

Early Ward brothers decoys steal the spotlight at Guyette & Deeter's annual Easton auction

AN EARLY AND EXTREMELY RARE "humpback" style pintail hen by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland sold to a southern dealer well over estimate for \$201,500 at Guyette & Deeter's annual fall auction on November 10, 2016 at the Talbot Community Center in Easton, Maryland. It was the top lot in the auction and an auction price record for its makers. The buyer referred to it as a "masterpiece," suggesting it's "the most significant Ward brothers decoy known."

Its rigmate, a "humpback" pintail drake with about three inches of its tail replaced, sold under estimate to a phone bidder for \$86,250. An Ohio collector, who was the underbidder on the hen, purchased a wonderful early 1920s low-head-style black duck by the Ward brothers for \$71,875, nearly double the low estimate.

A pair of classic 1936 model bluebills by the Ward brothers also made the top 25 list, just missing estimate at \$22,425.

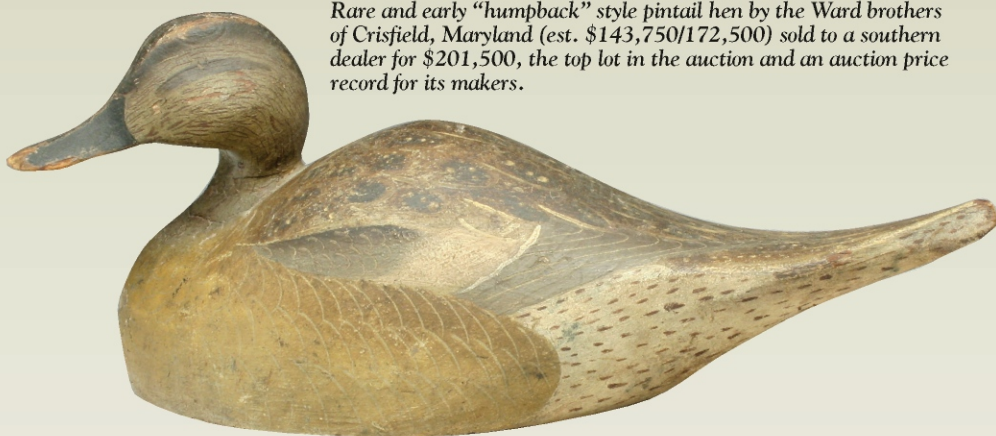
By Decoy Magazine
Photos courtesy Guyette & Deeter

Other Wards of note included a near-mint 1936 model mallard at \$10,925 and a pair of decorative preening mallards at \$10,350. A wigeon by their Crisfield neighbor, Lloyd Sterling, also made the

top 25, selling below estimate for \$33,350.

A rare bufflehead with carved crossed wingtips and an oval brand by A.E. Crowell of East Harwich, Massachusetts was the top estimated lot in the auction. It sold below estimate to a phone bidder for \$143,750. It last sold at auction in September 1988 for \$35,750. Two more Crowells made the top 25: golden plover

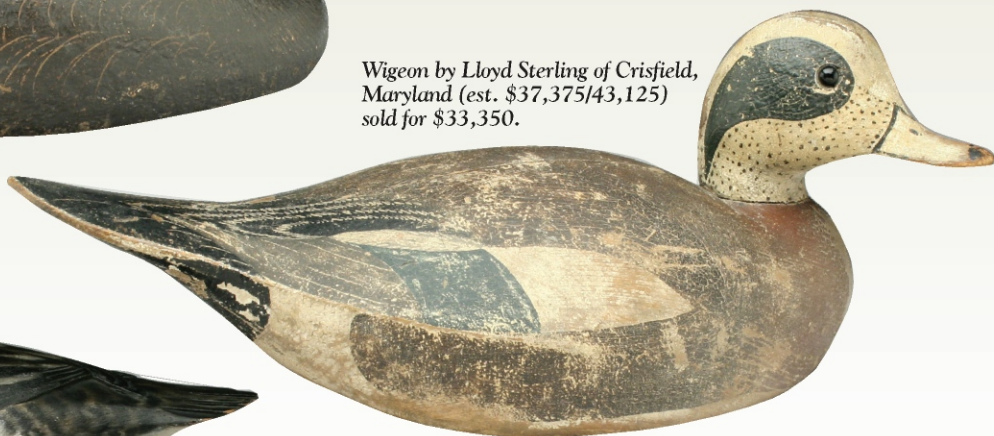
Rare and early "humpback" style pintail hen by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland (est. \$143,750/172,500) sold to a southern dealer for \$201,500, the top lot in the auction and an auction price record for its makers.



Rare and early lowhead style black duck by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland (est. \$37,375/43,125) sold to an Ohio collector for \$71,875.



