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COLLECTOR PROFILE

Building relationships
to build a collection

LEWIS BARKALOW

Forked River's esteemed boat
captain and decoy maker

ZEKE MCDONALD

Maker of quality St. Clair
Flats style decoys

AUCTION NEWS

Crowell decorative curlew
tops New England auctions

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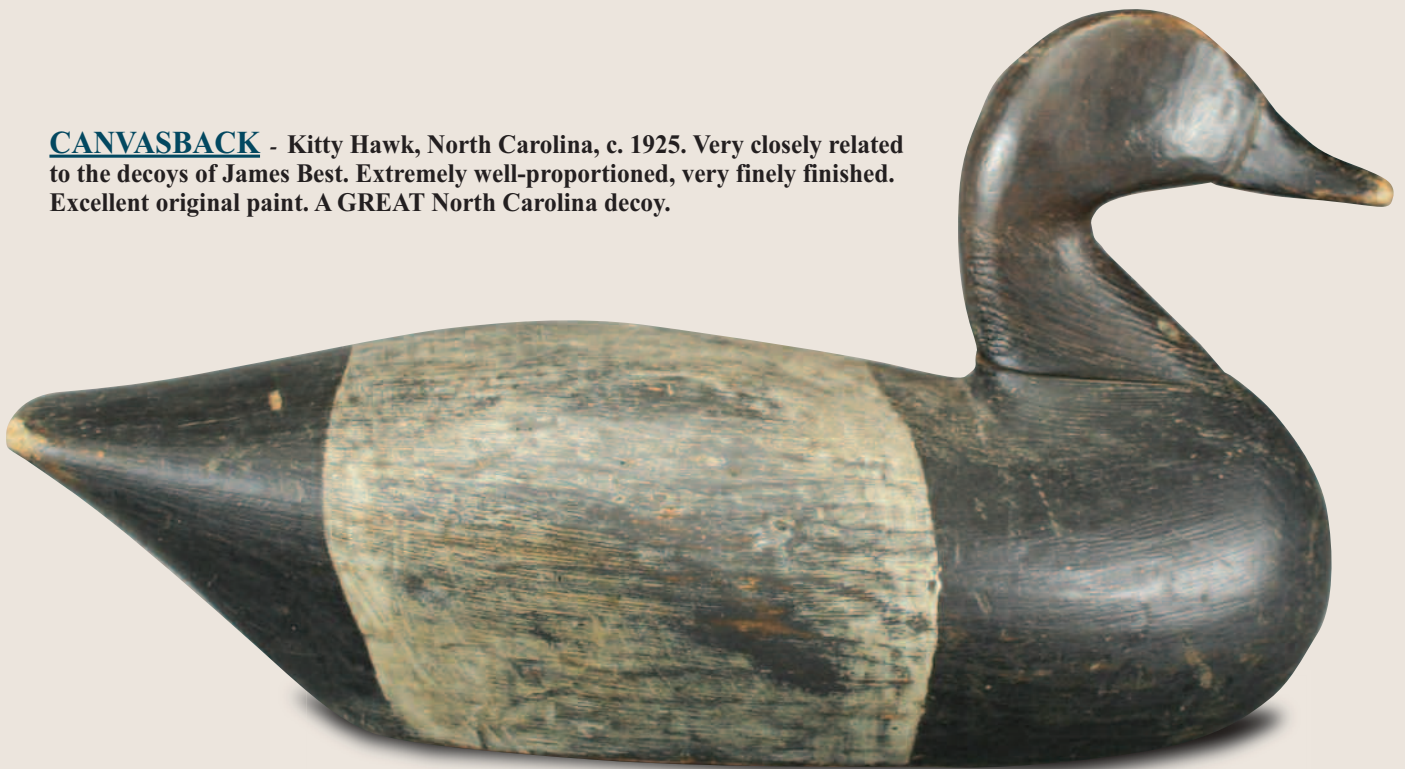


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Decoy Magazine (ISSN 1055-0364) (USPS 004192) is published bi-monthly plus an additional issue. Copyright 2011 by Decoy Magazine, 102 Second St., Lewes, DE 19958. All rights reserved. No material may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Subscriptions: In U.S., \$40 annually; in Canada, \$55 (U.S. funds) annually (air mail); in Europe and Asia, \$75 annually (air mail). Samples and back issues, \$9.95 each, \$12 overseas. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. Periodicals postage paid at Lewes, Delaware and at an additional mailing office. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Decoy Magazine, P.O. Box 787, Lewes, DE 19958, (302) 644-9001; Fax (302) 644-9003.

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING DEADLINES

July/August - September 9, 2011

September/October - November 11, 2011

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ON THE COVER

Burlington Bay at the west end of Lake Ontario was once a haven for migrating waterfowl - bluebills, redheads and canvasbacks congregated by the thousands - and the locals took full advantage of the opportunity. They employed a method of hunting called "screening," where a rig of 50 to 100 decoys was set up offshore. Once the divers came into the decoys, the hunters would sneak out in a skiff hidden behind a small frame interlaced with grass or reeds, called a "screen." Ivar Fernlund, whose decoys grace the cover, is one of the more celebrated carvers from the area.

Russ Goldberger

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Social Network

The annual New England summer decoy auctions have become infused into the DNA of many decoy enthusiasts. While it creates the biggest buying opportunity of the year in the sheer numbers of decoys put onto the auction block - this year over 1500 lots were offered in three sales within a week - it's attraction is additionally enhanced by the social nature of this annual migration, which draws participants from all over the Eastern Seaboard and Midwest.

While decoys are the main attraction, it's the opportunity to share a few meals and drinks with old friends and new acquaintances that creates lasting memories. To that end the auction houses have included lavish previews, free buffet lunches and lobsters and clambakes to encourage that camaraderie, all of which are greatly appreciated by all who attend. Despite those efforts attendance at all three auctions have, at best, flat-lined over the last few years, as many collectors find it way more convenient, and much less expensive, to stay at home and bid over the Internet or phone.

We feel the only way to turn this trend in a new direction is for all of the decoy community - which in this case would require the auction houses' cooperation - to consider working together to create one big summer event. This is no new idea, as we've discussed it numerous times before, but one that should be encouraged if we intend to continue this migration for years into the future. Let's first review the results of 2011.

We headed out for Portsmouth, New Hampshire on a Monday morning, in the teeth of a heat wave, arriving at the Sheraton Harborside Hotel in time for the evening preview of the upcoming Guyette & Schmidt auction, the first of three stops. The preview was well attended and the wine and finger food was first class. Although we skipped the opening day of the dealer exhibition, we unloaded our inventory and set up with about 35 other exhibitors for Tuesday and Wednesday.

In addition to the opening night preview party, Guyette & Schmidt provided free lunch buffets, including an open bar, on both days during the sale. Additionally, they hosted a lobster dinner at Chauncey Creek Lobster Pier in nearby Kittery, Maine on Tuesday evening. Interested parties paid for their own lobster, but Guyette & Schmidt provided free transportation, beverages and live music. (We decided to drive, take the scenic route and get totally lost.)

(Continued on page 6)

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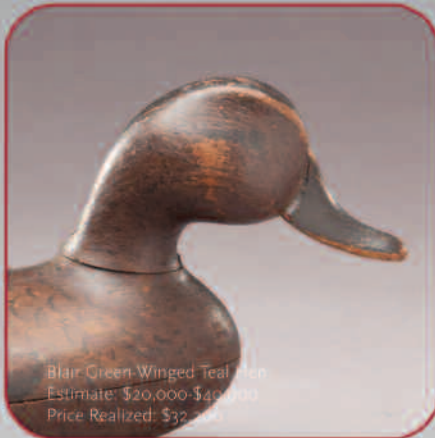
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PUBLISHERS NOTE

(Continued from page 4)

The food was a bit overpriced, but it was a nice venue for a casual get-together.

The Decoy Divas, a ladies social group that frequents the bars at many decoy events, gathered for drinks in the hotel bar on Tuesday afternoon. Having fashioned a poster to publicize the event, the ladies decided to all pucker up and plant a kiss on it, auctioning it the next day with the proceeds donated for breast cancer research. Texas collector Ron Gard offered the winning bid and was last seen having his picture taken with a gaggle of women.

The two highlights of the auction were shorebirds of very different origins likely purchased by the same phone bidder: a turned head willet by Elmer Crowell at \$57,500 and a curlew by Walter Brady of Oyster, Virginia at \$48,875. In all they sold just short of 600 lots for nearly \$1.5 million, the best total for their summer auction in three years. They also sold 30 lots for \$10,000 or more, the largest total of any of the auctions. Yet the high level of buy-ins, which included about 80 lots estimated at roughly \$450,000, continues to negatively affect their sales.

On Wednesday afternoon after the auction we headed south to the Radisson Hotel in Plymouth, Massachusetts for the Copley Fine Art Auctions two-day sale, which featured both sporting art and decoys, the decoys selling on day two. Copley also had a nicely attended preview night, which featured local oysters and beers. As always, the presentation of the decoys and artwork was first class, although we would prefer to have two separate catalogs - one for paintings and one for decoys - just to cut down on the weight. We always see new faces at the Copley previews, as many in the crowd were there to inspect the paintings.

There were about 30-40 dealer tables set up in the hotel lobby for Thursday and Friday. Since the paintings are sold on the first day, many who don't have tables opt for a day of fishing or sightseeing (Plymouth Rock is just down the road). So the decoy turnout was far better on Friday, although by the time the auction gets going the traffic gets pretty slow. But we understand that it was a successful morning for a number of the dealers.

The Copley auction - and we're just covering the decoys - had the best numbers, and highlights, of the week. They sold the highest grossing lot - a Crowell running decorative curlew for \$247,250 - and two more for six figures: a Lothrop Holmes swimming canvas-covered oldsquaw for \$218,500 and a Crowell standing wood duck for \$115,000. They also sold seven of the top eleven lots (there is a tie for 10th place). In all they sold about 320 lots for about \$1.7 million, the highest grossing of all three sales. In addition, they only failed to sell

(Continued on page 16)

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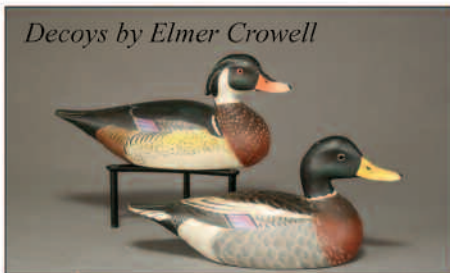


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John Clayton

Building relationships to build a collection



New Jersey native John Clayton, who now resides in Bozeman on Maryland's Eastern Shore, insists that "building relationships" was paramount in his success at building his decoy collection because other collectors will "share their expertise," a key ingredient in making the right choices, particularly for a new collector just arrived on the scene. "I'm still a baby," he suggests, referring to his relative newness in the hobby, as it wasn't until 1992 that he bought his first "real decoy." He also realized that relationships are a two way street, and by 1998, less than 10 years after joining the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association, he became its president, a position he held for five years ("I got roped into it," he jokes.), and has served as the president of the East Coast Decoy Collectors for over a dozen years. Since 2003 John has been a Board Member of the Ward Museum in Salisbury, Maryland, generously volunteering hours of his time.

BOZEMAN, MARYLAND



Running yellowlegs with scratch feather paint by Ira Hudson of Chincoteague, Virginia, ca. 1920.



Hollow red-breasted merganser by Charles H. Huff of East Long Branch, New Jersey, ca. 1900.



Hollow three-piece "Blair School" wood duck with pegged construction, ca. 1870.

Paddle tail pintail by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland, ca. 1930.



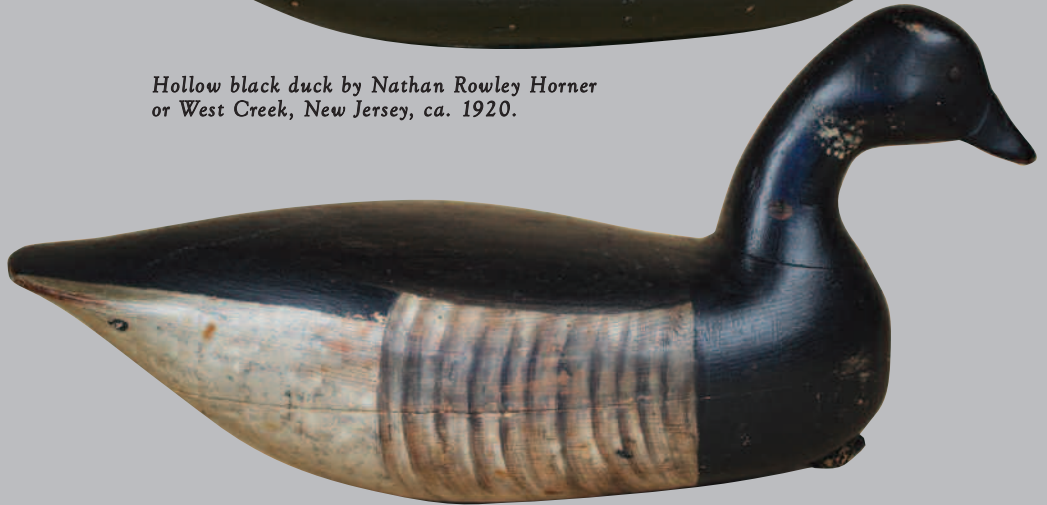
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DECOY MAGAZINE

JOHN GREW UP in Silverton, New Jersey, near Silver Bay, an area that used to be called Mosquito Cove. Not surprisingly, real estate developers eventually changed its name. Waterfowling had deep roots in his family, as his great, great grandfather was listed as a “gunner” in the 1850s census and his great grandfather was a market hunter and bayman who took out fishing parties on Barnegat Bay, reportedly guiding President Grover Cleveland on numerous duck hunting trips.

In his younger days John, an avid duck hunter, gunned over the family’s hunting rig, most of which was stolen in the 1960s, leaving only a few examples remaining. In the 1970s his father gave him four of the remaining decoys, including a couple of brant that have been attributed to Liberty Price; some collectors believe they are early examples by Joe King of Tuckerton. Little did he realize at the time they would be the start of a decoy collection.

