

# 1904 CROSSBOW FOR FISHING

by William Blausen

This is an EX condition example of a very desirable but rarely seen “Crossbow for Fishing”, (an “Arbalette A Poisson” in the original French), which was made between 1902-1924 by the French Arms and Cycle Factory of Saint Etienne, France.....Stamped “Manufacture Francaise D’Arms Et Cycles De Saint Etienne” ....with St. Etienne being a town located near Lyon in east central France.

This Crossbow has a walnut stock, with the barrel and cross member to which the elastic cords are attached being made of high quality blued steel, with other metal parts being nickel plated, and has an overall length of 37 inches.

This Improved Model 1904 Crossbow shot an 8 mm. aluminum harpoon-arrow (“Fleche-Harpon” in the original French) which was 50 cm. in length (only 2 of which are known to exist) and was advertised to be able to accept different styles of harpoon points, as well as a “field” point for target practice.

The earliest version of this Crossbow was not only designed to shoot

harpoon-arrows, but had a circular portal located on the top rear of the barrel for loading and shooting rocks!..(I mean really?...shooting rocks at fish?....seems like a very impractical idea). The major flaw in the earliest model however, was that when pointed below the horizontal, the harpoon-arrow or rock would slide down and out of the barrel. This was corrected in the “Improved 1904 Model” by placing a wire spring on the inside of the bottom of the barrel which would exert just enough upward pressure on the arrow to prevent it from sliding out under the force of gravity. It also appears that in construction and in their advertising that the Improved Model abandoned the concept of shooting rocks at fish.

This Crossbow is self-setting, meaning that it automatically “cocks” when the slide inside the barrel, to which the elastic cords are attached, is slid toward the back of the Crossbow, and came originally with a nickel-plated, 70 mm. Ferax St. Etienne reel with raised pillars. ....(from the collection of William Blausen).

The advertisement shown below is from a 1904 French catalogue (with the superb translation into English courtesy of Alex LeRoy and Ian Robinson).

## Crossbow Fishing



Crossbow fishing can take place in a pond, lake, river to catch very large fish such as pike, carp, trout, salmon, etc. At certain times of the year and at a low temperature, the fish are caught in a certain drowsiness, which causes them to search for the surface of the water. The use of the crossbow becomes very effective and it is a real pleasure for the fisherman to be able to launch the harpoon which he will bring back with the help of the reel placed under the crossbow, a part that would have been excessively difficult to retrieve in another way.

The new model of fishing crossbow shown above has been perfected to make it quite practical, we have adapted a special instant reel that eliminates any jolt in the start of the arrow and prevents breakage of the line. With this sophisticated crossbow, one can shoot perpendicularly into the water without the arrow exiting the barrel before the shooter has pressed the trigger.

The arrow-harpoon consists of an aluminum tube and a harpoon made of hardened steel. This arrow-harpoon, which is 50 centimeters long and weighs only 32 grams, can be launched at a distance of 50 meters without being tied to the line and up to 25 meters with the line.

According to our tests, the penetration of this arrow in the water makes it possible to wound a fish at a depth of 2 meters, but the shooting is done most often at a depth of 15 to 50 centimeters and a distance of 4 to 10 meters. It is consequently certain that we can shoot at this distance with every chance of success.

**1. Crossbow fishing**, model 1904, 8mm caliber, bronzed steel barrel, sanded walnut stock and butt, finely polished nickel-plated metal parts, crossbows with special extra quality rubber tensioners, total length 91 centimeters, perfect workmanship. Comes with an aluminum arrow-harpoon and a multiplier reel 70 mm in diameter, containing 25 meters of extra strong gimp..... 35

Regardless of fishing, this crossbow can be used for any other shooting exercise.

5. Sheath in fine brown canvas.....	2.50	15. Replacement harpoon in hardened steel.	60
10. Arrow-harpoon in aluminum cal. 10 mm.	2.50	17. Pointed steel screw for target shooting....	40
12. Arrow-harpoon in aluminum cal... 8 mm.	2.50	20. interchangeable rubber replacement	
1/2 dozen of arrow-harpoons.....	11.25	Spring.....	Each 1.50

**Note.** - When ordering spare arrow-harpoon, clearly indicate the caliber of the crossbow that you have.



Closer view below of the Crossbow with yardstick for scale, which has replaced elastic cords (all original cords known are highly degraded and unusable), and a harpoon- arrow made to exact specs.



Photo showing other side of Crossbow.



Photo below showing underside of Crossbow.



View below of Ferax St. Etienne reel with raised pillars.





