

# Kopfig Up More Reels

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A catalog published in 1890 by Henry C. Squires, a sporting-goods dealer then at 178 Broadway<sup>1</sup>, New York City, touted a “New Style Salt-Water Reel” made of German silver. Available in four sizes, the reel was a raised-pillar multiplier with a reverse-S crank and a guitar-shaped, raised housing that protected the gears. According to the catalog, “This reel was invented and first manufactured by us...” Squires also warned of imitations made “in an inferior manner.”

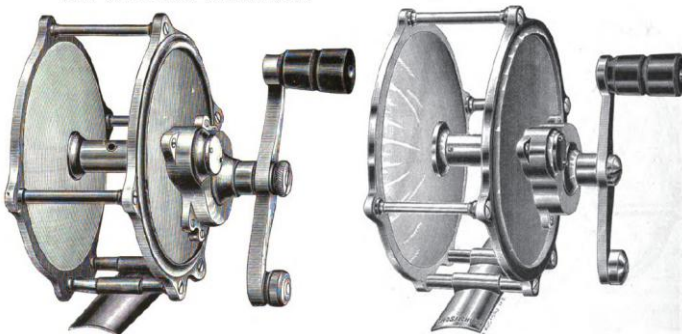


The “New Style” reel with Kopf’s marking. (Photo by Ron Gast)

and, perhaps, to Chubb. The difference in screw numbers may have been a result of Squires’ attempt to distinguish his reel from other retailers’ versions.

Kopf did not stamp his name on most of his reels, and, even when he did, he often marked them internally. This newly discovered reel is not only a scarce model in its own right, but is even more of a rarity in having Kopf’s name clearly visible on the outside. It adds to a growing body of evidence that, in addition to his relatively inexpensive sheet-metal machines, Kopf made some of New York’s finest reels.

NEW STYLE SALT-WATER REEL.



Illustrations of “New Style” reels in 1890 catalogs of Henry C. Squires (left) and Thomas H. Chubb.

The Thomas H. Chubb catalog for 1890 featured a very similar “New style multiplying reel for salt water fishing.” This reel, also available in four sizes, was “nickel plated,” probably plated brass. The most significant difference from the Squires reel, as far as the catalog illustrations go, was that the gear housing of the Squires reel was fastened with five screws, and that of the Chubb reel, with three. The crank screws and counterweights also differed. Was this the “inferior” imitation of the Squires reel?

Recently, one of those reels, made of German silver, was discovered with the marking of “John Kopf/Maker/Brooklyn, NY” stamped on the headplate. Another mystery solved! Reels of this design have been seen occasionally, but, to my knowledge, this is the first that is marked with Kopf’s name.

In 1890, John Kopf was manufacturing fishing reels at 57-59 Scholes St. in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>2</sup> Although the catalogued reels had some features that suggested Kopf manufacture, the Squires claim of manufacture created a cloud of doubt over the attribution. The Kopf marking indicates that he produced the reels, probably under contract to Squires



Tailplate of the Kopf “New Style” reel. (Photo by Ron Gast)

### Notes

1. Four years later, G. Harry Squires joined his father's business, which was moved to Cortlandt St., where it would remain until about 1910.
2. Vernon, S.K., and Brown, S., *The Reel News*, January, 2006, pp. 4-14

### Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Ron Gast and Jonathan Richards for generous assistance in writing this article.