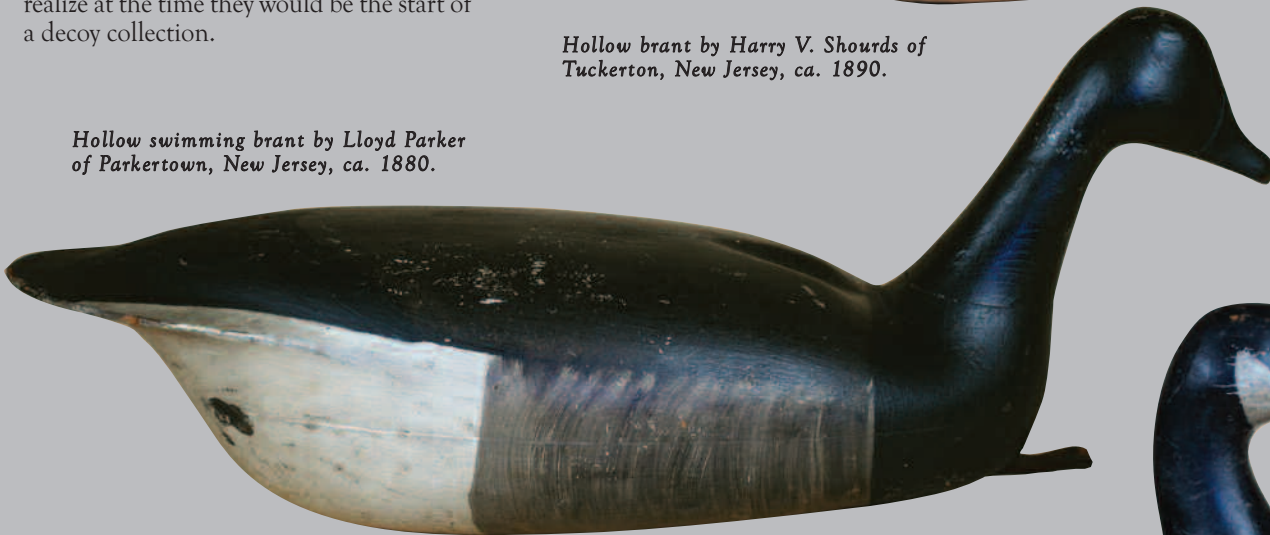


Hollow black duck by Nathan Rowley Horner or West Creek, New Jersey, ca. 1920.



Hollow brant by Harry V. Shourds of Tuckerton, New Jersey, ca. 1890.

Hollow swimming brant by Lloyd Parker of Parkertown, New Jersey, ca. 1880.



Hollow Canada goose by Phineas Reeves of Long Point, Ontario, ca. 1880.



Pair of black-bellied plovers, in spring and fall plumage, attributed to "Schutte" of Cape May, New Jersey, ca. 1890.



Ruddy turnstone with whimsical paint patterns by an unknown New Jersey maker, ca. 1900.



Golden plover with excellent paint pattern by Elmer Crowell of East Harwich, Massachusetts, ca. 1910.



Pair of black-bellied plovers with bulbous heads by Bill Harris of Brigantine, New Jersey, ca. 1890.



Running peep by Obediah Verity of Seaford, Long Island, ca. 1880, and a running yellowlegs by Tom Gelston of Jamaica Bay, Long Island, ca. 1900.

In the 1970s John's father began spending the winters in Florida, where he met Charlie Birdsall who moved there in 1977. He began buying some of Charlie's hand-made decoys and giving them to John as gifts. Slowly his "collection" began to grow, primarily comprised of contemporary decoys. Eventually John found out about the decoy show in nearby Toms River, attended it and began adding to his numbers. By the late 1980s he heard about the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association and soon became a member.

At one of his first meetings he met Bill Cordrey, the first of many relationships, and began attending some of the East Coast shows with him, such as Havre de Grace, Maryland and Cape Charles, Virginia, as well as the show in Ohio. Due to Bill's interest in Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys, John began buying them as well - still focusing on relatively contemporary birds, such as Madison Mitchell's - and started putting together his initial collection. But after buying a copy of Henry Fleckenstein's book on New Jersey decoys, and devouring its contents, he decided he wanted to focus on traditional decoys from his native state. And in 1992 he bought his first old bird, a Harry V. Shourds brant from Larry Polin, and became a full-fledged collector of vintage decoys.



Curlew, ex-collection of Dr. James McCleery, by Harry V. Shourds, ca. 1890.



Pair of hollow broadbills by Harry V. Shourds, ca. 1890

If John started out slow he made up for it in time. In 1996 he made his first trip to the National Antique Decoy Show in St. Charles, Illinois to witness the sale of the Hillman collection. "I was starting to get my feet wet," he says, as he added three decoys to his collection at the auction. And he refers to the McCleery auction, held by Sotheby's in New York City in January 2000 as his "coming out party," where on a handful of lots he competed with some of the big boys, including the winning bid on a Harry V. Shourds curlew, still one of his favorite shore birds. People take notice.

While New Jersey brant are both his first and last love, John's collection "has evolved enormously" over the years - "morphing," as he likes to call it. Even after the purchase of his Shourds brant he continued to build an Upper Bay collection, now focused on vintage decoys, which culminated in his purchase of a pair of high head canvasbacks by Charles Nelson Barnard. After much coercion by an avid Upper Bay collector - another relationship that worked both ways - he eventually sold the pair, and without the "crown jewel" he quickly sold the rest. He then shifted his interests - and finances - into shorebirds.

"My wife likes shorebirds," he says, referring to Dora, one of the founding members of the "Decoy Divas," a ladies' social group that gathers at shows and auctions, and his regular companion on most of his decoy hunting trips, which now take him to all of the major auctions throughout the year and many of the more important regional and national shows. When it comes to shorebirds, "I like to buy one or two good examples by each of the top makers," he says, and along with the many



Hollow bluebill by Dan English of Florence, New Jersey, ca. 1900.



Pair of hollow oldsquaws by Mark English of Northfield, New Jersey, ca. 1880.



Hollow swimming brant by Benjamin Maxwell of Wading River, New Jersey, ca. 1890.



Hollow black duck with scratch feather paint by Rhodes Truex of Atlantic City, New Jersey, ca. 1900.



Hollow brant by either Liberty Price or Joe King of Tuckerton, ca. 1870. It is from the hunting rig of John Clayton's great-grandfather.



Hollow Canada goose by Clark Madara of Pitman, New Jersey, ca. 1920.

New Jersey shorebirds on his shelf are choice pieces by the top East Coast carvers.

Along the way John's also added a few birds from other regions - a Phineas Reeves Canada goose is among his favorites - but after reaching out his interests "always came back to New Jersey," where most of his efforts are now focused. "It gets to the point where you ask the question, will it enhance my collection," a question more collectors should consider. "There's only so much money to spend, so refining your collection is part of the fun."

But he does have favorites, which can make the "choosing" a little easier. John's a "big fan" of Elmer Crowell shorebirds, and a wonderfully painted golden plover he owns is one of Elmer's finer accomplishments. For duck and goose decoys, he favors the work of Harry V. Shourds - for their "simplistic beauty" - and the Ward brothers - for their "expressive nature."

Since he's been on the scene for "only 20 years," John doesn't feel he can offer a lot of advice, beyond the usual suggestions, such as doing your homework, attending the shows and auctions and handling as many decoys as possible. "Enjoy the trip," he says, "and as the years go by you'll build more confidence." But most importantly, he insists, "building relationships" is the key to success.

To that end he related an auction he attended in Baltimore in the 1990s, where a Thomas Gelston running yellowlegs was being offered for sale. Still new to decoys, he called a Long Island collector he had met, discussed the decoy with him, and it became the first shorebird he added to his collection. Another favorite of his, an early 1930s Ward pintail that he spotted at a show, was priced out of his range. The dealer told him to take it and put him on a year and a half time-payment plan, an offer he couldn't refuse.



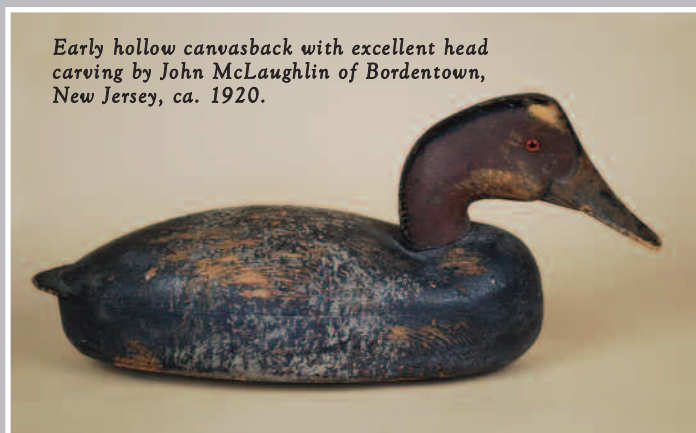
Rare hollow mallard by Henry Kilpatrick of Barnegat, New Jersey, ca. 1920.



Hollow green-winged teal from his personal gunning rig by Reg Marter of Burlington, New Jersey, ca. 1940.



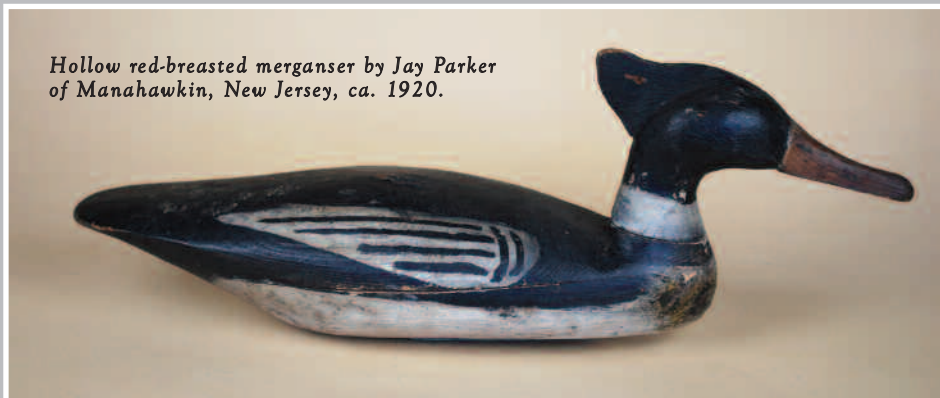
Hollow broadbill by Eugene Birdsall of Lovelandtown, New Jersey, ca. 1900.



Early hollow canvasback with excellent head carving by John McLaughlin of Bordentown, New Jersey, ca. 1920.

But the best story concerned his move to the Florida Keys, where he now spends his winters fishing. Needing to raise some serious money to finance a renovation, he sold a few decoys that were dear to his heart. "If you want to raise real money you've got to sell something good," he admits. One of the buyers told him, "If you ever want them back, just let me know." Some year's later John's red-breasted merganser by Charles Huff was back on his shelf. And today, thanks to those many relationships he's built over the years, many dealers and collectors are well aware of his interests, and many good birds continue to come his way.

Understanding that relationships grow over time, a collector, years ago, suggested he "build friendships." He also told John to "never let a duck come between friends." In his 20 years of participating in the hobby, John has made many friends in all parts of the collecting community. "Initially those friendships are based upon decoys," he reflected back over the years, "but eventually they evolve beyond that." Nonetheless, building those relationships are the start of the process.



Hollow red-breasted merganser by Jay Parker of Manahawkin, New Jersey, ca. 1920.



Hollow hissing Canada goose by John McAnney of New Gretna, New Jersey, ca. 1900.

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SHOWSTOPS

43rd annual Decoy & Wildlife Show Clayton, New York July 15-16, 2011

Each July for the last few years we've made the trip to Clayton, a small town along the St. Lawrence River in the scenic Thousand Island area of Upstate New York, for their annual Decoy and Wildlife Show, the only decoy show we attend during the summer months. We enjoy this show for the breathtaking beauty of the area as much as the opportunity to visit with some of our subscribers from the region - and hopefully do a little commerce. Once you see the river for yourself, you'll want to plan a vacation.

We arrive late Thursday afternoon to set up for this two-day show at the Recreation Park Arena, the local ice skating ring, then head off to our motel to freshen up for an evening reception at the nearby Thousand Island Museum. New museum president Tom Humberstone welcomed a nice turnout of exhibitors and local supporters and thanked them for continued support of the show. There was a table full of delectable hors d'oeuvres and a local winery was pouring a fine selection of their offerings.

Last year the museum did a renovation and added a second floor display of St. Lawrence River decoys. We totally over-

looked it! This year we made sure to get a peek at the exhibit of carvings by Sam Denny of Clayton, which sure enough included a wonderful little bufflehead, which must be a very rare species for any St. Lawrence River carver.

The show kicks off on Saturday morning, and the weather was beautiful. There are about 40 exhibitors in all, with about a dozen, most of whom are members of the Thousand Island Decoy Collectors Association, offering old birds for sale. Most of the inventory is comprised of decoys from both sides of the river - both Canadian and Upstate - but top quality birds are hard to find at this show. The only example we ran across by Chauncey Wheeler considered the top maker from the area, was a canvasback offered by Eric Pitman. But if you're a Ken Harris collector, this is a show you don't want to miss.

Each year the show committee features an exhibit of decoys for display. Normally they're vintage birds. But this year they exhibited a couple of cases of decoys by Bill Veasey, the well-known carver, carving instructor and author from Elkton, Maryland. We shared an enjoyable conversation the morning before the show.

The last few years there's been a doubly good reason to turn out for the first day of the show. First of all, collectors get a first crack at the inventory. Secondly, Blanchard's Auction Service holds a sale,



Eric Pitman (L) and Preston Lowe, longtime Upstate collectors, each brought a selection of New York decoys - many by Ken Harris - to this year's show.



Guy Sweet, a carver from Clayton, made a few "tourist souvenirs" to sell at this year's show including turkey feet backscratchers and miniature "stool samples."

mostly low-end decoys and miscellaneous local antiques, starting that afternoon. There are also three carving competitions that take place throughout the opening day. So by mid-morning on Friday a good crowd had come through the door. Sometime that afternoon a couple showed up with an interesting rig of "river birds," but none of the locals could identify the maker.

To further accommodate the exhibitors, the show committee offers complimentary coffee and donuts on Friday morning and a full breakfast on Saturday morning. The lunchroom, run by the show committee, provides a good variety of choices and their huge selection of homemade pies is always a show favorite (we're partial to blueberry).

By mid-afternoon on Saturday most of the crowd had left the building. While the attendance wasn't overwhelming, reducing the show at least makes the two days seem busier. We signed up some new members and sold a handful of books and back issues and saw quite a number of birds change hands. Unfortunately, we couldn't stay an extra day for a trip on the river, as the auctions in New England were just a couple days away. So it was time to pack up and prepare for the long drive home.

For more information on next year's show, contact the Thousand Island Museum at (315) 686-5794 or visit their website at www.timuseum.org.

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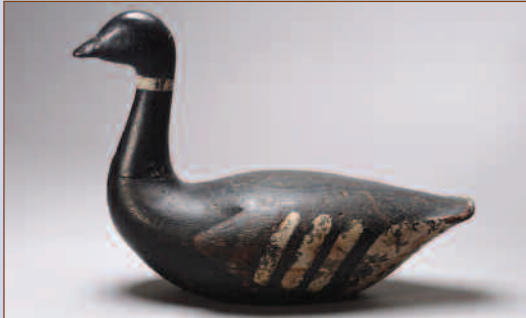
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(Continued from page 6)

about 40 lots with a low estimate of just over \$100,000, quite an accomplishment in this economy.

On Saturday morning we headed to the Cape Codder Resort in Hyannis for Decoys Unlimited's two-day sale, the last stop on our journey. Upon arrival we set up for the two-day dealer exhibition, which is held on Saturday and Sunday, with about 30-40 other exhibitors. The opening day is generally pretty slow, as most don't arrive until the preview starts that evening, but a good crowd showed up for a first look at the decoys and the open bar did plenty of business.

Generally Decoys Unlimited draws the biggest turnout for the dealer exhibition since there are so many collectors who live within a few hours drive or less. But this year it seemed unusually, almost painfully, slow, and the air conditioning made it feel like a meat locker. We felt bad as we had encouraged one dealer to extend his week and set up one more time. But it worked out in the end as a few last minute sales made it worth his while.

