

WINTER'S WEEDLESS SURFACE BAIT:

“PATENT APPLIED FOR”

For Your Fact or Fiction File

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One of the most beautiful and delicate bait and fly rod casting lures ever made is the dragon fly style Winter's Weedless Surface Bait (see Figure 1). It appears, based on advertisements, to have been produced as early as 1921 (Reference 1). It was sold by the H. G. Souther & Co. and by Voedisch Bros., both sales distributors located in Chicago, Illinois. It was also advertised for sale in 1922 (Reference 2). How long it was produced is not known. Winter's baits are rare, especially the small sizes. Interestingly, on some of the very few boxes and advertisements found for this bait is the notation “patent applied for” (Reference 3).



Fig.1: three sizes of the Winter's Surface Bait. Note the small trout size has the hook in the non-weedless orientation.

In researching lure patents for over eighteen years I have looked for, but not yet found, a patent that exactly matches the design and time frame for the Winter's bait. Was the “patent applied for” notice there to scare off competitors and a patent application never filed, or was a patent application filed but rejected by the U. S. Patent Office because a prior issued patent covered the Winter's bait design and utility? The other possibility is that a patent was issued and is yet to be found.

In searching for a Winter's bait patent, one patent kept surfacing as most similar in design to the Winter's bait. That patent was #1,117,281 granted to Frank X.

Schweickert of Bloomfield, New Jersey on March 28, 1916 (see Figure 2).

1,177,281. F. X. SCHWEICKERT.
ARTIFICIAL BAIT.
APPLICATION FILED FEB. 24, 1914. Patented Mar. 28, 1916.

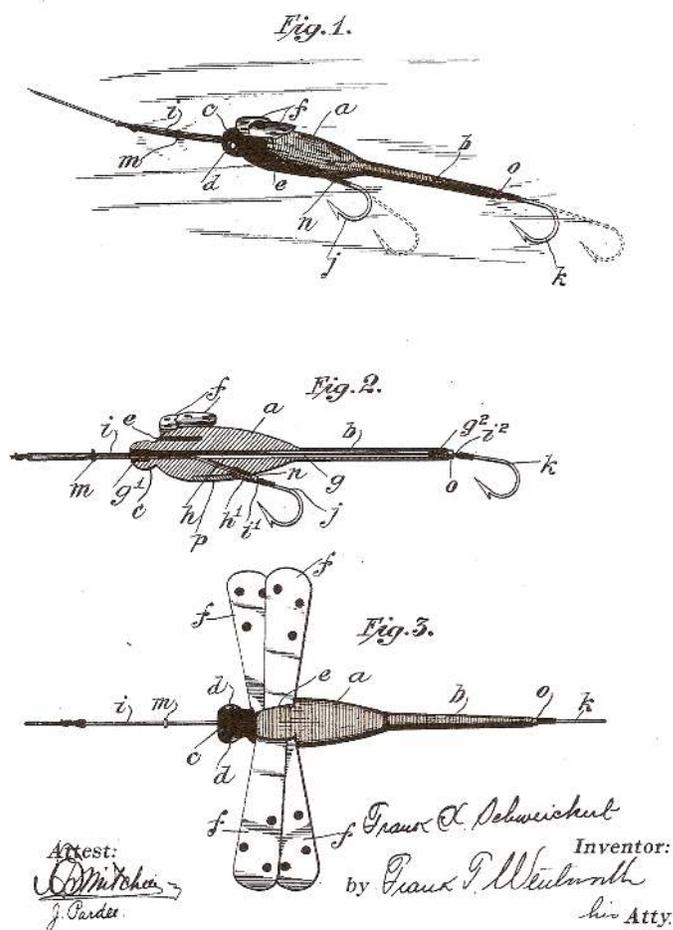


Fig. 2: U.S. Patent # 1,117,281 issued to Frank X. Schweickert on March 28, 1916.

