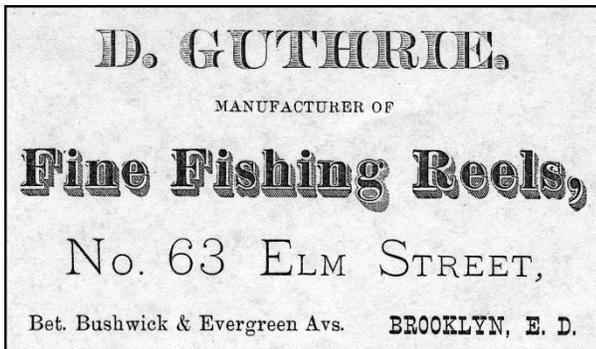


The Guthrie Family

Steven K. Vernon



Guthrie's trade card. (Courtesy of Guthrie Worth)

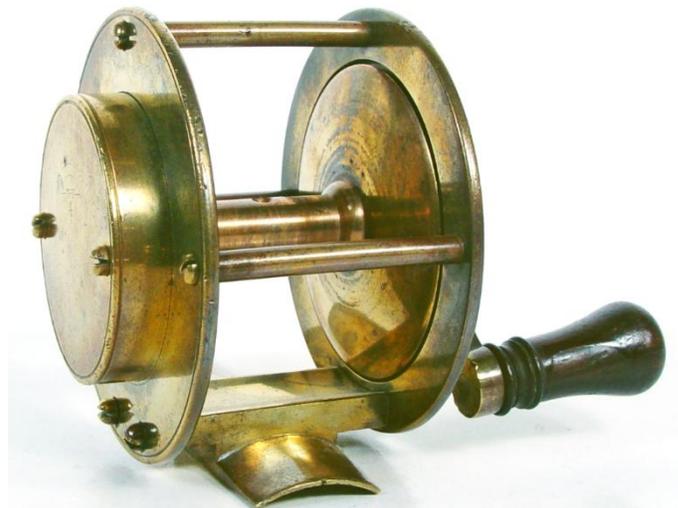
Twice widowed, Charles Guthrie left Scotland in the late 1840s with his five children and emigrated to Cos Cob, Connecticut.¹ By 1850, he and the family were living in New York City, where he was employed as a clerk. At some point, his oldest son David, born in 1835, moved to Brooklyn, and a Brooklyn directory² indicated that he was in the “fishing tackle” business in 1858-9, living at “6th near N. 1st.” Although Guthrie was listed in directories to 1864-5 as a “machinist” or “watchmaker,” he served in the Union Army during the Civil War and was promoted to First Sergeant in August, 1865.¹ His name reappeared in an 1866-7 directory, with an occupation of “brass.” In 1869-70, his occupation again was listed as “fishing tackle,” and his business appeared in the directory’s classified section, indicating that he opened his own business,



A single-action click reel made by Guthrie for Andrew Clerk & Co. (Collection of Roger Schulz)

perhaps for the first time. Nevertheless, he left Brooklyn within a year to become a harbor pilot in Galveston, Tex.

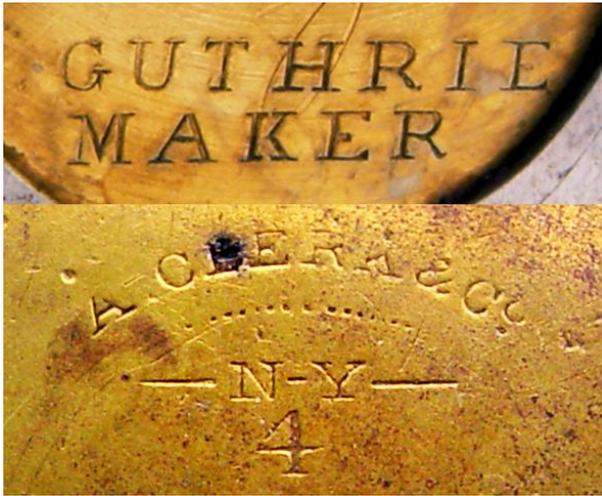
Why Guthrie left for Texas is an open question, but he returned to Brooklyn to manufacture reels. In 1873-4, directories named his occupation as “fishing reels,” and that term, “fishing tackle,” or “reel manufacturer” would appear next to his name until 1889-90, when he was listed as “foreman.” His business was located at 11 Elm St., at least for the earlier years of that period, and during the 1880s, he was joined by his sons Henry D., Charles, and James. By 1884, their residential address was given as 83 Elm St., but this might have been the same building denoted by the earlier address.



The tailplate of the Guthrie reel with a raised click housing. (Collection of Roger Schulz)

The reelmaking business had to endure heavy competition from the likes of Julius Vom Hofe, John Kopf, and Fred Malleon. Following David’s lead of 1890, his sons removed to New Haven by 1893 and were employed there by The Andrew B. Hendryx Co. David and Henry took up residence very near each other at 84 and 83 Kimberly Ave., respectively. The Guthrie family’s arrival at the Hendryx firm was indicative of the company’s major commitment to the manufacture of fishing reels. By 1910, two of David Guthrie’s grandsons—David H. and Eugene H. Studwell—also were employed at the company.

Henry D. Guthrie left Hendryx for a year to work as a clerk in the Dean’s office of Yale University, but he returned as a foreman to the company, where he may



Guthrie's mark is stamped on the reel's tailplate and covered by the click housing. The Clerk mark appears on the headplate.

have been in charge of the reelmaking facility. In 1919, a William J. Guthrie, who lived in West Haven and

who probably was a family “cousin,” was already employed at Winchester Repeating Arms Co. when it acquired the Hendryx reelmaking division in October of that year. Henry Guthrie transferred to Winchester, where he almost certainly was involved in helping Winchester to establish itself as a major manufacturer of reels. He remained there until the firm phased out its reelmaking business during the late 1920s, when he returned to the Hendryx company as a clerk in one of its birdcage retail stores.

Although very few reels are known to carry David Guthrie's mark, there is little doubt that he and his sons were responsible for many unmarked reels or reels marked with retailer names. David Studwell's click mechanism (pg. 25) was patented in 1909, and he seems to have been the only family member to patent a fishing reel.

Notes

1. Guthrie Worth, personal communication, 4/29/2006
2. Directory listings from editions of *Lain's Brooklyn City and Business Directory for the Year Ending May 1, 18xx*, *Lain & Healy's Brooklyn Directory for the Year Ending May 1, 18xx*, and *Patten's New Haven Directory for the Year 18xx*