For the last few years Ted and Judy Harmon have hosted a clambake, which was scheduled this year for Sunday evening. All of the exhibitors get a free ticket and others can be purchased for \$75. After an incredibly hot week of record-breaking temperatures, a terrible thunderstorm flashed through the area in the early afternoon, making it doubtful that we'd have the event outside. Then all of the sudden it cleared, the temperatures and humidity dropped, and the weather was spectacular for the night. All who attended would agree it was the social event of the week, as everyone had plenty of lobster, ribs, soups and salads, all topped off with a strawberry shortcake dessert. The turnout was terrific and everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy the event.

The highlight of this auction was a curlew from Duxbury, Massachusetts that used to be in the collection of Dr. George Ross Starr and is pictured in his book, "Decoys of the Atlantic Flyway." It sold to a battle of phone bidders for \$111,550, nearly five times its estimate. A hissing Canada goose by George Boyd also sold to a phone bidder for \$60,375. As of press time we were still waiting for their price key so we are unable to provide additional numbers at this time. We will fully cover all three auctions in our next issue.

In all, there were about 1500 lots sold during the week that grossed over \$4 million, a marked improvement over last year's figures. But the one thing that doesn't appear to be improving is the number of people physically participating in person at the sales. That is not a good trend, as fewer people affect the results of the dealers exhibiting at the shows, which effect their future attendance

(Continued on page 43)



Kit and Bill Atkinson from Upstate New York at the Guyette & Schmidt auction preview. Real troopers, they attended all three auctions.



Bob Mosher, a carver from Hingham, Massachusetts, offered some of his decoys for sale at the Decoys Unlimited auction.



Gerry Enoksen (R) checks out the inventory on Al Minucci's table at the Copley auction.



Dick Baker, a veteran collector from Fisher's Island, New York, had a few birds for sale at the Decoys Unlimited auction.



Illinois collector Tom Karras (L) and Virginia dealer Bill Masengarb, both shorebird fans, have a discussion at the Decoys Unlimited auction.



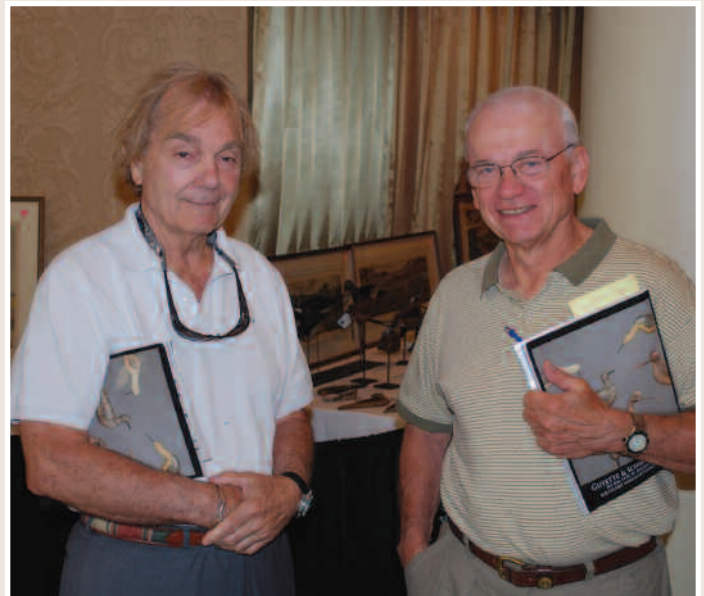
Ron Gard pictured with the Decoy Divas, a social group that frequents the bars at many events. If you don't know the ladies in the picture, you don't get around enough.



Decoy Magazine contributor Gene Kangas (L) with Max Hoyos, one of the few Canadians we saw at the sales this year.



Jim Twining (L) of Ravens Way Antiques and restorer Paul Fortin at the Decoys Unlimited auction.



Loy Harrell (L) and Jim Goodman, both avid fans of factory decoys, at the Copley auction.



Dick McIntyre (R) checks out a Stevens redhead on the table of dealer Russ Goldberger at the Decoys Unlimited auction.



Jason Baldwin (L) of Chicago checked out the artwork on Ohio dealer Bob Burger's table at the Copley auction.

Gove, Birdsall elected to NJDCA Hall of Fame

Dick Gove, a long time decoy collector, and Artie Birdsall, a fourth generation decoy carver, were recently elected to the New Jersey Decoy Collectors "Hall of Fame," joining Bill Cranmer, Harry V. Shourds II and David Rhodes as select members of this group. The announcement was made at the club's meeting in April and a dinner was held in their honor on June 21 at the Parkertown Firehouse.

Dick Gove grew up in Brant Beach in the mid-1940s and took up hunting at the young age of 12. His father, a doctor, had a passion for duck shooting, and his friends and patients shared stories with his young son about their days in the marsh. Chris Sprague, Bill Cranmer, Hurlley Conklin and other baymen were still active in the 1950s and 60s, and Dick not only hunted with some of them, but with their family and friends as well. This would serve him well years later when he began knocking on doors and buying collections.

When he was getting ready for duck season in 1968, a friend told Dick that his hand-me-down rig of Rube Corlies, Joe Paul and Les Van Brunt decoys were too good for the bay – they might be worth a few bucks – and maybe he should put them in the garage. Years later, in the late 1980s, he found out they were even collectible, and with long-time friend Grove Conrad he attended his first decoy auction and became an immediate competitor. Today his garage in Port Republic – as well as his house – is filled with many decoy treasures.

Over the decades, Dick has become a familiar face at most of the major decoy shows and auctions, both as a dealer and a collector, and he belongs to numerous decoy collecting organizations. He also maintains a Web site – www.portrepublicdecoys.com. A historian as well as a collector, Dick has written numerous articles on New Jersey decoys. Although his focus is on New Jersey – he has the finest examples by Bill Cranmer of Long Beach Island – his collection includes examples by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland and George Warin of Toronto.

Arthur Birdsall was born on December 19, 1949 in Lovelandtown, a town at the Head of the Bay in an area now called Point Pleasant. This beautiful shore area



Dick Gove.



Artie Birdsall.

is surrounded by water, and the estuaries and the bay are just a short walk away, an ideal place for waterfowl enthusiasts. He received his first shotgun in the late 1950s.

Art's family were boat builders, ship captains, baymen, market gunners, decoy carvers and guides, a heritage of which he is proud. As a young boy he developed an interest in woodworking. His father and his uncle, Charlie Birdsall, had been partners in the building business for over 20 years, when in 1961 Charlie bought the Wildfowler Decoy Company. His first job was cleaning up around the shop.

Throughout the 1960s Art took a greater interest in decoy carving – patterns and tools were readily available – and took a full time job with his uncle in 1972. Under his tutelage, Art learned all phases of the decoy making process, and when Uncle Charlie sold Wildfowler and moved to Florida in 1977, Art started a business of his own. He started with a single spindle machine, using patterns his uncle provided. Bill Cranmer was among other local area carvers that provided additional masters for his machine. Today he uses a 12-spindle lathe that greatly facilitates production. Over the years he's made over 3000 decoys.

A visit to The Birdsall Decoy Shop, in

what was once his Uncle "Dipper" Ortley's decoy shop, is a step back in time to the heyday of decoys and duck hunting. A "meeting place" for hunters and collectors, there are always old birds and new carvings for sale. Birds fill the room in various stages of completion and there is always plenty of sawdust.

There are also examples of old birds by his ancestors – Capt. Jesse Birdsall, Eugene Birdsall, Nathan Birdsall and Charlie Birdsall – whose work he actively collects. That he has continued the tradition – the fourth generation of Birdsalls to make hunting decoys – is his greatest source of pride.

To become a member of the NJDCA Hall of Fame, a carver or a collector must first be nominated by the membership. For consideration, one must be a carver for 20 years or a collector for 25 years, have contributed as an author or researcher concerning decoy history and willingly shared their knowledge with other carvers or collectors. For more information on the NJDCA, contact Pete Butler at (609) 965-3143 or smokehousepete@aol.com.



Letter to the Editor

The ODCCA Board of Directors would like to respond to the Publisher's Note, "Then There Were Two" in the March/April 2011 issue of Decoy Magazine. Much of the information provided in that article is misstated and is misleading.

We want to make one thing crystal clear: the ODCCA has not changed, has not divided and is not splitting. The article suggests we have divorced and must move on with our lives. Keeping that analogy, there has been no separation or division, only a couple of family members - Ken Cole and Jon Deeter - have run away from home to start their own lives. The rest of the ODCCA family remains intact and planning for the future, including our annual Decoy Show in Westlake, Ohio the third full weekend in March.

The ODCCA is headed by a Board of Directors that is a combination of carvers and collectors. The article suggests, "the carvers had an overwhelming majority on the Board of Directors and the collectors were marginalized." Currently there are 15 board members - 12 elected positions and three past presidents who maintain lifetime positions. All collect decoys in some fashion or another, yet only five carve and just three competitively.

As the name indicates, the Ohio Decoy Collectors and Carvers Association encompass two distinct factions. For 35 years these two groups worked together to create one of the finest shows in the country. The openness of the Holiday Inn allows us to stage a large variety of decoy show events and vendors under one roof at the same time - there is so much to see and do that everything can't be done in one room - a formula that has proved successful.

The article also questioned the financial decisions and stability of the club. It quoted Cole: "It's about controlling the funds, and no matter how many votes were held we always lost 8-2." Even though collectors are two-thirds of the board? After reviewing 20 years of minutes it was discovered that the VP of Collecting NEVER lost a vote for a funding request. In 2010 Cole received over \$8000 in funding - over three-quarters of the club's advertising budget. Part of it was used to print a membership roster - given only to collectors - and they received complimentary rooms for themselves. A Web site was also funded but never completed. The article also mentions a \$15,000 loss at the 2009 show; our accounting firm has verified the actual loss was \$5503. But the years before and after were profitable, far outweighing one off year.

According to the article, Cole and Deeter claimed the board refused to furnish them

with the club's financials. Cole wanted them put into a box and mailed to him. Although our treasurer tried to make other arrangements for him to see them - the ODCCA's financial information is published, presented and available for viewing at every meeting - they weren't sufficient for him.

We concede there was one vote that went against their wishes. Cole and Deeter wanted the club to run separate profit and loss statements. Our outside accounting firm and members of the board found this unnecessary because the club is united in one purpose. The only reason to separate the finances is if someone had been planning a breakup. That seems obvious to us now.

Since Cole and Deeter resigned from the club, their positions have been quickly filled. Tom Whitlock, a long time decoy collector and past president and chairman of the board, is now Vice President of Collecting. Duane Ganser will continue to handle vendor room assignments and Wayne Baldwin will handle vendor and room-to-room trading applications. We have also assigned chairmen for the vintage decoy seminar and contest.

Lastly, the article suggests, "most of the collectors never had any idea that trouble was brewing. And many were surprised when they heard the news." The only real news is that Jon Deeter and Ken Cole quit the club. The ODCCA Board of Directors has always supported the collectors and vintage dealer's needs, and that is not going to change. If you never noticed there was a problem, there wasn't one.

Let there be no misconception. The ODCCA is planning a large 35th anniversary Show and Sale and have been receiving a great deal of support from our friends and members. One collector has donated money to expand the advertising budget for the 2012 show. Decoys, both vintage and contemporary, have been donated - unsolicited - for an auction to benefit the club as an expression of their appreciation for the ODCCA and its traditions.

Think long and hard about the ODCCA's past show and sales: Has it been a good experience for you? The majority of our board and volunteers have been there throughout those years. We have always done what we thought was for the best of the show and tried to satisfy everyone. We are volunteers. We do it for you and the love of decoys. If you enjoyed the ODCCA Show and Sale in the past, there is absolutely no reason to not continue to support it in the future. Come join us in 2012 and celebrate our 35th year.

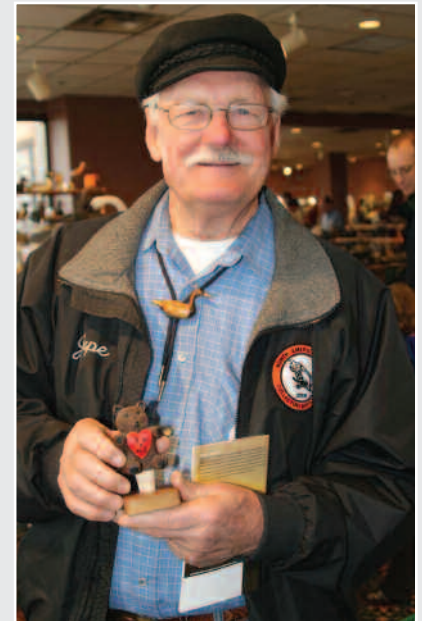
- The ODCCA Board of Directors

Jupe Houman

Had a fondness for Evans decoys

The decoy collecting fraternity lost a dear friend when Jupe Houman of Hudson, Wisconsin passed away on June 1, 2011. A long time enthusiast with a special fondness for Evans factory decoys, his collection was one of the best. Jupe always looked forward to another get-together with his decoy buddies, particularly the regular meetings of the Evans Society, and he always had valuable information to share with everyone.

Jupe was a member of the Minnesota Decoy Collectors Association, the Midwest Decoy Collectors Association and regularly attended the Oshkosh, Wisconsin decoy shows. Besides being an avid collector of decoys, he was an accomplished wood carver



Jupe Houman.

and decoy maker, many of which were donated to worthy organizations or given to family and friends. Going to his house was like a visit to a museum.

Jupe was a special person that everyone enjoyed. His kindness and generosity will long be remembered. A teacher and mentor to many young collectors, he was a good friend who will be missed by many in the decoy community.

= John Southworth

Ward Museum showcases the development of conservation efforts

Beginning on July 15 the Ward Museum opened the first of two new exhibits designed to explore the interactions between people and wildfowl in the United States over the last two centuries. Through September 23, "Catching a Glimpse" will present the works of American wildfowl illustrators whose work has given rise to the growing phenomenon of birding in the United States and around the world. From September 30 to January 12, 2012, "Back from the Brink: Stories of Wildfowl Conservation" will show how the efforts of lawmakers, birdwatchers, environmentalists, hunters and everyday citizens have helped to bring some species back from the edge of extinction.

Early masters of American wildfowl illustration, such as Mark Catesby, John James Audubon and Alexander Wilson systematically documented and presented the diversity of birds and their habitats. Later artists like Roger Tory Peterson and David Sibley continued their explorations with the development of field guides, enlightening others to the beauty of the natural world. This exhibit presents a glimpse of the art, artifacts and elements of popular culture that have contributed to this emergence of interest in birds, collectively shaping our perceptions of the natural world for generations to come.

But all bird enthusiasts know that many species have faced challenges. Throughout the United States several species of birds have neared extinction as gunning practices and habitat loss have taken a toll on wildfowl populations. Over the last century, the efforts of many have helped bring some species "Back from the Brink." This second exhibit shares stories of successful conservation efforts, attempts that came too late, and what the fu-



John James Audubon.

ture might hold for currently threatened species and habitats.