Wigeon by Lloyd Sterling of Crisfield, Maryland (est. \$37,375/43,125) sold for \$33,350.



Bufflehead with an oval brand by A.E. Crowell of East Harwich, Massachusetts (est. \$172,500/230,000) sold to a phone bidder for \$143,750.





Pair of red-breasted mergansers by Ira Hudson of Chincoteague, Virginia (est. \$31,625/37,375) sold to a Tennessee collector for \$29,900.

in fall plumage at \$20,700 and red-breasted merganser at \$13,800, both short of estimate.

A rare rigrate pair of red-breasted mergansers by Ira Hudson of Chincoteague was the top Virginia lot in the auction, selling to a Tennessee collector just short of estimate at \$29,900. A rare pair of Hudson wigeon had been on the market for quite a while; they sold here after the auction for \$9200, less than half the low estimate. A hollow-carved blue-bill hen by Nathan Cobb Jr. sold to a Virginia dealer for \$11,500, double the low estimate.



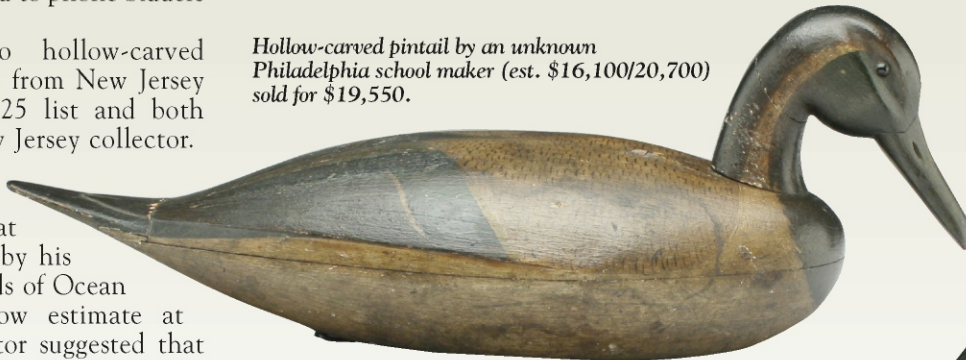
Hollow-carved canvasback hen by John English of Florence, New Jersey (est. \$46,000/69,000) sold to a phone bidder for \$51,750.

Three Delaware River decoys made the top 25 list, topped by a hollow-carved canvasback hen by John English of Florence, New Jersey that sold for \$51,750. A hollow-carved black duck by John Blair Sr. of Philadelphia sold for \$32,200, and what we would call a "Philadelphia School" hollow-carved pintail by an unknown maker brought \$19,550. All three sold to phone bidders within estimate.



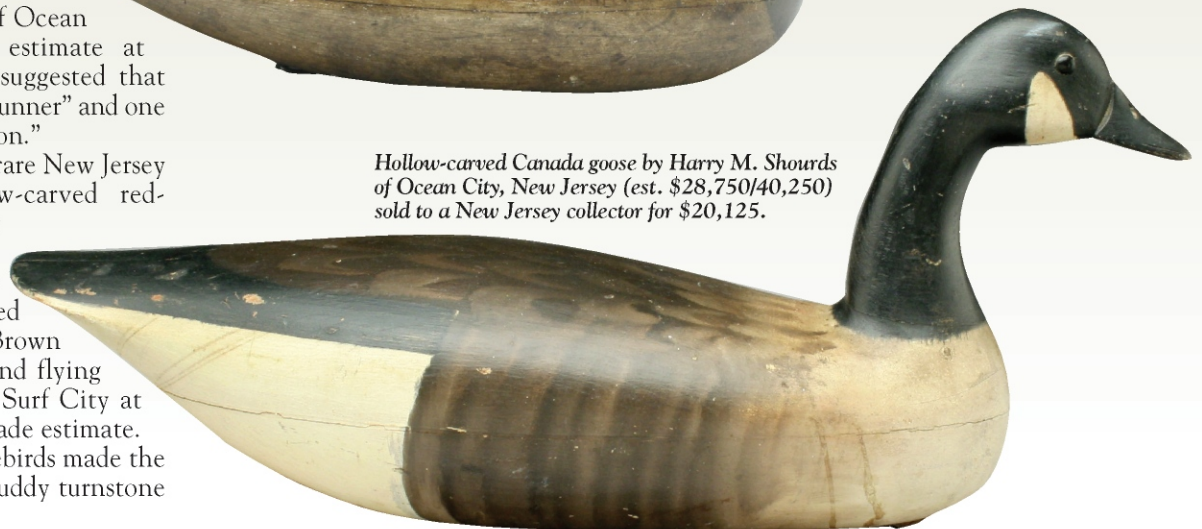
Hollow-carved black duck by John Blair Sr. of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (est. \$28,750/40,250) sold to a phone bidder for \$32,300.

