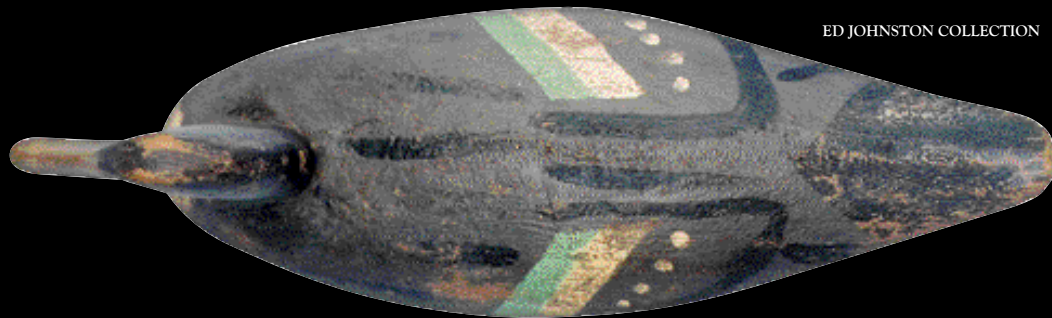




*Ned Burgess with a canvas-covered goose.*  
PHOTO COURTESY ARCHIE JOHNSON

# BURGESS NED

## A CAROLINA DECOY MAKER WITH AN ART DECO FLOURISH



ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION

*Top view of pintail showcases the art deco paint patterns that Ned Burgess applied to the backs of his pintail and wigeon drakes.*

B Y D I C K M C I N T Y R E

**A** North Carolina decoy maker who painted some of his decoys with an art deco flourish? Absolutely, Edward Roger “Ned” Burgess of Waterlily did just that. The backs of his drake pintails and wigeons are comprised of intricately positioned geometric bars and dots of contrasting colors. Viewed close-up, the art deco patterns don’t look anything like a live duck’s plumage pattern, but from a short distance, they are very representative of their intended species.

“Basic” would be a fitting description of the paint patterns on most coastal North Carolina decoys. While the sculp-

tural qualities of Tarheel decoys are often very powerful, their paint adornments are usually quite pedestrian. How Burgess, who lived in a remote coastal fishing village, was influenced by the art deco movement is anyone’s guess. The time during which most of his “art deco” decoys were produced (1925-1945) was a period of much change in the art and architectural movements in America. Yet Waterlily, where Burgess resided, would seemingly be out of the art loop.

Burgess was truly a commercial decoy maker, supplying thousands of decoys to organized hunt clubs as distant as the Washington D.C. area. He proudly acknowledged more than one U.S. Congressman as clients who drove to his backwater shop to pick-up their promised orders. Could one of his more cosmopolitan duck hunting clients taken Burgess a supply of picture books or magazines that may have held some artistic influence?

Ned Burgess was born in 1868 in the



*Wonderful pintail pair with art deco paint patterns on the back of the drake, from the Mose White rig.*  
D.C. NORTH COLLECTION

*Redhead with slight upturn to bill, used on Maryland's Eastern Shore.*  
DICK MCINTYRE COLLECTION



*Drake wigeon with white and green bar speculum, from the MoseWhite rig.*  
ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION



*Diminutive ruddy duck in perfect original paint.*  
ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION



*Drake pintail from the Mose White rig with typical art deco paint pattern. See top view on facing page.*  
ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION



village of Duck on North Carolina's Outer Banks and died in 1962. In an interview for a newspaper in 1957 he told how he was orphaned when he was nine-years-old, blinded in one eye at the age of 12, and pretty much raised himself through childhood. As a young man he net fished for largemouth bass and carp in Currituck

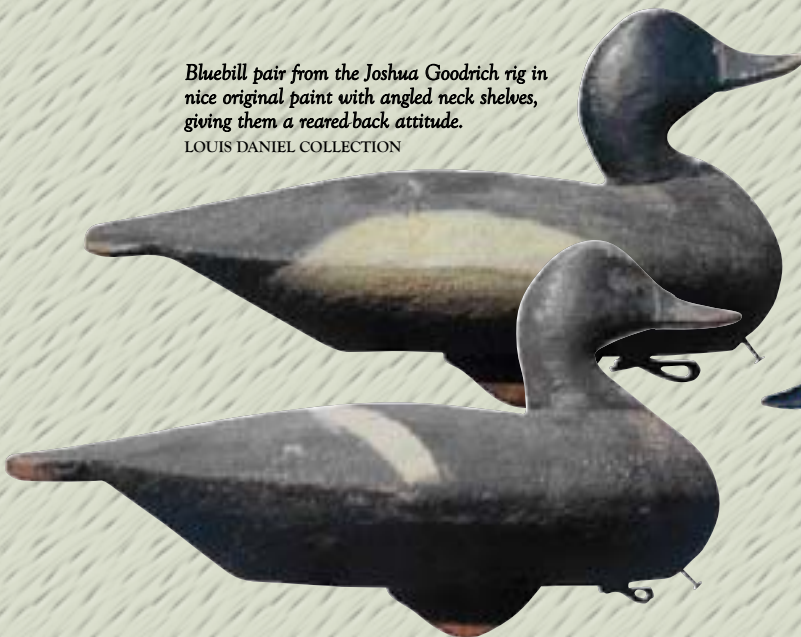
Sound, built fishing boats and, occasionally, guided duck hunters.

Ned Burgess carved decoys until he was over 90-years-old, and the urge to create a decorative item now and again probably did not escape him. As undoubtedly the most prolific of the Currituck County decoy makers, Burgess would be proud of

his historical legacy, and possibly more astounded at the prices paid by modern day collectors for his version of an art deco decoy.

**You can read the "rest of the story" in the Sept./Oct. 2004 issue of Decoy Magazine.**

*Bluebill pair from the Joshua Goodrich rig in nice original paint with angled neck shelves, giving them a reared back attitude.*  
LOUIS DANIEL COLLECTION



*Black duck with art deco paint pattern.*  
ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION



*Canvasback hen in excellent original paint.*  
ED JOHNSTON COLLECTION