The first explorers who touched the shores of North America were astonished by the richness of its bounty, including the vast numbers and wide variety of birds. The early colonists became expert hunters and by the early 1800s most East Coast cities had become centers of commerce with thriving game markets.

The market hunters who supplied them gunned down waterfowl with shocking success in both the fall and spring migrations, providing them with a decent living. The supply seemed endless, and there were few regulations, but as the century wore on the supply of game began to dry up. The causes were variable and not fully understood – industrial pollution and loss of habitat due to agricultural processes certainly played roles – but de-

struction by market hunters was most easily recognizable to the public at the time.

During the mid-1800s, this decline in numbers became a major concern. Theodore Roosevelt, in collaboration with hunters, scientists and explorers, formed the Boone and Crockett club in 1877 in an effort to conserve wildlife populations and habitats. The American Ornithologists Union and the National Association of Audubon Societies convinced him to provide federal protection for dwindling shorebird species, as the commercial demand of the ladies' hat trade for feather plumes had triggered rapid population declines.

By 1900 sportsmen had begun to put pressure on state and federal governments to slow down the devastation. Many of these sportsmen were members of gunning clubs and were witnessing the decreased populations of wildfowl year after year. They passed club rules, including self-imposed bag limits along with curbing unsportsmanlike behavior.

In 1903, Pelican Island in Florida became the first national wildlife refuge to provide protection for wading birds. The National Wildlife Refuge system now includes 553 refuges covering more than 150 million acres. Federal and state agencies, in cooperation with private conservation groups, provide research, management, protection, conservation and preservation for America's diverse wildfowl populations.

The U.S. Congress, in response to a growing demand for the preservation of our natural resources, passed the Migratory Bird Act of 1929 and the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Act of 1934. Shepherded through Congress by such influential people as J.N. "Ding" Darling, a Pulitzer prize-winning cartoonist and avid conservationist, these two acts led to the creation of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, also known as "Duck Stamps." Created by the U.S. Postal Service for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, they were used as licenses required for hunting migratory waterfowl. The money raised was allocated to purchase or lease wetland habitat, and since 1934 have generated over \$750 million to preserve more than 5.3 million acres of prime habitat.

While government agencies played an important role, ordinary citizens also did their part. In the late 1800s the Christmas "side-hunt" was an important holiday tradition. Hunters went afield in a competition to bring in the most birds. Frank Chapman, an



Many sports and market hunters shipped their kill to the game markets by railcar.

early Audubon Society officer, proposed a new holiday event, a “Christmas Bird Census,” to count birds instead of shooting them.

Such educational, environmental and conservation efforts have brought a number of species back from the edge of extinction; for some, like the passenger pigeon, help arrived too late. Other species still face danger from habitat disruption. “Back from the Brink: Stories of Wildfowl Conservation” explores the efforts being made to ensure their continued survival.

For more information concerning the exhibits contact the Ward Museum at (410) 742-4988 or visit their website at www.wardmuseum.org.

Guides setting out decoys on Great South Bay, ca. 1900.



2011 “Old Bird” Antique Decoy Competition categories

The Ward Museum has announced its categories for its 12th annual Antique Decoy Competition, held during the Chesapeake Wildfowl Expo on Saturday, October 8, 2011. This year the competition will feature canvasbacks from ten different regions.

Registration will be held on Saturday morning between 9:30 – 11 a.m. and participants can enter up to four categories. They must be working decoys made prior to 1950 and pairs count as a single entry. The winner will be determined by a vote of the participating owners and a panel of three judges will determine if the entries fit the categories and will vote to break any ties. The winners must agree to display their winning decoys at the Ward Museum immediately following the contest and for a period of up to six months.

The Expo kicks off on Friday morning for a two-day buy, swap and sell meet in the museum parking lot. A pig roast will be held on Friday evening after the show. Admission to the event and the museum galleries is free. For more information contact the museum at (410) 742-4988 or visit their website at www.wardmuseum.org.

2011 Categories

- Best New England Canvasback
- Best Great Lakes Canvasback
- Best Delaware River Canvasback
- Best Upper Chesapeake Bay Canvasback
- Best Crisfield Canvasback
- Best Virginia Canvasback
- Best North Carolina Canvasback
- Best Illinois Canvasback
- Best Louisiana Canvasback
- Best West Coast Canvasback

Revisiting Long Island’s elite hunt clubs

The Suffolk County Historical Society in Riverhead, New York is presently featuring a new exhibition: “Private Places/Public Spaces: Suffolk County’s Elite Hunt Clubs & Regional Decoys.” The display features photographs, historical documents, art, artifacts and regional decoys from the gilded age of Long Island’s private hunt clubs.

By the late 19th and early 20th century millionaire robber barons, made rich by the Industrial Revolution, were building their Long Island estates as retreats from the metropolitan scene. Leaving their elite men’s clubs of New York behind, these wealthy gentlemen founded rural counterparts in exclusive, private hunt clubs and lodges that dotted the shorelines of Suffolk County and encompassed hundreds of acres of wetlands.

The lodges they built provided food, comfort, camaraderie and a wealthy man’s view of country living. The waterfront locations also provided an abundance of waterfowl, perfect for the gentlemen’s shooting pleasure. Local residents were hired as guides, gamekeepers and staff for the clubs; many supplied them with decoys. The tradition of decoy making, already long-established on the island, flourished with this new demand.

What began as gentleman’s exclusive enclaves has led to conservation and preservation of large tracts of land, thousands of acres retained in their natural state, as many of these famous hunt clubs were acquired by both New York State and Suffolk County as public parklands. Some of those include The Flanders Gun Club, Black Duck Lodge, The Suffolk Club, Southside Sportsman’s Club and the Wyandach Club. A series of lectures on the history of each private club was held throughout the summer.

Also accompanying the exhibit is a display on the Pattersquash Gunning Club organized by Dick Richardson, a past president of the club. Founded in Bellport in 1922, it is an active hunting club with 60 members on Great South Bay. Many of the private clubs went out of business because they were individually owned, whereas the town of Brookhaven owns the Pattersquash club and lease the shooting rights.

For more information on this temporary exhibit, scheduled for display until August 27, 2011, contact the Suffolk County Historical Society at (631) 727-2881 or visit their website at www.suffolkcountyhistoricalociety.org.



Bud Corwin (L) and Dick Richardson with curator Cathy Curran at the Suffolk County Historical Society.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

3

21st annual Chincoteague Island Decoy & Art Festival to be held at the Chincoteague Community Center on Chincoteague Island, Virginia. Contact: John & Cinda Walls at (410) 546-1635 or (757) 336-0614.

10

24th annual Duck Fair held on the grounds of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in Havre de Grace, Maryland. Contact the Museum at (410) 93903739 or visit www.decoymuseum.org.

17-18

25th annual Middle Creek Wildfowl Show to be held at the Middle Creek Visitor Center in Kleinfeltersville, Pennsylvania. Contact: Al Keith at (717) 733-1512 or akeith@state.pa.us.

23

Fall Decoy Auction by Frank & Frank Sporting Collectibles to be held at the Tuckerton Seaport in Tuckerton, New Jersey. Contact: Frank & Frank at (732) 938-2988 or frank1807@cs.com.

24-25

29th annual Ocean County Decoy & Gunning Show to be held at Parkertown Firehouse in Parkertown, New Jersey. Contact Ocean County Dept. of Parks & Rec. at (609) 971-3085 or visit their website at www.oceancountyparks.org.

30-1

2011 Eastern Shore Fall Sportsman's Auction by Barfield Auctions to be held at their facility in Hallwood, Virginia. Contact: Jeb Barfield at (757) 824-4698 or zeb@zebsauctions.com.

OCTOBER

7-8

2011 Chesapeake Wildlife Expo to be held at the Ward Museum in Salisbury, Maryland. Contact: The Ward Museum at (410) 742-4988 or visit their website at www.wardmuseum.org.

8-9

Louisiana Wildfowl Festival to be held at the Castine Center in Pelican Park in Mandeville, Louisiana. Contact: Richard Reeves at (985) 626-7997 or visit their website at www.lwccg.com.

14-15

32nd annual Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition & Sale to be held in Chestertown, Maryland. Contact: Chestertown Wildlife at (410) 810-4898 or info@chestertownwildlife.org.

21-22

44th annual Upper Shore Decoy Show to be held at the historic Wellwood Club in Charlestown, Maryland. Contact: Paul Shertz at (302) 834-8427 or paulshertz@aol.com.

29-30

2011 Decoy, Fishing Tackle & Outdoor Collectibles Show sponsored by the Canadian Decoy & Outdoor Collectibles Association to be held at the Best Western Cairn Croft Hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Laurin Garland (613) 256-7255 or David Dauphinais (905) 727-5853 or visit their website at www.canadiandecoy.com.

30

South Shore Waterfowling Association annual Duck Boat Show to be held at Cedar Beach Marina in Babylon, New York. Contact: Curt Matzinger at (631) 661-0379 or visit their website at www.sswa.org.

NOVEMBER

9-10

Fall Decoy Auction by Guyette & Schmidt to be held at the Talbot County Community Center in Easton, Maryland. Tailgating both days of the sale. Contact: Guyette & Schmidt at (410) 745-0485 or visit their website at www.guyetteandschmidt.com.

11-13

40th annual Waterfowl Festival to be held throughout the town of Easton, Maryland. Buy, Sell and Swap and Artifacts Display at the High School. Contact: The Waterfowl Festival at (410) 822-4567 or visit their website at www.waterfowlfestival.com.

SEND US YOUR LISTINGS

Calendar is a free service of *Decoy Magazine*. Just mail us your information and we'll take care of the rest. Remember, we're published bi-monthly, so send us your information as soon as possible. We recommend you contact the shows to confirm these dates.

Deadline for the July/August 2011 issue is September 9, 2011.

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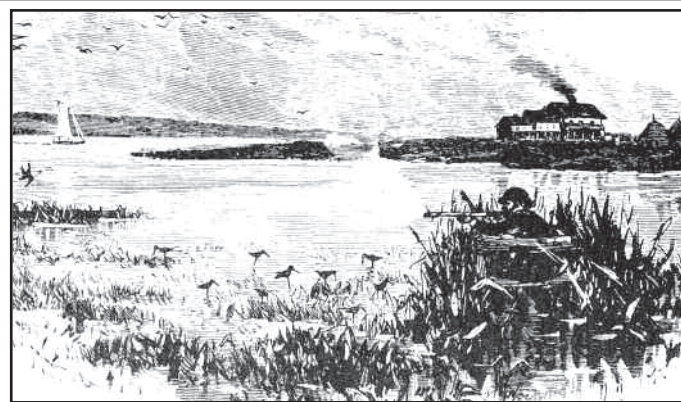
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Decoys of BURLINGTON BAY

Tools for the art of “screening”



BY PETER MUNGER

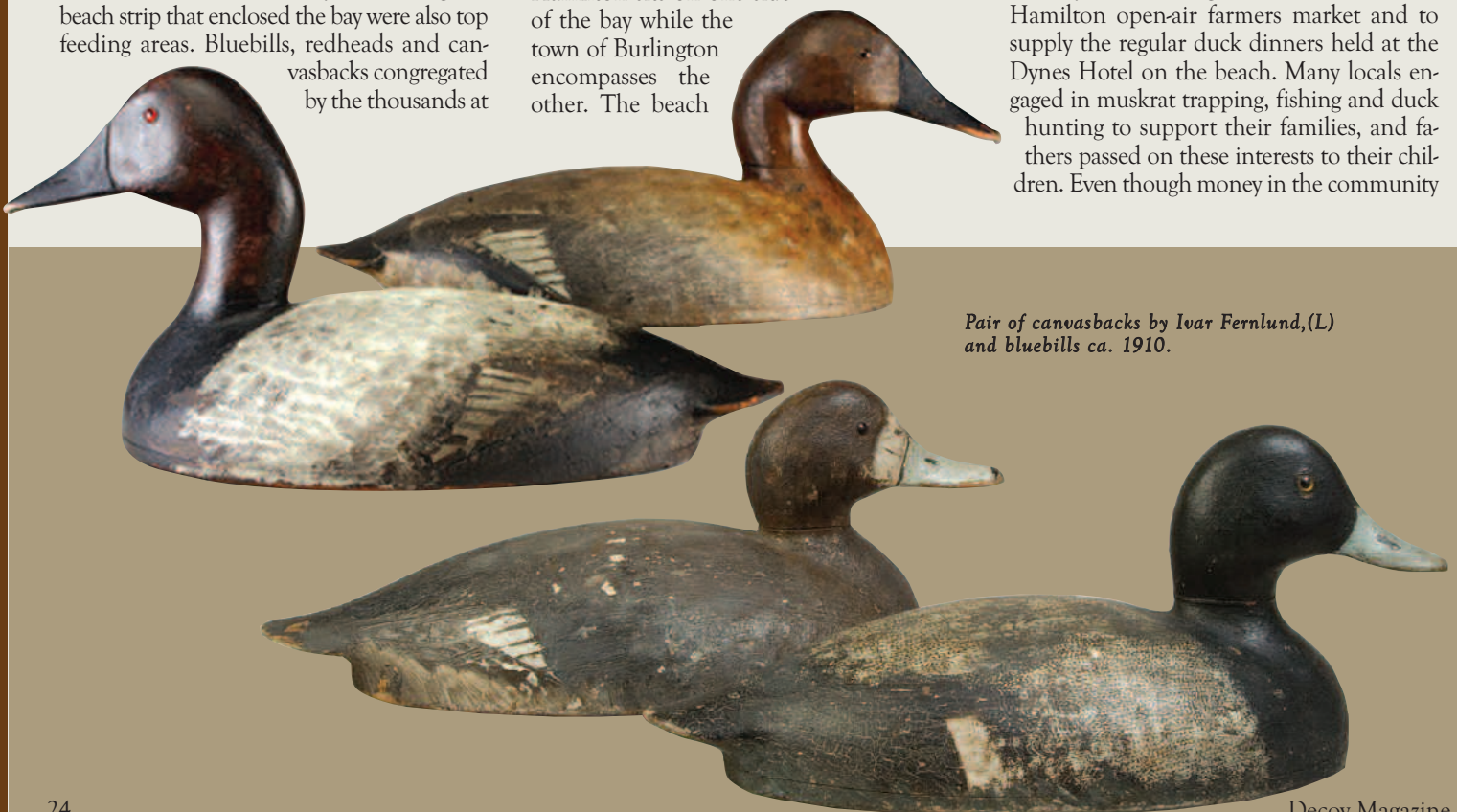
BURLINGTON BAY at the west end of Lake Ontario was once a haven for waterfowl during their southern migrations each fall. With its shores lined with shallow bays and inlets replete with marshes and wild celery throughout, it was a natural “fueling station.” The shallow sandy areas along the beach strip that enclosed the bay were also top feeding areas. Bluebills, redheads and canvasbacks congregated by the thousands at

this favorite rest stop on their way to the wintering grounds and the locals took full advantage of the opportunity.

