

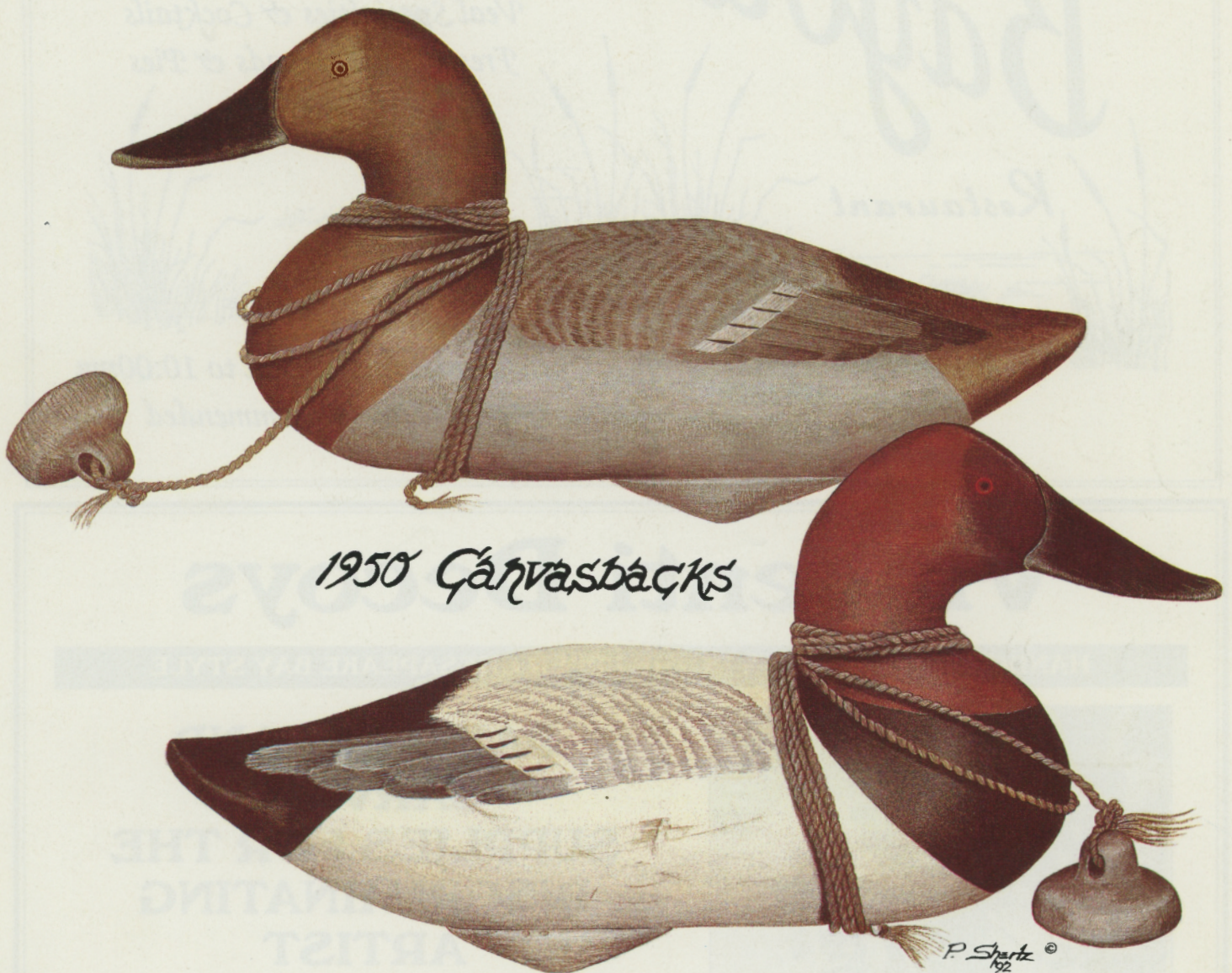
The Canvasback

Fall
1993

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

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Paul Shertz: Artist-Historian



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Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



can•vas•back (kan'ves bak'), *n., pl. -backs*, (esp. collectively) - back. 1. A north American wild duck, the male of which has a whitish back and a reddish-brown head and neck. 2. A style of decoy made famous by carvers of the Susquehanna Flats region. 3. A quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

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ON THE COVER

Paul Shertz's illustration of R. Madison Mitchell's 1950's Canvasbacks, a portion of the Shertz print *R. Madison Mitchell Shop Restoration Issue*. A limited number of this special print are available at the Decoy Museum for \$100 plus tax. All proceeds from the sale of this print go towards the restoration of R. Madison Mitchell's Shop.

