

HISTORIANS IN THE NEWS

On January 29, 1977, the *Newport Daily Express* ran a picture and detailed caption of the Fur-Bearing Trout. It was picked up by UPI (United Press International). A local news reporter was called by people from *Ripley's Believe It or Not* and the *National Enquirer*, asking if the trout story was true.

The story about a fur-bearing trout is a favorite of fishermen in northern Vermont. The story has been around a long time. Ralph Sessions of Newport created the idea during the winter of 1927. He made a fish with fur on it because his employer, Charles Flint, wanted an idea to use for a novel Christmas card.

Mr. Sessions got the idea while he was ice-fishing. He caught a perch and at home put raccoon fur on it. Then he put it on a mirror with cotton balls to look like snow. He took pictures and then made cards using Kodak postcard stock. After two days the fish began to smell so Mr. Sessions threw it out.

In 1932 Mr. Sessions bought the Photo-Craft Shop on Main Street in Newport. Later he sold his business to Harry Richardson. Mr. Richardson was a well-known photographer who recorded area scenes beginning in the early 1900's. Mr. Richardson may have gotten an idea for a fur covered trout from Mr. Session's negatives. He made a trout covered with fur with the help of Clarence Phillips, a taxidermist in Glover. Mr. Richardson made postcards of himself ice fishing and a close-up of the fish. The fish became well-known at this time and was called the fur-bearing trout or beaver trout.



Alton Brooks, a taxidermist in Glover, has made and sold several fur-covered fish. He has one on his wall made with ocelot fur. Mr. Brooks still tells the tale of the Fur-Bearing Trout. He tells visitors that the fish live 100 feet down in Lake Memphremagog and that the fur keeps the fish warm in the cold water. He says that fishermen need large worms from a manure pile to catch these fish and that they are easiest to catch during special moon phases.