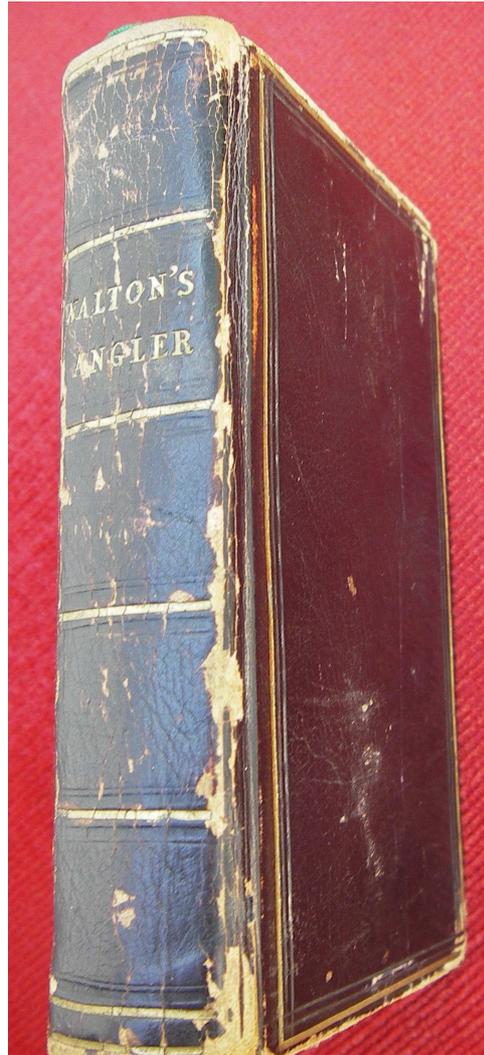


A Fly Fishing Bibliophile

By Art Lingren

I am addicted to books and reading, have been for a good part of my life. At any given time I can have four books on the go and a half dozen more lined up for reading. I can't imagine a world without books. In the year-end edition of *Newsweek* Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon when asked whether the ink-on-paper book will eventually go away? He said that the book was the most successful technology ever and that it has had a run of 500 years but no technology, not even one as elegant as the book, lasts forever.

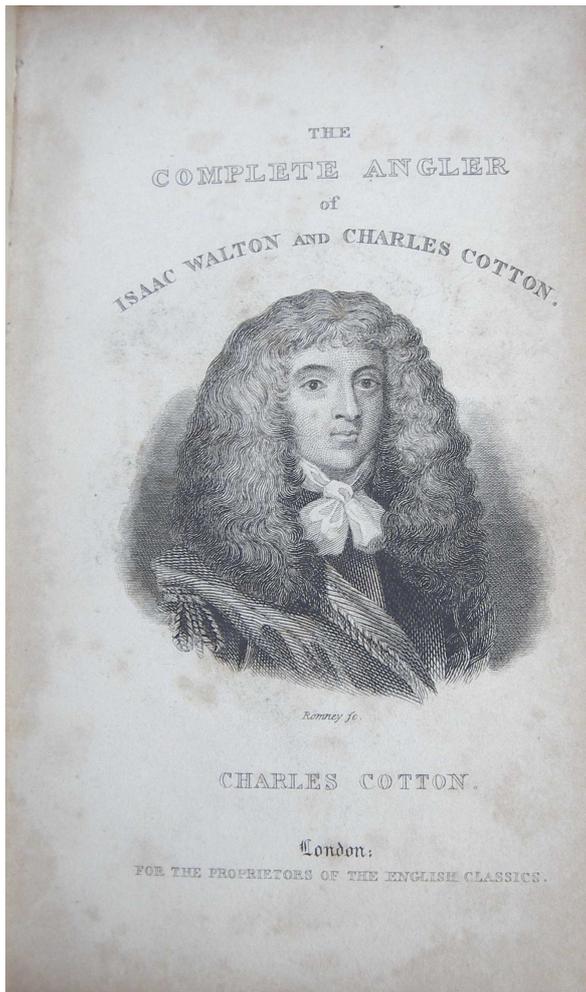
He may be right. People like to do things cheaply and reading electronic books would be the cheap way of reading a book. It is probably the sign of the future, especially for the ever popular paperback novel. I am a fly fishermen and part of being one is my love of fly-fishing books. When I look at my bookshelves lined with tomes about fly fishing and fly tying I am connected to the rich heritage of fly fishing. That is a part of my being and important to me. However, to me a well bound book—the type of book done by fine press --is much more than just words on a page. There is something magical and beautiful when I hold a book in my hands that has been bound by master craftsman. The first book written about fly fishing appeared in the late 15th century. Back then fly fishing books were few and far between and most collectors, even if they could find a copy, couldn't afford to get pricy rare editions and have to settle for a facsimile edition.



The oldest book I have in my library is a fifth edition copy of Isaac Walton's and Charles Cotton's *The Compleat Angler*. Walton was 60 years old when the first edition was published in 1653, and Walton added Cotton's fly fishing

section in the 1676 edition. Since those early editions on *Walton's Angler*, over 300 editions have been produced.

My tome is a small, 3" x 5" leather bound, and well worn, printed for the proprietor, Sir John Hawkins, KNT, by J. F. Dove of London in 1825. When I look at my *Walton's Angler* I muse if a book could talk what kind of stories it could tell. Who was the craftsman who bound the book? Who was the first person to buy the book, at what price and from which London shop? I bought



it at Lawrence Books a couple of blocks from my Vancouver home in 1982 for \$60. How many different owners' book shelves has it shared with other books over the past 185 years? The average Canadian will live 82 years, I have owned the book for 28 years but at 185 years old it has already lasted 2 1/2 times the average Canadian life. How did the book get to that Vancouver book store? Did it come to eastern shores of North America or did some traveler from Vancouver find it in a British used book store and it travelled back to Vancouver in his or her luggage? Because the leather along the edges and spine is well worn, I wonder if that wear was from fly fishers packing it along on a fishing trip. I have read it twice and because of its size it was a convenient book to pack on a holiday as it fit into my shirt's breast pocket. Yes, if books could talk

they could certainly spin some interesting tales on its travel and owners. It will have a home in my library until my death then I expect it will be sold to a book dealer with a specialty in angling or to a general book dealer as part of my estate. Walton is the father of angling and Cotton the father of fly fishing. The fifth edition of Walton's book is an important book for fly fishing historians for that reason alone a must have for any serious fly fishing book collector. I have read it twice and enjoyed its company for many years.