassed fisheries department again opened fishing only after 15 June. Beyond the misstep, the episode demonstrated the potential influence of the CAA. It was large, well organized, and represented powerful business interests and city boosters prepared to push for an early tourist-pleasing season, regardless of the consequences for native cutthroat.

The CAA membership was not easily deterred. In 1924, it proposed an even earlier season opening date of May 1, with an October 1 closing. Robert V. Hunt, who ran the Fisherman's Inn in Calgary—and who, not coincidentally, favoured a longer angling season, as this would allow him to sell more rods, gear, and licences—easily gathered 171 signatures on a petition to support the CAA's proposal.[74] These petitions mattered to federal fisheries officials, given the instability of the traditional party system in the west and the constant shifting of political support behind Conservative, Liberal, and now agrarian party candidates in elections just after the war.[75] In the end, the CAA's new proposal was only stopped by an intense backlash from Robert Darker's SAAA faithful and anglers in High River, who continued to advocate on behalf of spring-spawning cutthroat.[76]

There were, however, additional differences between the CAA and other angling associations. The CAA wanted Banff's regulations applied in Calgary, allowing anglers to land seven-inch rather than nine-inch trout (Banff's regulations were based on the smaller size of cutthroat in higher mountain streams).[77] Perhaps more importantly, the

CAA wanted new fish to catch in Southern Albertan streams. After the war, the CAA initially championed rainbow—not the native variety found in the Athabasca watershed but one imported from Ontario (and those originally from California). Very soon into the organization's work, however, the membership began openly pressing for other exotics. In 1923, the association's leader, the Calgary businessman David Keir, became a vocal supporter of newcomer fish that had already been introduced into mountain streams in Montana and Idaho. Many anglers advocated for brown trout and eastern speckled brook trout. Between 1909 and 1913, the Department of Marine and Fisheries was receiving petitions in support of the introduction of the latter into Eastern Slope streams, on the very improbable argument that they would survive winter-cold water better than native species of trout.[78] Certainly, by the beginnings of World War I, many Calgary anglers were demanding the eastern brook trout already extensively planted in the western US, "where the dancing mountain streams foam over hidden boulders, tumble into shaded pools, and renew their brawling and winding course through rugged canyons." In Alberta, brookies, though growing smaller in size than in the East, would develope "sharp lines and symmetrical form. . . , large and powerful fins that enable it better to resist the force of rushing waters, to ascend the swiftest rapids, increase its activity, and likewise its powers of resistance to capture with hook and line."[79]

During the war, Keir's posting to a regiment in Scotland seems to have taken the CAA's preferences in another direction. It might have been in his homeland where Keir regained a strong attachment to its fish. He and the CAA membership pushed for the introduction of a subspecies of brown trout, and a genetic interloper in Alberta, the Loch Leven, which was felt offered both brute size and a good fight. Keir's association even volunteered to stock the fish in Southern Alberta if the Banff hatchery, by then in operation, would begin producing them in large enough quantities.[80]

Many European fish had already been introduced in the United States because they tended to be heavier and sportier than native species, and, at the time, experiments with Loch Leven brown trout were taking place in New Brunswick, as well as in Montana and in Yellowstone. But in reply to Keir's request for them in Southern Alberta, the Dominion fisheries superintendent, W. A. Found, drew on Edward Prince's keen

concerns about the fish, that there was "some danger that its introduction would eventually mean the extermination of the smaller native species." Prince was following American studies that suggested that once introduced, European species like the Loch Leven became sluggish and complacent and were thus of far less value to sport fishers than native species.[81] Prince indeed had long put the kibosh on demands for exotics in Western Canada. As early as 1909, at a time when the introduction of exotics was first gaining popularity, Prince had warned that, in the United States, bass, yellow perch, brown trout, and brook trout had been introduced to waters "without proper investigation," and was "ill-advised." At that time, and ever since, he had recommended to the fisheries department that only native Rocky Mountain species, primarily cutthroat, be planted in Eastern Slopes streams.[82]

In 1924, Red Deer anglers were successful in arguing that the Banff hatchery should at least supply the Raven River with Loch Leven. However, the Department of Marine and Fisheries refused to see the fish introduced into Southern Alberta, as the CAA wanted. In the end, Calgary anglers gained a concession to their request only accidentally. In 1925, the fish was introduced to Carrot Creek, near Canmore, when a truck carrying Loch Leven from Banff to Red Deer basin streams broke down and the driver had to hurriedly release his cargo there.[83]

Plans to open the season earlier, catch smaller fish, and stock streams with species of fish that had never swum in local waters horrified purists. All the same, even by 1919, individuals within the SAAA had already begun breaking ranks to lobby for the introduction of "spawn or fry game fish not already in this province," and there was now open support among some members for introducing not only Ontario Nipigon brook trout but also rainbow into the Bow.[84]

This, in the opinion of the High River angler's association, was a disaster in the making. As the group noted in a letter to Darker, "When we start to interfere with what nature has done we are at sea."[85] Four High River angler-conservationists—W. D. Elliott, Edward McCorquodale, C. A. Farquharson, and Henry Gould (also regarded as a local bird expert)—likewise took exception to the SAAA's shift in favour of exotics in a strongly worded letter to Ottawa. Elliott, writing with the association's secretary, Frank Watt, argued that introducing anything "other than nature has placed in the stream" was a poor idea, adding that, "We think the [SAAA] is on the wrong tack." As for the push for changed

season dates, which might encourage the spread of fall spawners, High River anglers had noticed a steady decline in cutthroat some forty miles up their own stream, the Highwood. "When one looks back ten or twenty years," Elliott and Watt wrote, "it is sad to reflect that their numbers are now replaced by the grayling."[86]

The stage was set. Whatever anglers who aligned themselves with conservationists might say about the need to protect their favourite fish, the native cutthroat, the business and commercial classes—and, behind them, the demographic clout of the city—were moving in a different direction immediately after the war.

Ironically, anglers so fiercely debating season dates and minimum catch sizes were not in the position to see much of the bigger picture at the time. The fight between cutthroat preservationists and mountain whitefish advocates in Calgary was largely based on assumptions that species of fish grow at the same rate and each species spawns at its own respective times of the year. Setting a minimum size of landings, it was hoped, would move anglers to kill only adults that had already reached sexual maturity; killing smaller fish would otherwise kill juveniles before they reached maturity and strike decisively at a fish population's breeding stock. But, in fact, depending on the water body, for instance, the McLeod River drainage, fish such as rainbow trout grow very slowly and become sexually mature long before they reach five to six inches; conversely, in the Oldman River, the same fish might reach ten inches before it even reaches maturity to spawn.[87] It is clear, too, that anglers wanted to nail down exactly when cutthroat spawn, this to protect them accordingly within closed season dates. It was true that cutthroat is generally a late-spring and early-summer spawner, but it turns out that the species can have "both prolonged and variable" spawning times—from April to August; members of cutthroat populations can have changing spawning times annually and they can spawn at different times within the different streams they occupy in Alberta.[88] Nevertheless, the debate among Calgary anglers about how to conserve fish and which species to prioritize in regulations mattered a great deal in the ensuing question about how to save pioneer fishing in Alberta's cold-water streams.