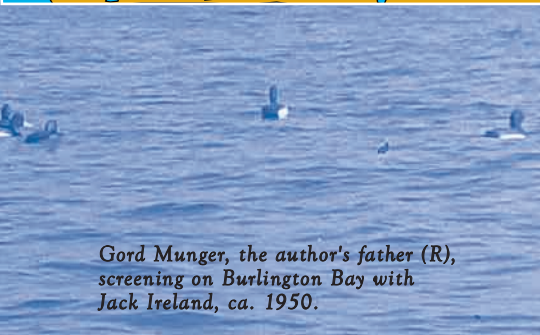
Although it’s called Burlington Bay on most maps, the locals sometimes referred to it as Hamilton Bay, as the sand spit that encloses it is called Hamilton Beach. The city of Hamilton sits on one side of the bay while the town of Burlington encompasses the other. The beach

strip is divided in two by the shipping canal that cuts through it, allowing the ships that came to Hamilton Harbor access to the Great Lakes.

In the early days the bay provided such an opportunity for waterfowlers that market hunting was practiced by some of the locals. A ready demand for game existed both at the Hamilton open-air farmers market and to supply the regular duck dinners held at the Dynes Hotel on the beach. Many locals engaged in muskrat trapping, fishing and duck hunting to support their families, and fathers passed on these interests to their children. Even though money in the community



Pair of canvasbacks by Ivar Fernlund, (L) and bluebills ca. 1910.



Gord Munger, the author's father (R), screening on Burlington Bay with Jack Ireland, ca. 1950.

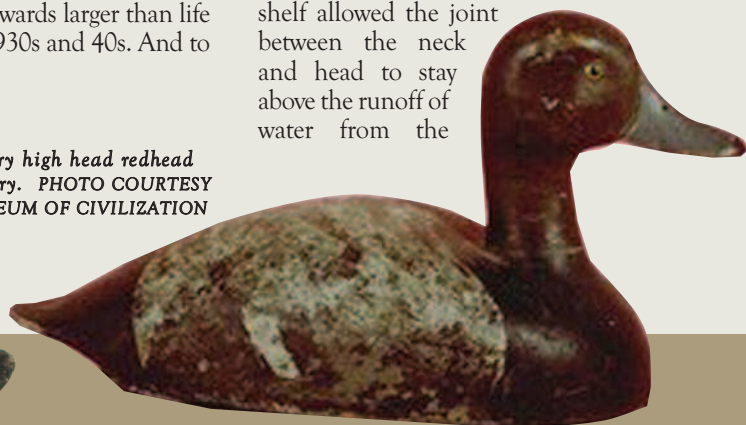
was tight, it only took a rig of hollow wooden decoys, a double-ended skiff, oars and paddles – and a box trailer to haul it in – for a father and his sons to go “screening.”

“Screening” involves setting up 50 to 100 decoys 100 to 200 yards offshore in a horse-

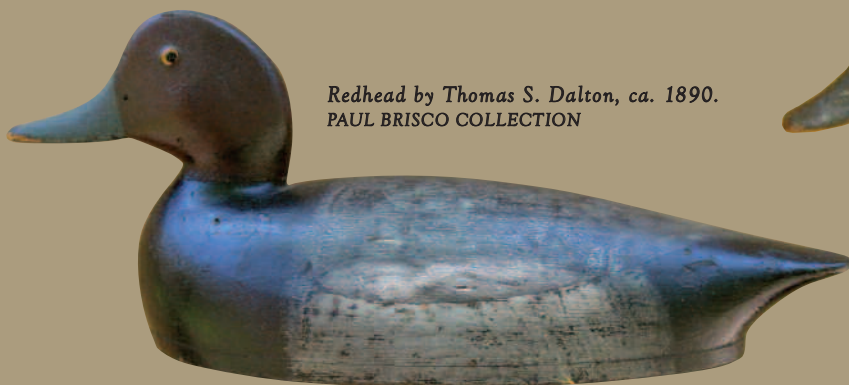
Late 19th century bluebill by F.G. Mummery, among the earliest known makers of Burlington Bay decoys.



Late 19th century high head redhead by F.G. Mummery. PHOTO COURTESY CANADIAN MUSEUM OF CIVILIZATION



Redhead by Thomas S. Dalton, ca. 1890. PAUL BRISCO COLLECTION



High head bluebill by Jackie Morris, a third generation carver, ca. 1925. GRAHAM PILING COLLECTION



Waterfowlers after a successful day screening on Burlington Bay, ca. 1890.



shoe array with the open side facing the beach, which was believed to hold the ducks a bit during a hunter's approach. Once the divers came into the decoys, the hunters would sneak out on them in a double-ended skiff powered by a strong sculling arm. The boat had a small frame interlaced with grass or reeds, called a screen, attached to its bow, hiding the movements of the hunters as they approached the ducks, thus the term “screening.” The legal limit for setting the decoys from shore was 200 yards.

Since divers tend to fly quite far out on large bodies of water, visibility was important to success, so a move towards larger than life decoys evolved in the 1930s and 40s. And to

safely transport a sufficient number in a 16-foot skiff with two men, they had to be light, so most were hollowed as much as possible, with a 3/8-inch thickness, including the bottom board, providing about the right amount of weight without sacrificing strength. It is a rare exception to find a Burlington Bay decoy not made this way, although some of the “hide” hunters, those shooting from shore blinds, did make solid-bodied decoys.

Another trait common, though not unique to Burlington Bay decoys, is the raised neck shelf, often on the same plane as the top of the back but sometimes lower. This raised shelf allowed the joint between the neck and head to stay above the runoff of water from the



"Pocket" size bluebill and a high head bluebill hen by Donnie Reid, ca. 1900.



Redhead with a pronounced crown to the head by Bill Hazel, ca. 1920



Bluebill hen with a delicately thin neck by Abner Cassidy, ca. 1930.

back, thus keeping the seepage from causing problems in the joint. The carving behind the neck from the back of the shelf down the shoulders allows for complete water runoff to prevent or at least minimize ice buildup in late season weather.

The heads most admired are those with full cheeks as a good-sized profile was important for visibility. The bills are almost always parallel to the water surface or slightly upturned to prevent ice buildup on the bill tip. The upturned bills on some decoys would make the water run back under the chin; ice formation here would be less noticeable to the ducks than an unnatural glob of ice hanging from the bill. Since the last third of the season occurs in below freezing weather, these are important details to consider. Mandible separation, nostrils and a nail are sometimes included, although the nail is sometimes omitted.

Almost universally standard to Burlington Bay decoys is the swing weight, and there are several reasons. Most importantly, the swing weight is screwed to edges of the bottom of the decoy, avoiding a hole in the bottom board that would invite leakage. In addition, the weight hangs down about six inches, causing a very low center of gravity to maintain an upright position even in a rough chop, a common feature in Burlington Bay and Hamilton Beach. Unlike the keels on other decoys, the swing weight folds up under the decoy with a single loop of the anchor cord. After securing the swing weight with a few additional loops around the body, the last three wraps go around the neck, making it ready for storage. Finally, the method of hanging the swing weight in concert with the flat bottom allows the decoy to ride naturally over the chop with no side-to-side roll, creating a more natural look on the water.

The earliest known makers, like the Morris clan, Dalton and Mummery, made life-sized decoys in the last half of the 19th century with artful attention to the details they thought most important. Most of them were also boat builders, so the materials available were often ends from planking for the large sailboats they built. These men had skills suited to the nautical woodworking craft. Hugh James, oldest of the Weir family, made decoys with slightly oversized heads. His brothers Al and Fred (Pop) did as well, but it was the much younger George (Geordie or Red) who was the most prolific and influential in the evolution to a larger screening decoy.

It's no doubt that the styles of the earlier makers were incorporated by later generations into their decoys. For example, it appears that Donnie Reid made decoys with a similar body to those of F.G. Mummery, and that Ivar Fernlund's decoys, to some extent, follow the style of Reid's. If one fellow's decoys were working well, then why not copy the best at

tributes of those decoys when making their own.

Most late 19th century and early 20th century Burlington Bay makers built life-sized decoys, possibly because they were “hide” hunters or shot in an area with little competition. They concentrated their efforts on paint and carving detail to make a more realistic rig. Several were either pattern makers or knew someone with access to “pattern pine,” which is clean and free of knots, excellent wood for carving decoys. But as more fellows hunted the bay by screening and a limit was placed on the number of decoys one could legally set, the only other recourse to “out-draw” the competition was a bigger decoy. George Weir was the first to answer this call.

The following carvers were the most talented and important makers of Burlington Bay decoys, both yesterday’s hunters and today’s collectors would agree.

Donnie Reid (1862-1920) made primarily bluebill and redhead decoys with a body shape almost identical to Mummery, with a bit more detail to the bill, a straight rather than an upturned tail sloping down to near the water surface and very often with a ¼-inch dowel through the neck joint, possibly to tighten it and prevent leakage. While the style of his birds remained fairly constant over time, he did produce a variety with resting and alert attitudes and even some “coat pocket” bluebills, little 10½ inch gems that weighed only ten ounces. While they did indeed fit in a coat pocket, they were likely made to carry to a remote spot for a bit of shore shooting. Unlike most Burlington Bay hunters, Reid shot mostly from a blind in the marshes at the northwest end of the bay not far from his home. All of his decoys have a DR brand at least once, sometimes twice, on the bottom.

Ivar Fernlund (1881-1933) arrived in Hamilton in 1906, joining Westinghouse as a pattern shop foreman. Sometime later he moved to the Beach Strip and became friends with Bill Hazel, a screener and his next door neighbor. Along lines similar to Reid, his decoys exhibit finer detail in every way. He carved only his own rig, never made a bird for sale and is estimated to have made only 150 decoys in his relatively short lifetime. Painted with great skill in artist’s oils, he produced a full range of species hunted in the area – whenever he shot a new species he would use it as a model to produce a decoy for his rig – including bluebills, redheads, canvasbacks, black ducks, scoters, pintails (only two drakes and a hen), mallards (only one known pair) and a wood duck drake.

Bill Hazel (1893-1940) made nice examples of bluebills and redheads. The bluebills have a body shape similar to Fernlund’s but sporting a swimming head style of his own design. The pronounced crown on the head of his redheads is a variation to that style.



Bluebill by Willy Freeborn with distinctive tail carving, ca. 1920.



Left to right: Late and early period bluebills by George “Red” Weir.

A screener paddles into a raft of ducks off Hamilton Beach, ca. 1970.





Rare pair of original paint canvasbacks by Clarey Shaw, ca. 1930.



Left to right: Early and last period bluebills by Clarey Shaw, ca. 1930.



Black duck and bluebill with excellent comb painting by Roland "Rolly" Jarvis, ca. 1930. GRAHAM PILLING COLLECTION



Dynes Hotel on Hamilton Beach, the scene of many duck dinners, ca. 1900.

Both are life-sized birds with pleasant paint patterns.

Abner Cassidy (c. 1900) was another maker who followed the Mummery style. He only made them for himself, so their numbers are quite small. Life-sized decoys, they have a thin neck like the Mummery birds with the initials AC carved under the tail and the bill.

William "Willy" Freeborn (1883-1971) favored the Morris style but carved more depth between the shoulders, which give the wings more prominence. He also cut the underside of the tail straight in on the horizontal and branded a W on the flat underside of the tail. His heads are narrower and less cheeky with a narrower bill. Some of his decoys have the W stamp on the bottom boards and others are branded in both spots.

George "Red" Weir (1884-1978), 21 years younger than his brother Hugh, made his first decoys much the same as his sibling, slightly larger than life with oversized heads. Over a long and prolific career that began in the 1920s (he is thought to have made more decoys than the total of all the previous carvers discussed), his style evolved to a larger oversized decoy by the late 1930s. The large cheeky heads had a substantial upturned bill for visibility and durability. Relief-carved wing shoulders that lead across the back to his flat top tail are among his trademarks. His bluebills and canvasbacks, rough textured with a rasp to prevent glare, were reportedly the top drawing decoy for hunters, so if you wanted to compete for ducks, this was the decoy to copy. And many carvers did, as a "Weir school" of decoys soon followed.

Harry Kretschman (1888-1954) was the owner of the Jockey Club tavern in Hamilton and a renowned trapshooter. He was a hunting partner with Weir and the pair were known as the deadliest screeners in their time, supplying large numbers of ducks for the annual Dynes Hotel game dinner on the beach strip. He carved a rig of 50 fine little bluebills, many with squat heads, with backs sloping down to the water.

Clarey Shaw (1884-1957) was possibly the first to follow Red's larger pattern idea. His early bluebills are the shape and size of a Fernlund decoy, high at the back but with a thin rounded head. There are no wing shoulders carved in his early decoys, however some have the sides incised to give the suggestion of a shoulder. The bills have a 1/2 inch mandible separation and sport small triangular nostrils, which are common to all his decoys. Sometime around the early to mid-40s he started making his heads larger and blockier, similar in size to Weir's, cut out mostly with a band saw before finishing them with a rasp. He developed patterns for his 7-piece bodies (two lower halves, two upper halves, a back board and two crescent shaped wing sec-

tions), sometimes with pegs to hold the sections together (they could have been added later to decoys that showed signs of separation). Once assembled, he had roughed out hollowed decoys that could be carved quite quickly and easily with a drawknife.

Shaw made quite a few decoys for other hunters at this time. His redheads are even wider in the head and body, however most of these were overpainted as bluebills in the 1950s due to their decline in numbers; there was a limit of one, probably to allow for mistakes. The canvasbacks were his best decoys, not quite as large as Weirs but with his recognizable head style. Few exist in original paint.

George "Chic" Poyton (1895-1972), a bit younger than the previous two men, began making smooth body decoys during the Depression years. His birds, the same size as Weir's with oversized heads, include much more detail, particularly the later birds, in the wing shoulders, carved primaries, secondaries and tail feathers, details for which he is best known among collectors. His redheads are decidedly larger than his bluebills, and some are magnums that take the idea of oversized to the extreme. He sometimes mixed sawdust into his paint to create a finish that reduced glare. Many of his decoys have G. POYTON DECOYS stenciled on the bottoms.

Ernie England (1905-1991), a bricklayer from Bristol, England, made his first rig of decoys in 1925 for his personal use but had to sell them during the Depression. He later made another rig of 150 decoys, mostly bluebills and canvasbacks. A good number of them were destroyed in a fire but it is estimated that about 100 still exist. His decoys are close in style to Weir's but with an even larger head profile, especially the bluebills. They lack wing carving but have the same tail feather carving as the decoys made by his friend and hunting partner Chic Poyton. He also used the same sawdust method of painting to reduce glare. Wonder who influenced who? But in a variation from his friend's birds, he scratch-painted the feathers on his canvasbacks. The bills of his decoys are simple and straightforward with a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch mandible separation and small triangular carved nostrils, similar to Shaw's but smaller. Some of his decoys are marked COX on the bottom for Ernie Cox, not a hunter but a collector.

Cyril "Cy" McKim (1892-1948) made a decoy very similar to Weir's early smaller decoys in both style and size. In fact, it's hard to tell the difference, except that Red's early birds have a bit of an upsweep to the tail where Cy's curve straight down towards the water. His decoys were for personal use and examples are hard to come by.

Roland "Rolly" Jarvis (1899-1967) made some uniquely styled birds with good comb



Bluebill hen and oversized redhead by George "Chic" Poyton, ca. 1930.



