

Story of Brenco Products Limited and Their Fishing Reels
By Paul Manuel and with files from Ken Kerr, January 18, 2017

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There are 2 known models of fishing reels made by Brenco Products Limited of Ottawa, ON. Good examples of the Brenco fly reel and its much larger cousin, the Brenco trolling reel, exist in collections. Factory boxes are marked with the 235 Catherine St., Ottawa address. The common cosmetic feature for both is a dark pebbled finish such as seen on reels by DAM and Tamco. The fly reel is held together with ostentatious-looking sized Philips screws. It features a latch-released spool and has a single un-balanced grasp. The side-mounted Brenco trolling reel features two bulbous salt and pepper coloured grasps made of synthetic material. It has a central drag control knob and a brake-release lever. Both reel models are sturdy, although the pebbled paint seems to easily flake off the underlying aluminum bodies of these 70 year old specimens. A July 1946 display ad by McLennan, McFreely & Prior Ltd. in The Daily Colonist, Victoria BC, promotes both of these Brenco models, pitting them against fly reels by Lawson (Laurentian), Penn salt water reels and Bronson casting reels. Prices advertised for Brenco reels in this ad were higher than for directly competing products.

Brenco Products Limited of Ottawa was a private company incorporated in Ontario under the Laws of the Dominion of Canada on June 21, 1943. Notice of its Charter being Granted was published in the Canada Gazette Vol 77, July, 17 1943. The company had authorized capital of up to \$50,000. Its President and Manager was John Charles Brennan, a machinist. The main purpose of the company was for machining and the by-line on the company's letterhead stated "Specialized Machinists". There was nothing mentioned in the corporate documentation about the design or manufacture of fishing reels. It is assumed that reels were a short-lived side line.

Brenco shared space at 235 Catherine with Murphy Gamble Ltd. Garage. It is unknown if there were any business relations between Brenco and Murphy-Gamble. Murphy Gamble was a large department store located on Sparks St. This garage was probably a private service depot for their "fleet" of delivery vehicles.

There was a woman by the name of Ida May Cummings who was the corporate Secretary/Treasurer of Brenco Products Limited. She stayed with the company and handled its corporate paperwork until the eventual demise of Brenco starting around 1956, after 13 years of operation. She lived at one home address over the timeline of the company, while Brennan moved house 3 times. Between 1948 and 1950 Brennan lived with John C Brennan Jr, presumed to be his son. In the city

directory, both names are listed separately but at the same address. Their names are accompanied in the Directory with an unexplained acronym "Q". Perhaps they were under quarantine due to a communicable disease like TB, for example.

Other officers of the company when it started up included C.T. Kirby and Kenneth Greene. Greene was a very prominent figure, being a Canadian High Commissioner in New York from 1950 to 1953 while he would have been a Director of Brenco Products Limited. Greene's obituary said he was not only an officer of Brenco Products Limited but also its vice-president. He was a WWI veteran and had numerous accomplishments to his name.

During 1956 the street address for Brenco Products Limited changed to 59 Queen Street, Ottawa c/o R. Stewart & Sons Ltd. Letters sent on behalf of Brenco from that address were written by the Brenco Products Limited Secretary/Treasurer Ida Cummings. So perhaps Cummings found a job with an insurance company and kept the paperwork going for Brenco Products Limited while Brennan was ill. In 1957 she tried to submit an annual return without Brennan's signature but that was rejected. She followed up with a letter of apology saying that Brennan could not sign the documents because was committed to bed due to a broken leg. Then subsequently, in October 1957 she responded to a demand for payment of corporate filing fees saying that the company had not operated for many years and that all funds were exhausted. As a consequence, Ontario removed the Brenco Products Limited name and corporation number from its records in 1958. Probably as a result of an ungraceful ending, the corporate records are not on file in the Ontario Archives and had to be retrieved directly from the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services- Companies and Personal Property Security Services Branch.

John C Brennan is buried in Cataraqui Cemetery (Kingston, ON).

Information Sources:

Might City Directory, Ottawa, 1946-1950: Toronto Public Reference Library.
Ancestry.com Library Edition - Toronto Public Reference Library.
The Ottawa Journal, Birth Valley and Death Notices 1885-1980.
Ottawa Voter Lists.
Archives of Ontario- Ontario Corporation name search.
Yellow Pages, Ottawa-Hull April 1945 - February 1947.
The Daily Colonist, Victoria BC, July 13, 1956.
Ministry of Consumer and Business Services- Companies and Personal Property Security Services Branch, Toronto. TC/RC file #000041098 BRENCO PRODUCTS LIMITED