There were two hollow-carved Canada goose decoys from New Jersey that made the top 25 list and both sold to the same New Jersey collector. One, by Harry V. Shourds of Tuckerton, made estimate at \$21,275. The other, by his son, Harry M. Shourds of Ocean City, sold well below estimate at \$20,125. One collector suggested that the second goose was a "stunner" and one of the "steals of the auction."



Hollow-carved pintail by an unknown Philadelphia school maker (est. \$16,100/20,700) sold for \$19,550.

There were also a few rare New Jersey decoys of note: hollow-carved red-breasted merganser by Mark English of Northfield just short of estimate at \$10,925, hollow-carved Hutchins goose by Bob Brown of Tuckerton at \$6325 and flying brant by Ellis Parker of Surf City at \$3450. Only the goose made estimate.



Hollow-carved Canada goose by Harry M. Shourds of Ocean City, New Jersey (est. \$28,750/40,250) sold to a New Jersey collector for \$20,125.

Four Long Island shorebirds made the top 25 list, topped by a ruddy turnstone

Top 25 lots at the Guyette & Deeter auction Easton, Maryland, November 10, 2016

Rank	Description (catalog no.)	Av. Est.	Price
*1.	Ward Bros. (MD) "humpback" pintail hen (157)	\$158,125	\$201,500
2.	A.E. Crowell (MA) bufflehead (46)	201,500	143,750
3.	Ward Bros. (MD) "humpback" pintail (163)	129,375	86,250
4.	Ward Bros. (MD) lowhead black duck (169)	40,250	71,875
5.	Obediah Verity (NY) ruddy turnstone (193)	57,500	57,500
6.	John English (NJ) HC canvasback hen (14)	57,500	51,750
7.	Lloyd Sterling (MD) wigeon (240)	40,250	33,350
8.	John Blair Sr. (PA) HC black duck (21)	34,500	32,200
9.	Ira Hudson (VA) red-breasted merganser pair (283)	34,500	29,900
10.	John Dilley (NY) dowitcher, spring plumage (252)	20,125	26,450
11.	Mason factory (MI) Premier green-winged teal pair (113)	20,125	25,300
12.	Ward Bros. (MD) bluebill pair, 1936 models (321)	25,875	22,425
13.	Harry V. Shourds (NJ) HC Canada goose (67)	23,000	21,275
14.	John Dilley dowitcher, fall plumage (251A)	28,750	20,700
14.	Mason factory (MI) curlew (41)	25,875	20,700
14.	A.E. Crowell (MA) golden plover (218)	28,750	20,700
17.	Harry M. Shourds (NJ) HC Canada goose (59)	34,500	20,125
17.	Charles S. Bunn (NY) dowitcher (196)	20,700	20,125
19.	Albert Laing (CT) HC preening black duck (52)	34,500	19,550
19.	Philadelphia School (PA) HC pintail (216)	18,400	19,550
21.	John R. Wells (ONT) HC canvasback (181)	18,400	14,950
22.	A.E. Crowell (MA) red-breasted merganser (51)	20,125	13,800
23.	Jim Schmiedlin (PA) wood duck pair (5)	8,050	13,225
24.	Stevens Bros. (NY) mallard hen (209)	12,650	11,500
24.	Nathan Cobb Jr. (VA) HC bluebill hen (296)	6,900	11,500
TOTALS		\$1,100,225	\$1,009,950

Key: HC – hollow-carved * – auction price record for its maker

The top 25 lots (7.2% of the 347 sold) accounted for \$1,009,950 (60.6% of the \$1,666,521 gross) and was nearly identical to their total average estimate.

by Obediah Verity of Seaford that sold to a Texas collector at \$57,500, exactly as estimated. There were two dowitchers by John Dilley of Quogue, one in spring plumage over estimate at \$26,450 and one in fall plumage under estimate at \$20,700.

A dowitcher in fall plumage and with a content pose by Charles Sumner Bunn of Southampton, Long Island, New York sold within estimate at \$20,125. The auction house continues to attribute these shorebirds to Bill Bowman of Lawrence, Long Island, although it allows in the description that it is "attributed by some to C.S. Bunn."

A preening hollow-carved black duck by Albert Laing of Stratford, Connecticut, later repainted by Shang Wheeler, sold well below estimate at \$19,550. A rare mallard hen by Harry Stevens of Weedsport, New York, with a "H.A. Stevens" ink stencil on the underside, also made the top 25, selling within estimate at \$11,500.

A hollow-carved canvasback by John R. Wells of Toronto, Ontario was the top Canadian decoy, just missing estimate at \$14,950. Also of note, a hollow-carved Canada goose by Ken Anger of Dunville, Ontario fell short of estimate at \$5175.