High head bluebill and canvasback by Ernie England, ca. 1940.



Small-sized bluebill by Cyril "Cy" McKim, ca. 1930.



Later "Morris style" bluebill by Les Drew, ca. 1940, later overpainted as a redhead.



Bluebill made in the Morris style by Ben Taborek, ca. 1940.



Looking south on Hamilton Beach with Lake Ontario on the left and Burlington Bay on the right, ca. 1880.

painting on the backs and a black outlined speculum similar to Morris decoys only more distinct. They have a nicely formed head with a fairly thin bill and a straight vertical cut to delineate the head and bill separation.

Les Drew (1900-1969) produced four rigs in his lifetime. His first rig of 100 decoys was made on the small side but nicely styled. For the second rig he used Weir's pattern, which resulted in a larger more competitive decoy with carved shoulder separation. The heads are nicely rounded and the bills have mandible separation and nails. His third rig of 100 decoys were made on the Morris pattern with the same attention to detail he devoted to the second rig. The tails are carved with a V-shaped point to indicate the separation between wingtips and tail. After a brief retirement in Florida, he and his son Bob made one last rig of 40 solid-bodied decoys they used until he died.

Ben Taborek (1912- ?), another pattern maker, made about 600 decoys in the 1930s and 40s, fine little decoys carved in the Morris style. He made mostly bluebills, with some redheads, canvasbacks and a few marsh ducks. The drawknife marks are still lightly visible on the bodies and the tail has a slight indication of the wingtip to tail separation. The heads are nicely rounded and cheeky, with slight mandible separation, nostrils and a slight nail undercut at the tip of the bill. The neck shelf is 1/8-inch high, just enough to serve the purpose, the breast is carved to a slight pinched breast effect and there are virtually no shoulders. Taborek copied the Morris-styled speculums and the comb painting on the back is exceptional.

Oscar "Augie" Noorling (1903-1962), a coal dealer in the 1930s and 40s and later a International Harvester employee, where he met his shooting partner Jimmy Calderbank, made two rigs of nice little bluebills in his short lifetime. They were patterned after the Morris decoys with very cheeky heads, the same bill carving and nicely formed shoulders. Many different attitudes, including some with contented little squat heads, were included in both rigs. His first rig, which he sold during a period when he was unemployed, has tack eyes; the second rig, branded with a stylized N on the bottoms, has glass eyes. All have a nice 1/2-inch groove on both sides of the top of the tail to define the separation between wingtips and tail. Although the heads are only 2-inches wide, they still have an amazingly fat pair of cheeks - fantastic lesser scaup! Noorling also copied the Morris styled speculums.

Les Fawcett (1914-2007) was a "bay kid" who started his carving career at the age of 15. He made a good hollow decoy using the Weir pattern and continued to produce decoys most of his life. Fawcett favored shooting off the "mudbank" in the west end of the



Pair of bluebills by Graham Pilling, ca. 1960.

bay and used an Irish Water Spaniel, a popular hunting dog of the day.

Other waterfowlers of the bay, some who made decoys, deserve mention, including Reg Stone (a hunting partner of the author), Bill Dynes, Harlo Trueman, Frankie May (made decoys), Joe Lynch, Don "Ducker" Donaldson (copied Weir), Bob Lawry, Bill Ronalds, Bill Simmons (his decoys are similar to Ken Anger), Ray Hazel, Jimmy Calderbank (shot with Noorling), Pete Townsend, Ross Corey, Jim Simmons, Gord Munger (author's father), Jack Ireland and Bernie Wannamaker.

As a youngster, **Graham Pilling** (b.1932) watched the hunters of the bay as he walked to school, sometimes late for class, and came to know and admire them, particularly Les Fawcett and Red Weir. His decoys emulate the size of Weir's with the cheekiness of a Morris. They have excellently detailed bill carving, the shoulders are nicely formed and he added his own style of carved primaries and secondaries.

In his book "Decoying, St. Clair to the St. Lawrence," Barney Crandell wrote that ducks were mostly gone from the bay by the 1940s due to pollution and the resultant loss of habitat. Duck hunting continued on the beach until the early 1970s but was eventually crowded out by urbanization. Yet concentrated efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and stop dumping of shipping waste in the harbor and the curtailment of agricultural and municipal waste runoff into the bay has restored much of the aquatic vegetation and the ducks are back.

Just last winter Pilling reported seeing a group of over 1000 bluebills and redheads rafted off the north shore of the bay late in the season. The hunting on Burlington Bay will never approach its glory days, when flocks of waterfowl blotted out the sun and locals took advantage of their numbers to boost its local economy. But it does bring back memories of the good old days and those old wooden decoys that proved so effective. 🐾

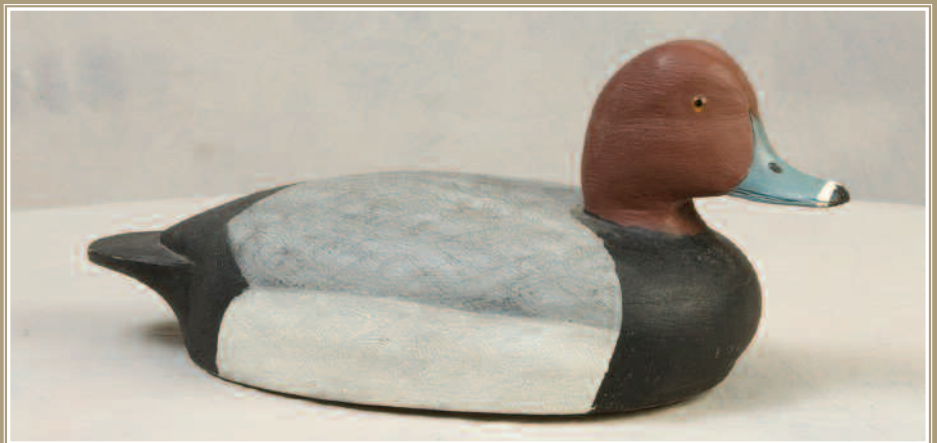
The author, a long-time screener, learned the art from his father. A decoy maker who carved his own hunting rig, he has retired many veteran Burlington Bay decoys to a new home on his shelf.



Pete Munger with a restored Reg Stone skiff and a bag of ducks.



Pair of bluebills from his second rig by Oscar "Augie" Noorling, ca. 1940.



Redhead based on a Weir pattern by Les Fawcett, ca. 1950.

Lewis BARKALOW

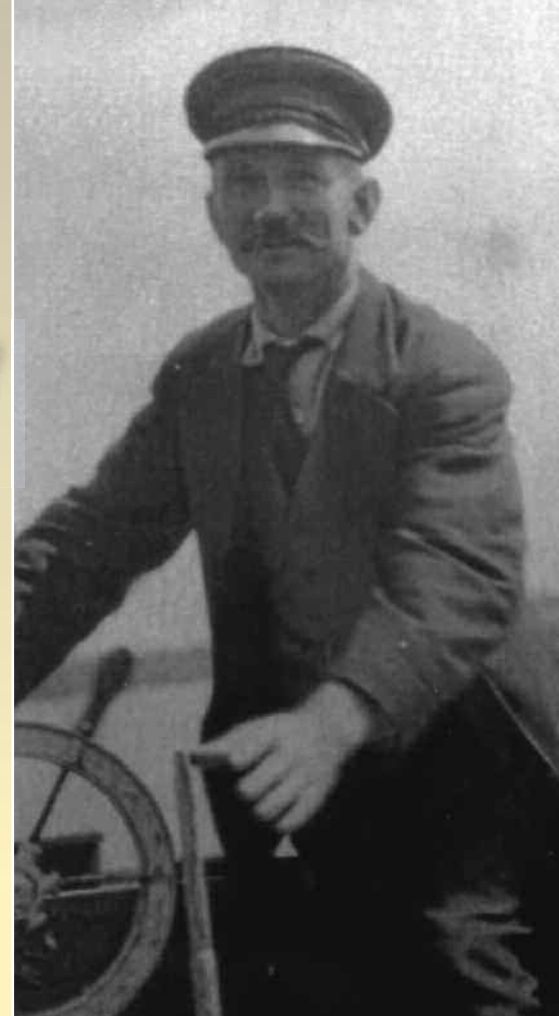
Forked River's esteemed boat captain and decoy maker

BY ALLEN LINKHORST & GENE MARSHALL

Born just ten years after the end of the Civil War, Lewis Barkalow and his peers witnessed more change to the American way of life than any group of people. From the days of the horse and buggy to the age of jet propulsion, his generation witnessed Reconstruction, two world wars, a Great Depression and the incredible technological innovations of the 20th century.

BORN IN 1875, Jesse Lewis Barkalow was one of three children by Samuel and Mary Barkalow. Apparently he didn't care much for this first name, for in the 1900 Federal census he's listed as Jessie L. Barkalow. As he aged he began referring to himself as J. Lewis Barkalow, and finally just Lewis. While his name changed often, he was a lifelong resident of Forked River, New Jersey.

In 1905 Barkalow married Matilda Lewis, known as Tillie to friends and family. They raised four children: Marguerite B., Frederick, Edgar and Albert. They lived in a large, comfortable house on nearly 1½ acres of property on Station Drive. Barkalow, a hard working, frugal man, maintained a large garden and grew nearly all of his own vegetables. Added to his deer and duck hunting and fishing, he provided his family with the majority



Capt. Lewis Barkalow.

of its food consumption. He also kept chickens for their eggs and meat. The property had several out buildings and a large, deep cold cellar for storing his vegetables during the winter. Photographs of his home and grounds reveal a tidy, well-maintained estate.

In his early days Barkalow worked as a bayman on Barnegat Bay. A talented woodworker, he made many of his own tools, such as decoys, rakes, oars and clam tongs. He also made beau-

Sanderling decoys in winter (L) and spring plumage, ca. 1900.



Yellowlegs decoy in spring plumage. The bills on Barkalow's shorebirds were inserted through the head and splined in the back, ca. 1900.



Pair of hollow-carved broadbills with Barkalow's signature ice grooves in the back. The drake was made around 1900 and the hen about 1930. GENE MARSHALL COLLECTION



Pair of hollow-carved goldeneyes with simplistic but efficient paint patterns from his 1945 rig. GENE MARSHALL COLLECTION



tiful Martin houses and skillfully produced many wooden household items, such as benches, small tables and cupboards. From 1900 to 1907 he served as a surfman in the U.S. Lifesaving Service, which provided seasonal employment from late December through March. Many bayman up and down the coast followed this pursuit, as they were the logical choice to handle rescue boats in the heavy surf.

In time he quit working the bay and began working as a boat mate. Barkalow proved to be a gifted waterman and after a number of years became a boat captain, hosting parties for sport fishing. During that time fish were plentiful in Barnegat Bay, but occasionally he would navigate the boat out of Barnegat Inlet and into the Atlantic Ocean.

His boat, the Marguerite B., named after his daughter, was built in 1915 by his brother-in-law, Amos Lewis. Crafted of local Jersey cedar, she was 32 feet in length, 12 feet wide with a draft of 3½ feet. The vessel, equipped with a Chrysler marine engine, was docked at the state's marina, located just a short distance from his house and the railroad station.

The railroads were an integral part in the development of New Jersey's coastal region. Prior to the trains, overland travel to the

shore was difficult at best. In 1853 the first rail line to the shore linked Camden to Absecon. By the 1880s trains left Camden, Philadelphia and New York City for numerous shore points. The railroads delivered materials, supplies, tourists and sports for hunting and fishing. They returned to the cities carrying local produce, wild ducks and geese, fish and other seafood delicacies.

In the early 1920s Forked River was a small village of approximately 700 fulltime residents. Nevertheless it was a busy place. Located less than 60 miles from New York City, it was a gateway to Barnegat Bay with its abundant hunting and fishing opportunities. Captain Lewis, as he was now known, took full advantage of the situation. Wearing his captain's hat, he would wait at the train station, greeting arriving guests, and inquire if they were interested in a fishing expedition. Many



Stylistic early pair of hollow-carved red-breasted mergansers. They were reportedly a favorite of Bill Mackey's, who bought many directly from Barkalow, ca. 1900.

PHOTO COURTESY FRANK & FRANK SPORTING COLLECTIBLES



Hollow-carved red-breasted merganser with a stylish paint pattern.



Hollow-carved red-breasted merganser hen with an unusual head carving that lacks a crest. GENE MARSHALL COLLECTION

fishermen stayed at the Greyhound and Enos Hotels. Many duck hunters, who gunned at the famed Sedge Island Gun Club, embarked by boat from Forked River.

Although an avid hunter of ducks and shorebirds, Captain Lewis was not known to take out gunning parties. Yet duck hunting was such an important part of his life that he owned two sneakbox ducks boats; one was painted brown and decked out in typical Barnegat Bay fashion and the other was painted white, which he used when ice and snow were present. His hunting rig included his own handmade decoys as well as some made by others. He enjoyed hunting on the Forked River, Barnegat Bay, Bridge Creek and the Tide Pond Creek Point areas.

Along with ducks and shorebirds, Barkalow also hunted the marsh areas around Forked River for blue herons, which according to many accounts was a local delicacy. Bill

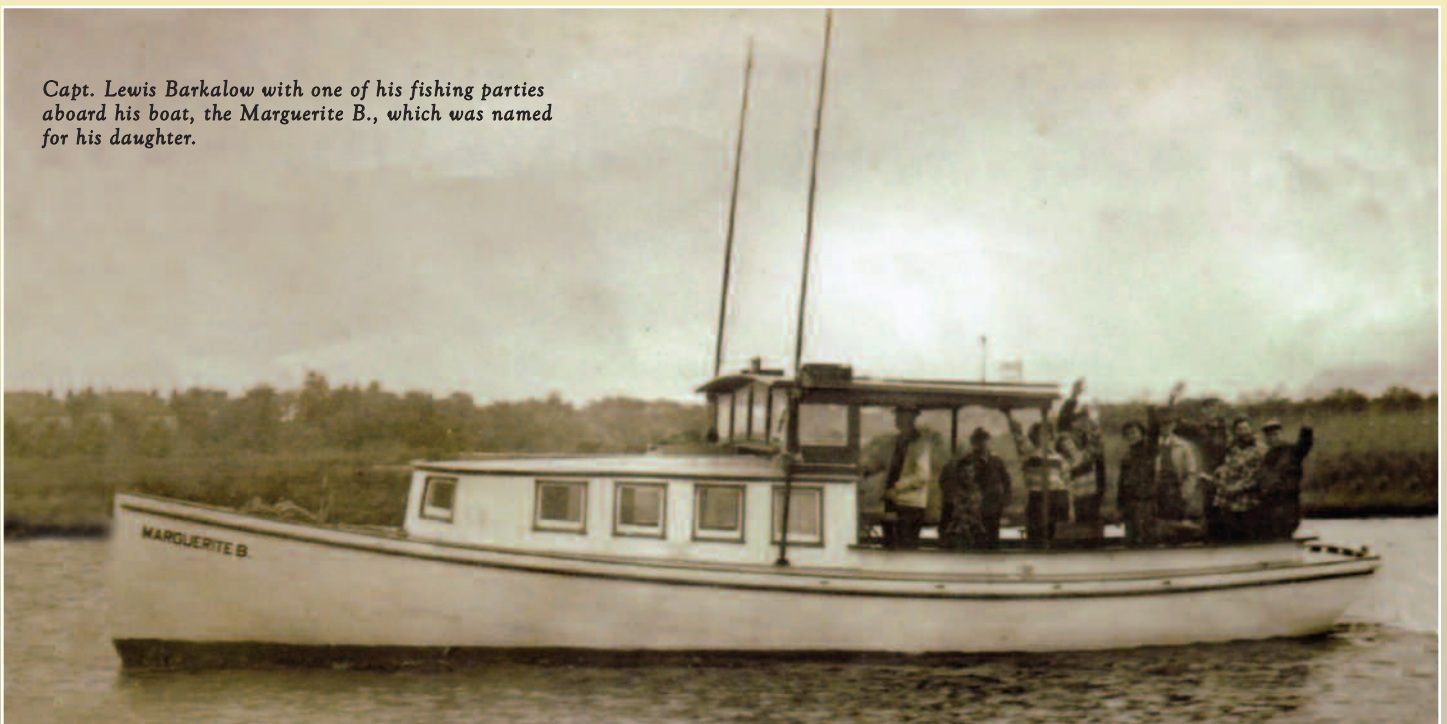
Mackey in his book "American Bird Decoys" illustrated an example of a heron decoy that was carved by John Cornelius of Forked River and given to Barkalow in 1893 as a birthday gift (see page 55, plate 35). Just 18 years old at the time and already a dedicated hunter, Barkalow later told Mackey that he hunted over the decoy for years.