His patent application was filed on February 24, 1914. It is possible that this patent issued before the advertised Winter's bait has enough similarities in design and materials that resulted in rejection of a patent application. It is obvious the hook designs are different. However, the dragon fly shape, the wing design, wing attachment and wing material are strikingly similar (see Figure 3).

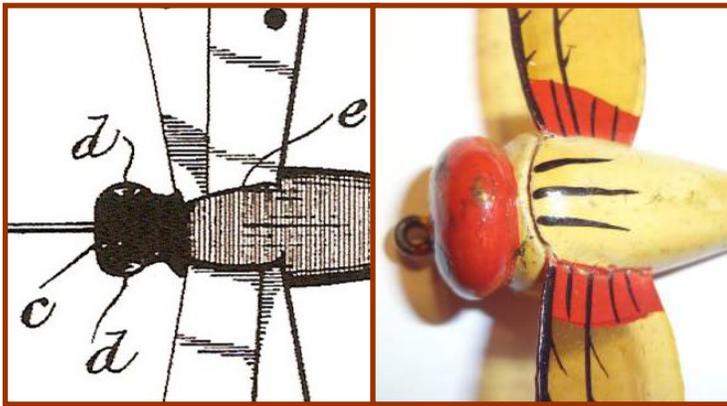


Fig. 3: Comparison of similarities of wing design and wing location of Schweickert's patented bait and Winter's Surface Bait. Note both use celluloid or transparent material for wings.

The overlapping pair of wings located high on the body in both and are held in a slot located behind the head. A celluloid or transparent wing material is common to both. The patented bait incorporates a ballast weight low in the wood or cork body (letter p in patent drawing). An x-ray image of a Winter's large size bait shows metal welded or attached to the hook which would also act as ballast (see Figure 4). Also, revealed in the x-ray image is a small nail used to secure the wings. It is suspected that the combination of these similar features could be more than enough for a patent examiner to deny a patent.

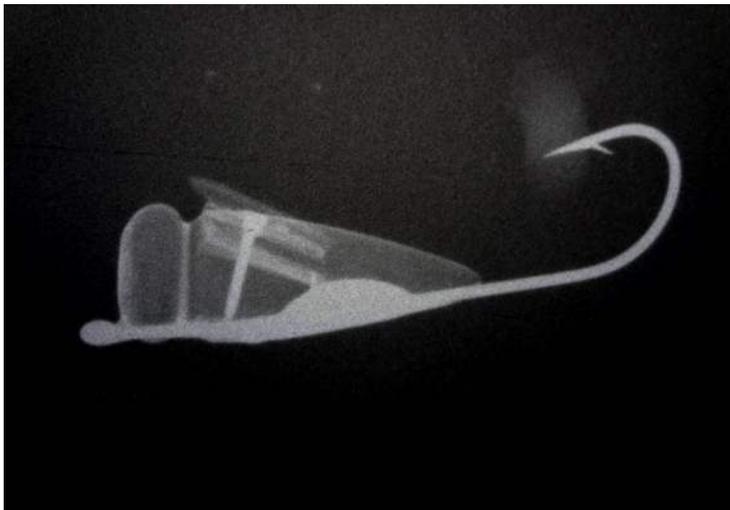


Fig. 4: X-ray image of Winter's Weedless Surface Bait. Note use of metal welded or attached to the hook, and small nail to secure the wings.

It remains a mystery as to who was the person or persons who filed a patent application (if one was filed). Another lingering question is: Who was Winter? Was Winter the inventor or was it A. J. Stockley whose name

appears on one box found for this lure (Reference 3). All other known boxes and advertisement had no individual listed. And lastly, who physically manufactured the baits? Remember Souther and Voedisch Bros. were only distributors. Hopefully more information will surface about this beautiful and fascinating lure and provide answers to some of these questions. Until then, tight lines, and...take a kid fishing!

References:

1. *The American Angler*, July 1921.
2. *Forest and Stream*, May 1922.
3. *FATC News*, "The Winter's Weedless Surface Bait," January, 2009.

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