There were two lots by the Mason decoy factory on the top 25 list, topped by a pair of Premier grade green-winged teal that sold over estimate at \$25,300. A long bill curlew, formerly in the collection of Dr. James McCleery, sold below estimate to a phone bidder at \$20,700. Also of note, a robin snipe in spring plumage more than doubled its low estimate at \$10,350 and a Challenge

Pair of wood ducks by Jim Schmiedlin of Bradfordwoods, Pennsylvania (est. \$6900/9200) sold to a phone bidder for \$13,225.



Pair of Premier green-winged teal by the Mason decoy factory of Detroit (est. \$17,250/23,000) sold for \$25,300.





Ruddy turnstone by Obediah Verity of Seaford, Long Island, New York (est. \$51,750/63,250) sold to a Texas collector for \$57,500.

Dowitcher in spring plumage by John Dilley of Quogue, Long Island, New York (est. \$17,250/23,000) sold for \$26,450.



grade bufflehead made estimate at \$9775.

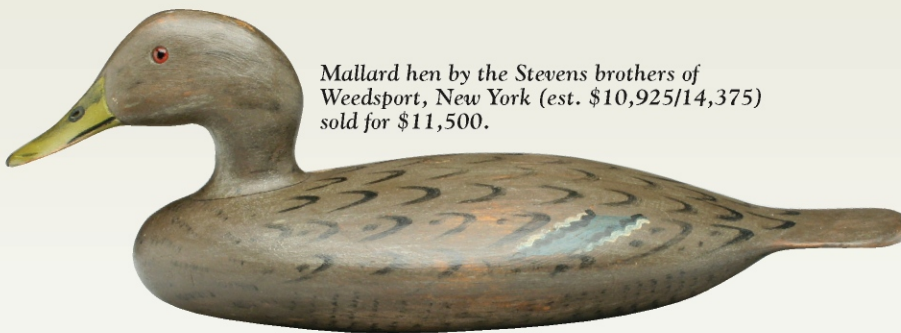
A rare gull with a large serifed "PA" carved in the underside and attributed to Pennell Alexander of Harpswell, Maine sold to an Ohio collector for \$8913, over double the low estimate. A pintail by Leonard Pryor of Chesapeake City, Maryland just missed estimate at \$8050.

A pair of wood ducks by Jim Schmiedlin of Bradfordwoods, Pennsylvania was the only contemporary lot on the top 25 list, soaring well above estimate to a phone bidder at \$13,225. Decoys and decorative carvings by Cigar Daisey of Chincoteague, Virginia continue to attract high bids with a rare shoveler hen selling for \$6325, over five times the low estimate. Others included a pied billed grebe at \$3738 and pairs of hooded mergansers and green-winged teal at \$4313 and \$3450, all over estimate.

There is no doubt that the group of early Ward brothers decoys clearly stole

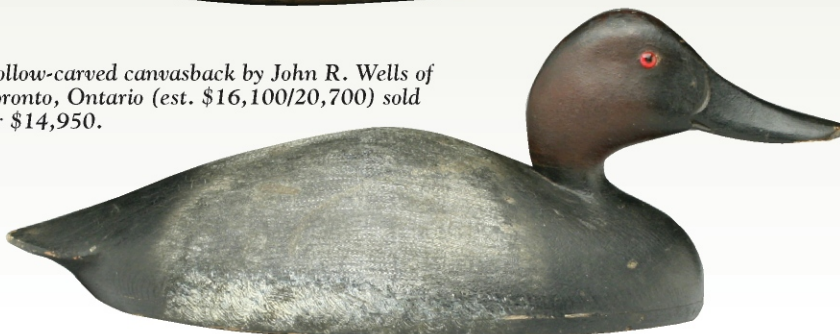
the spotlight at this auction, as they accounted for three of the top four lots in the sale. Yet there were strong performances from other regions, as the other seven top 10 lots were all made by different makers, which contributed to the overall success. There were also 60 lots of flat art in the auction which aren't included in the totals in this report, and 41 lots with a low estimate of \$251,563 failed to sell.

In summary, of 388 lots offered 41 failed to sell, leaving 347 lots that sold for \$1,666,521 for an average of \$4802 per lot and were .9% over their total low estimate after deducting the estimate of the unsold lots. The top 25 lots (7.2% of those sold) accounted for \$1,009,950 (60.6% of the gross) and were just short of their total average estimate. All prices include a 15% buyer's premium. Jim Julia served as auctioneer.



Mallard hen by the Stevens brothers of Weedsport, New York (est. \$10,925/14,375) sold for \$11,500.

Hollow-carved canvasback by John R. Wells of Toronto, Ontario (est. \$16,100/20,700) sold for \$14,950.



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