Barkalow began carving decoys as a teenager, starting with shorebirds. His uncle, Joel Barkalow, was a noted shorebird carver and hunter, so one could speculate he was a strong influence on his nephew's early pursuits. He later began carving duck decoys for his own use. After he acquired his house on Station Drive, he carved them in a small shed located directly behind his house. According to his family, he was a very neat and efficient woodworker; the shed was very organized and his tools were always clean and sharp.

The shorebird decoys were carved out of

aged cedar. He used hard woods for the bills that were inserted through the head and splined in back. This produced a very tight fitting bill that could easily be repaired if needed. His simple paint palette included four colors: brown, black, green and white. They produced all the shades he needed to paint realistically looking shorebirds in both spring and fall plumage.

The spring plumage birds were painted a beige color with a dark tail and an elongated teardrop - or dark sideways "J" - denoting the wing line. While the paint was still wet, he dabbed the back and sides with a brownish-green color, often adding some fine ticking or stippling in either black, brown or white. Fall plumage birds were painted in a similar manner, only the base color was off-white and dabbed with black paint. The eyes were always painted black. He reportedly made sanderlings, pectoral sandpipers, yellowlegs and wil-



Capt. Lewis Barkalow with one of his fishing parties aboard his boat, the Marguerite B., which was named for his daughter.

lets. Most were branded or stamped "LB" on the sides and bottoms.

Barkalow's duck decoys are not typical Barnegat Bay models. Although most were hollow-carved from aged Jersey cedar he also made examples of solid construction. His earliest decoys are round bottomed with wide squared tails. The bodies are held together with two hardwood dowels, white lead and galvanized nails. A deep ice groove was carved into the back. The heads, which sit on a small neck shelf, were skillfully joined to the body; the earliest include a nicely carved eye groove. The bills on all of his decoys were minimally carved, with no nails, nostrils or mandibles. The eyes were stamped then painted, yellow for ducks and red for mergansers. All the heads were attached in a straightforward position.

Barkalow used whatever lead was available for the ballast weights on his decoys. Some are long and rectangular while others are square. All were held in place with galvanized nails. "LB" was stamped into all of the weights, and some of the bodies. He even stamped the weights of some decoys in his rig that were made by others. A leather loop held in place by on or two nails served as the anchor tie line. On many of the drakes in the rig, a second leather loop was located at the rear of the decoy, enabling him to attach a short line to a hen decoy, requiring only one anchor.

The duck decoys, simply painted, were very efficient. He was known to make mergansers, broadbills and goldeneyes. He might have made other species, but the vast majority of ducks found on the Forked River were divers. His earlier duck decoys were much more skillfully carved than his later decoys.

In 1945, when he was 70 years old, Barkalow carved another rig of broadbills and goldeneyes. They were made for his son, Edgar, who served in the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II. Both of his sons, Edgar and Fred, worked on the bay. Edgar worked as a bayman and operated a small seafood store and Fred was a boat captain like his dad. Avid duck hunters, they were both gifted with decoys from their father.

These later decoys were more squared off than round, with barge sides and a flatter top. None had the ice groove in the back as the earlier rigs. The bodies were hollow-carved from Jersey cedar and the construction methods remained the same - two dowels, white lead and nails. The heads were also flat sided, without eye grooves, and they were attached directly to the body. Rigged similar to the earlier decoys, most have "EB" (Edgar Barkalow) or "LB" stamped into the weights.

The majority of New Jersey merganser de-



Lew Barkalow and his wife Tillie, ca. 1945. A peep by his uncle, Joel Barkalow, is pictured below.

coys are good-looking birds, and Barkalow's, all red-breasted and carved early in his career, are outstanding decoys. Streamlined and racy in design, they were a favorite of decoy collector Bill Mackey, who owned some of the finest. The heads, well carved with stamped red eyes and bills, were mounted on a neck shelf with some variation in the location of the merganser crest. All sport a stylish paint pattern.

A well-respected member of the community, Barkalow was very conscious of his role as a boat captain, never leaving the house without a fresh shirt and his signature cap. Not only a successful captain, he was a shrewd businessman as well, clever enough to develop a mailing list of sport fishermen. He had post cards printed of him standing at the helm of his boat, which he mailed to these valued clients.

Lewis Barkalow was a hard working, frugal man, who lived off the bay and the bounty of his garden, providing well for his family throughout his life. Likewise his decoys were honest gunning birds, both practical and seaworthy, that assisted in those efforts. He was well liked by his family and friends, a big citizen in a small town. He lived a life to be proud of, to coin a phrase, one he could hang his hat on. Despite the great changes he witnessed in his life, this was a constant that remained the same.



The authors would like to thank Mrs. Linda Barkalow Goeke for her assistance with this article.

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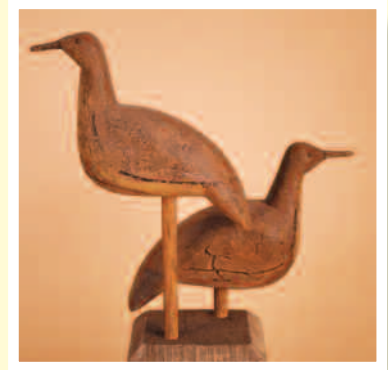
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ZEKE McDonald

BY RONALD SWANSON

Maker of quality St. Clair Flats style decoys

LITTLE IS KNOWN about Zeke McDonald. He was an early St. Clair Flats duck hunter who lived on a farm on McDonald's Island, a narrow, nearly two-mile long strip of land on the north side of the Middle Channel in the Harsen's Island delta in Michigan. In his later years he is remembered as a quiet man who often sat on his screened-in porch overlooking his domain.

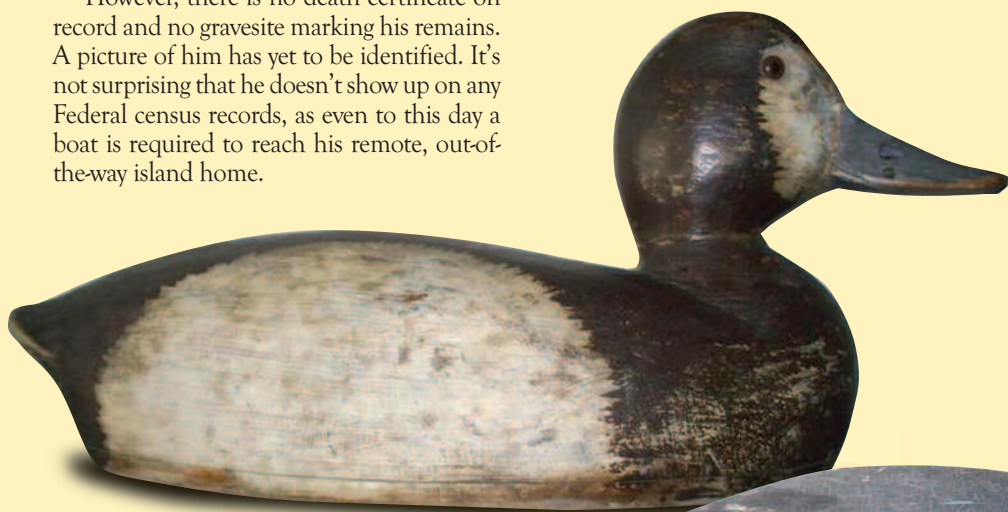
However, there is no death certificate on record and no gravesite marking his remains. A picture of him has yet to be identified. It's not surprising that he doesn't show up on any Federal census records, as even to this day a boat is required to reach his remote, out-of-the-way island home.

When McDonald died in 1938 at the age of 89, his farmhouse, a two-story structure, was left to his son Ed, who in the 1920s built three cottages on the property that he rented out. A new owner leveled the McDonald farmhouse and some of the other buildings just a few years ago and replaced them with a seasonal cottage.

What is known about Zeke McDonald, who was born in 1849, is that he made some

fine hollow, bottom-board decoys in the St. Clair Flats style, birds considered desirable since the earliest days of collecting. All of McDonald's decoys tend to be on the large size. His black ducks were made in a content, low head style, while the divers - canvasbacks, redheads, bluebills, ringbills and buffleheads - sport high heads, not as nervous sentinels but alert, as though they just landed and are sizing up the situation.

ABOVE: A Zeke McDonald canvasback with the Middle Channel and McDonald Island in the background.



Early original paint redhead hen (above) and redhead drake with a later second coat of paint. The arched side paint on the hen is indicative of his simplistic paint patterns.
HEN/JOE GARGAGLIANO COLLECTION,
DRAKE/BOB SAKUTA COLLECTION



In chapter 1, entitled Canvasback, in Clune Walsh and Lowell Jackson's 1983 book, "Waterfowl Decoys of Michigan and the Lake St. Clair Region," Michael and Julie Hall wrote:

"The Zeke McDonald canvasback (fig. 25) is a primitive. The hollow construction of this decoy indicates that McDonald was not unaware of the local tradition of decoy making around him in the St. Clair Flats, yet his image of a canvasback is highly original. The great head on his can rises on its slim neck like a giant lollipop on a stick. The broad oversized bill juts out from the bird's face like a snow plow blade. The decoy's body is flat and simple but it is punctuated with a beautiful tiny tail that gives the whole carving a sense of style. As art, the McDonald canvasback has both the originality and authority that make a good, collectible primitive."

The late Barney Crandall wrote the Michigan chapter in Joe Engers 1990 publication, "The Great Book of Wildfowl Decoys," and in it he disagreed with the Hall's opinions and voiced his own:

"Another maker who styled decoys with a forceful and challenging appearance was Zeke McDonald, who lived at the turn of the (last) century on a small island in the Flats known as McDonald's. His redheads and canvasbacks appear ready to dominate any kind of water and wind while his blacks are overbearing masters of the marsh."

"One collector has described the strong head and jutting bill of the McDonald canvasback as a "snowplow blade," but I liken it to a big-nosed, avuncular professor aggressively laying the facts of history on a class of



This alert canvasback perfectly illustrates the simplicity and accuracy of McDonald's paint pattern. Applied over a primer with uncomplicated strokes, he avoided a hard edge line where the colors met.
RON SWANSON COLLECTION



Delicate alert bufflehead nearly worn to the bare wood. RON SWANSON COLLECTION



Rare ringbill hen, a species nearly unheard of on the Flats, repainted by a former owner of the rig. Unlike bluebills and redheads, ringbills have a brown eye. RON SWANSON COLLECTION



Pintail hen with delicate scratch feather paint over the body and head. BOB SAKUTA COLLECTION

Mallard hen with a coat of darker paint on the body, likely to use it as a black duck. BOB SAKUTA COLLECTION



uninterested students. Only the spectacles (perhaps a pince nez) are absent.”

When these words were respectively written, few collectors, including the Halls and Crandall, realized that McDonald was a pioneering carver who may have been making decoys as early as the 1870s. It's quite possible that along with Harsen's Island locals, Charles and Fred Unger and Budgeon Sampier, or Chris Smith of Algonac and Nate Quillen of Pointe Mouille - all among the earliest documented Michigan decoy makers - he might have been one of the originators or the St. Clair Flats style of hollow, bottom-board decoys.

Early Toronto carvers like George Warin and Phineas Reeves, both English immigrants, supplied hollow, bottom-board decoys for Lake Erie's Long Point Club (established in 1866) and the nearby St. Clair Flats Shooting Company or Canada Club (established in 1874). The Canada Club was just a short distance across the St. Clair River from Harsen's Island in the central part of the St. Clair Flats. All of these men helped establish the "Flats" style of decoy. It will never be proved who was the originator, but as of this writing Zeke is now placed in some very special company.

In 1863 George A. Peabody of Danvers, Massachusetts brought hollow, bottom-board decoys to those local waters during the Civil War, where they were used at both Long

Point, hunting with Phineas Reeves, and elsewhere on Lake St. Clair, but there is no evidence it established a trend. (As of now, the earliest known maker of hollow, bottom-board decoys is Albert D. Laing of New York City, who used his rig in the 1830s for market hunting.)

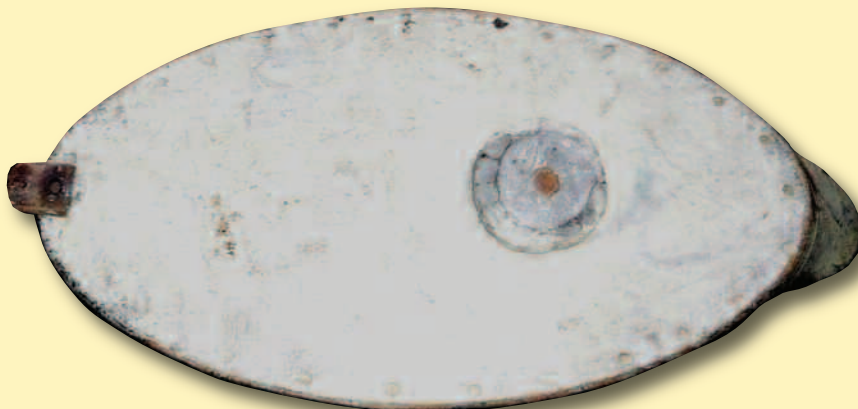
Maybe the Hall's designation of "primitive" in reference to McDonald's decoys is close to appropriate when judging just a single canvasback, but when reviewing his entire body of work it falls short. There is a distinct family look to all of his decoys. His view or interpretation is a caricature of each type or species of duck, but McDonald's birds are consistent, smooth, balanced, very well constructed and the overall look is quite appealing. As for Crandall's description, the decoys don't appear professorial to this writer, but they no doubt have an appearance that is both "forceful and challenging."

Considering the construction, McDonald's decoys are actually quite sophisticated.

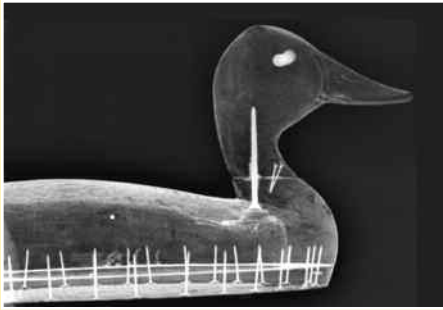
All of them are fully hollowed and have a first rate brass screw holding the head from within (refer to the x-ray). Some of his decoys have a 5/8-inch plug in the bottom board just below the screw, possibly a later addition to plug a hole made to tighten the head screw. The oval bottom-boards are held in place by as many as 30 small flathead nails (no "leakers" are known). The neck shelf is raised to receive a beautifully carved head with a carefully detailed bill that features mandible carving, a V-shaped chin, a nail and his unique triangular nostrils. The glass eyes are first class taxidermy products, likely from Germany. This Flats island farmer spared no expense in an effort to create superb decoys that would last for well over 100 years.

There are a few very fine examples of McDonald's decoys in original paint, and although the patterns are simple they are very correct. The brushstrokes on his canvasbacks are feathery and unadorned, without any wing shapes or speculums, just plain black and white. No hens are known to exist. The paint patterns on his redheads are also very simple yet accurately portray the sexes. The black ducks have body feathering and excellent comb or scratch painting on the head. Hen puddle ducks, such as his pintails and mallards, have additional scratch painting on the bodies.

One example of a bufflehead of undetermined sex - the paint has been worn off completely - is still desirable for its dainty form. It appears to be an early decoy, as it shows signs of having a dog-bone shaped lead weight rather than the typical two-inch diameter round weight generally attached to the bottom-board. Not only is it proportionately smaller than his other species, the bottom-



The bottom boards on McDonald's decoys are perfectly oval with a round lead weight screwed into them and a leather loop attached for the anchor tie line.



This x-ray of the canvasback on page 36 shows most of the 30 flathead nails holding the bottom board, the brass screw holding the head and only one pellet shot. Few of McDonald's decoys exhibit signs of shot, indicating the great care afforded the rig by its maker.

board is not a perfect oval, another indication that it's an earlier bird.

There are rumors of mallards but no drakes were found for this article, although there is one example of a mallard hen – a "Suzie" – being changed to a black duck with a coat of darker paint applied from the end of the chest area to the tail. When handling the decoy, a mallard hen wing flash or speculum is nearly visible. Early mallards are uncommon in the Flats area of Lake St. Clair, but there were a few made by the Toronto makers on the Canadian side, probably to the order of some of the club gunners, as opposed to market hunters who preferred canvasbacks and redheads. It's possible Zeke did a little guiding in his early days to augment his farming activities, or perhaps he just enjoyed a mallard or two occasionally, as they are delicious ducks.

His rarest decoy, a ringbill hen, an almost unheard of species on the Flats (examples by George Warin and Tom Schroeder have been identified), has been repainted by artist Bill Rose. Although it's the size of his bluebills, the brown eyes identify the species.

There is no indication that Zeke McDonald was a professional decoy maker. Although a good number of his decoys have survived, perhaps 50 or 60 in total, their numbers are insufficient to suggest he carved birds for more than his own or his family's rig. That they survived is no doubt due to their utility, high quality and careful family use. Very few have shot in them, indicating a high level of pride in the art form and sportsmanship in hunting over the rig. Due to those efforts in creating a simple decoy, his legacy will sustain.

The author would like to thank Michigan decoy collectors Michael Hall, Jerry Catana, Jerry Adams, Len Carnaghi, Bob Sakuta, Ken Cole, Steve Fox, Joe Gargagliano, Lowell Jackson, Connie Clippert, Clune Walsh Jr. and Dick Walters, as well as Nancy Minnock and Ketty J. Koltz of the Algonac Library, the Gilbert Funeral Home and Dr. Chistoff Dean, for their assistance in researching this article.

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A new lure for folk art collectors

Vintage Folk Art Fishing Lures and Tackle

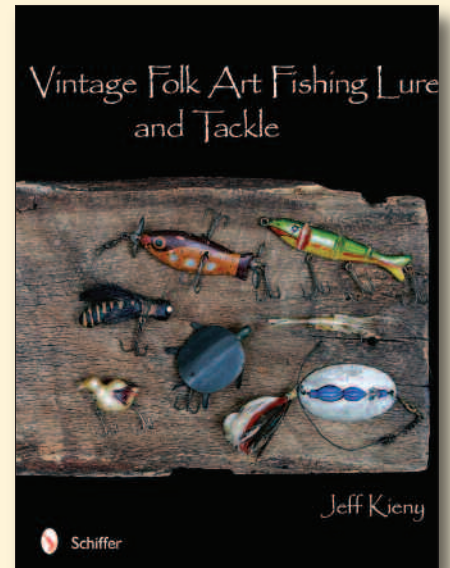
BY JEFF KIERNY

REVIEWED BY DECOY MAGAZINE

Sorting through old tackle boxes might not top your list of interests, but Jeff Kierney's new book, "Vintage Folk Art Fishing Lures and Tackle," might change your mind. Illustrated with over 700 pictures of these "miniature works of art," as the author refers to them, it is the first book to recognize and promote hand-made fishing tackle and lures as legitimate examples of American folk art.

Prior to the 20th century, the majority of fisherman used live bait and hooks to pursue their sport. But with the dawn of the new century, in the midst of America's Industrial Revolution, tackle companies began producing factory-made lures that were sold at local sporting goods and hardware stores. Due to their immediate popularity and demand, these companies were constantly adding new designs and concepts, including a potpourri of critters from a variety of materials and some with mechanical attributes.

Despite this availability of new and better products for fisherman, factory-made lures were not available to the "average guy," who couldn't afford to spend what little money was available on "expensive" fishing tackle. So many sports-



men of the day simply made their own, often using available materials and household supplies and whatever artistic talent they possessed. Most surviving examples are handmade copies of the store-bought commercial lures; others are the inventions of fishermen with creative imaginations.

Most of the lures were made for personal use, so most of the makers remain anonymous. However many fish decoy collectors, who we assume would have an interest in the topic, are familiar with Bud Stewart, one of the few identified makers of handmade fishing tackle featured in the book. Since they weren't making lures under strict commercial standards, all are singularly unique. And the designs are endless, whether they are a "one-of-a-kind creation or an inspired re-interpretation of a classic."

Since the collecting of folk art fishing lures, as the author writes, is "in its infancy," they are still readily available. But interest is growing - and this new book should only add to their allure - so you ought to have a second look the next time you sort through an old tackle box. Even if they don't attract your attention, they're liable to lure another collector into a sale.

"Vintage Folk Art Fishing Tackle and Lures" by Jeff Kierney, published by Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 240 pages, \$49.99.

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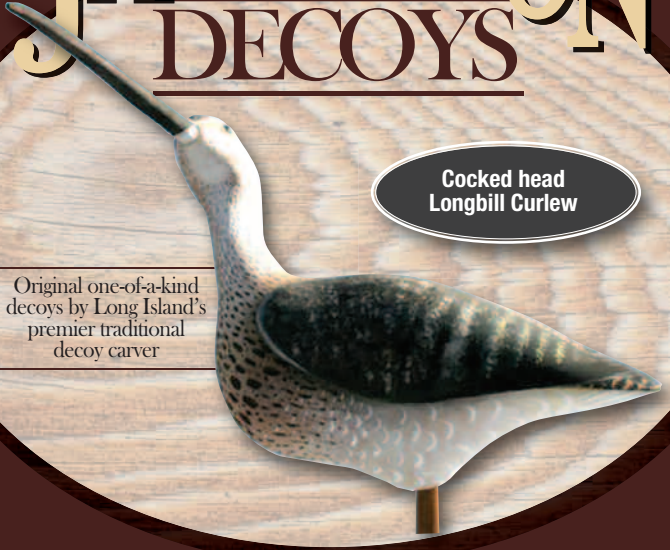
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Virginia shorebird takes off at Maryland auction

A small raised-wing dowitcher, described as an “Eastern Shore of Virginia shorebird” in the catalog, got some big attention at Pete Richardson’s estate auction in Berlin, Maryland, where it sold to a buyer in the audience for \$14,025 after a long battle with a phone bidder. Although the buyer, not at first certain who made it, would only agree with the catalog description concerning its origin, educated collectors with an “eye” for Southern decoys credited it as the work of Ira Hudson of Chincoteague, Virginia.

The shorebird was one of a handful of decoys from the estate of the late John Dale Showell of Ocean City, Maryland, a family with deep roots in the area. According to veteran collector Bill Purnell, also of Ocean City, it was among a rig Showell found locally in the early 1970s, this being the lone example he didn’t manage to acquire. He told a number of collectors it was made by Hudson.

Although some Hudson shorebirds do feature raised-wing carving – similar to



A rare raised-wing dowitcher from the Eastern Shore of Virginia brought \$14,025, which drew cheers from the audience. Most knowledgeable Southern collectors would credit it as the work of Ira Hudson of Chincoteague, Virginia.

those by Dave “Umbrella” Watson – the raised wing on this shorebird was so high that it is reminiscent of the raised “shark fin” on the back of some of Doug Jester’s finest shorebirds. However, according to Cameron McIntyre, who’s handled and/or repaired some of the finest Vir-

ginia shorebirds, “If you broke the head off it and handed it to a knowledgeable collector and asked them who made it, they’d say Hudson.” The paint pattern on the breast and sides of the dowitcher, a rare species for Hudson, is very similar to the random dot pattern found on other early raised-wing examples.

There were only a handful of significant decoys in the sale, which included guns and other “sporting” collections (Our favorite was a taxidermy mount of an old rabbit wearing a hat and aiming a rifle.). Three 1970s decoratives by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland – two canvasback hens and a bluebill – brought \$2860, \$2640 and \$1870. A Virginia shorebird with nice form but plenty of overpaint sold for \$1100. A wigeon by Miles Hancock of Chincoteague, Virginia brought \$908 and an owl with a bear claw bill by the Herter’s Company of Waseca, Minnesota made \$963.



ANNUAL FALL DECOY AUCTION



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Friday, September 23, 2011
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Crowell decorative curlew tops hot auction week in New England


(Continued from page 16)

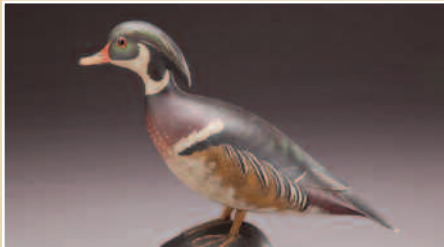
and participation, which is a downward spiral.

The best solution is to remake this summer migration into one big event. Don't make collectors choose which of the auctions they'll attend, simply have them all at the same place over the course of a week. The dealers could arrive on Sunday to set up for a week. The auction houses would each come in and have their auctions and move on, picking straws to see who goes first. An extra stipend attached to each table - and additional contributions from each of the auction houses - would allow us to advertise the event in antique publications throughout New England - "Come attend the annual New England Summer Decoy Extravaganza"

- which might attract some fresh meat into the room.

If you think this is a good idea, suggest it to your favorite auction house. Encourage them to get together and discuss it. If we can't get all three to go along with this idea,

maybe two will participate. At least that's a move in the right direction. If not, who knows, maybe more collectors will decide to stay home and participate through other means. That's one way to be a collector, but it doesn't sound very social to us. 



3. A.E. Crowell
decorative standing wood duck
Copley - \$115,00



4. Massachusetts
sickle bill curlew
Decoys Unlimited - \$111,550



5. Lothrop Holmes
canvas-covered oldsquaw
Copley - \$74,750



1. A.E. Crowell
decorative running curlew
Copley - \$247,250



6. Lee Dudley
canvasback
Copley - \$69,000



7. Ward brothers
1936 model canvasback
Copley - \$63,250



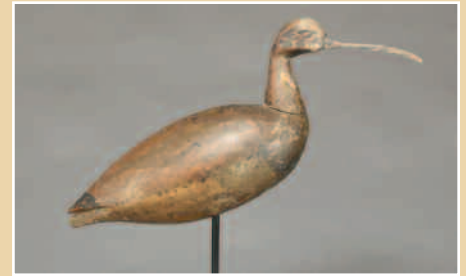
8. George Boyd
canvas-covered Canada goose
Decoys Unlimited - \$60,375



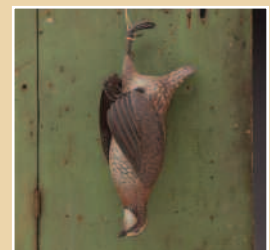
2. Lothrop Holmes
canvas-covered swimming
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9. A.E. Crowell
turned head willet
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Wanted: Decoy Magazine is always looking for quality articles on old decoys and their makers. For information, contact Joe Engers at (302) 644-9001 or decoymag@aol.com.

Wanted: Decoys by Realistic Decoy Co. of Kewaunee, Wisconsin, 1930s to 1940s. Looking for O/P canvasback, bluebill or mallard decoys. Will consider repaints depending on condition. Contact Curt Marsolek at (918) 314-4600, (918) 787-7972 or cjmar57@gmail.com.

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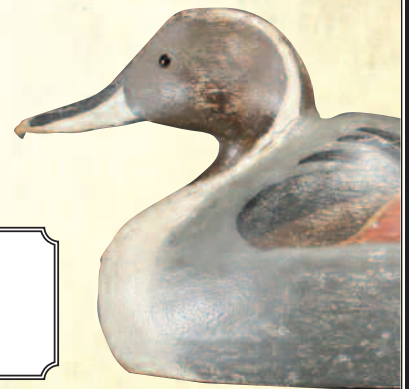
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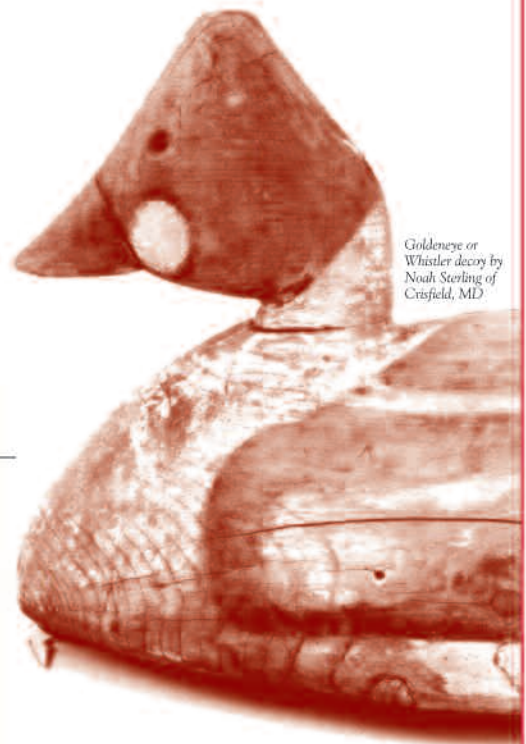
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