FROM THE EDITOR

Every so often a story comes along that is very timely. A friend recently sent me such a story, and I knew I had to pass it on. *Yellow Ducklings Invade Shores - Sitka, Alaska*. "The shores of southeast Alaska are being invaded by blue turtles, yellow ducklings, beige beavers, and green frogs. But, no need to worry - they're all plastic. Thousands of bathtub toys fell off a cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean last year. They have been washing ashore for the past three months....The hollow 4" long toys have been traced to Boston-based Kiddie products. Marketing Manager, David Zatic, said a container holding more than 7,000 toys was lost in the North Pacific in 1992, during a voyage to Tacoma, Washington."

As many of you know, I am leaving the Decoy Museum and migrating to become the director of a historical museum in Washington State. Like those little yellow ducklings, I'm making my way back home. In the year that I have been here, I have developed a tremendous appreciation for the business of decoy making, and the unique individuals. Thanks to all of you who shared your decoy world with me. Needless to say, I'll never look at a duck or a decoy the same way again.

Karen Marshall

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The Canvasback

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*From
the
President*



Dear Museum Member,

The fall season is perhaps Havre de Grace's best as it brings the return of waterfowl to the Susquehanna Flats. This season is just what the museum is all about, remembering the gunners and decoy makers who yearned for the autumn skies filled with thousands of canvasbacks seeking the once rich beds of celery grass. The birds may no longer be in abundance, but the museum's interpretation of the special stories of men like Daddy Holly, Jim Currier, and Bob McGaw helps to keep this wonderful heritage alive. The next time you visit the museum, look out from its second floor and just dream about those days.

Beyond all our successes in 1993, it still has been a sad year for the Decoy Museum due to the loss of Madison Mitchell. We are striving to keep his legacy alive by the endowment fund established in his name and by efforts to complete his decoy shop restoration. Your support for these activities will help this institution become a 'living' museum in honor of carvers like Madison Mitchell.

I hope that you all will be able to attend the museum's Anniversary Dinner on November 6th and begin planning to come to our special programs in 1994.

Allen J. Fair
President, Board of Directors

*You are cordially invited to attend the
7th annual Decoy Museum Anniversary Dinner*

Saturday November 6, 1993

Decoy Museum

cocktails and hors d'oeuvres 6 p.m., dinner 7p.m.

Tickets are \$20.00 each and can be purchased in advance in person at the Decoy Museum or through the mail by sending check or money order to: Havre de Grace Decoy Museum Anniversary Dinner, P.O. Box A, Havre de Grace, MD 21078

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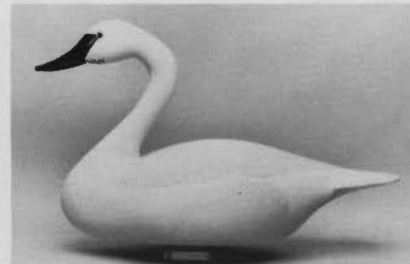
In conjunction with the Easton Waterfowl Festival
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Very rare duck call with carved mallards by Charles Perdwew



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Part of a very rare complete set of decoys by Charles Joiner to be sold in this auction. The swan is one of only three ever made by Joiner



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Consignments are being accepted for April 94 Auction until March 1, 1994

Volunteer Spotlight



Thank You Duck Fair Volunteers!

Two beautiful days, with lots of activities and fun. Thanks to all of the volunteers who helped to make the Duck Fair twice the success - we could not have done it without your help.

Looking for Weekday Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers to assist staff working in the gift shop and at the front desk 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday-Friday. We are flexible: you could volunteer as much as one day a week or as little as one day a month. If you are interested, please call Arlene at the museum.

Duck Fair volunteer Pat Pollmann at the extremely popular and messy stenciling station. Photo by Ralph Broth.

Calender of Events



November 6, 1993	7th Annual Anniversary Dinner, Decoy Museum. Cocktails - 6 p.m., dinner - 7 p.m. Tickets \$20.00 per person in advance.
December 12, 1993	Candlelight Tour, 4-8 p.m. Museum Gift Shop 25% off sale 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
February 26, 1994	Carvers Appreciation Day
May 6, 1994	13th Annual Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, 6-9 p.m.
May 7, 1994	13th Annual Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
May 8, 1994	13th Annual Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
July 23, 1994	1st Decoy Museum Flea Market, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Quality items will be accepted (no clothing) beginning in the spring - just in time for that annual spring cleaning! Watch for more details!
September 10-11, 1994	7th Annual Duck Fair

THE OUTLAW GUNNER

By Harry M. Walsh

Mr. Walsh's publication is considerably different than the previous books I have reviewed for *The Canvasback*. Rather than focusing upon decoys or their makers, this book reflects upon the hunters, techniques and equipment used to harvest waterfowl.

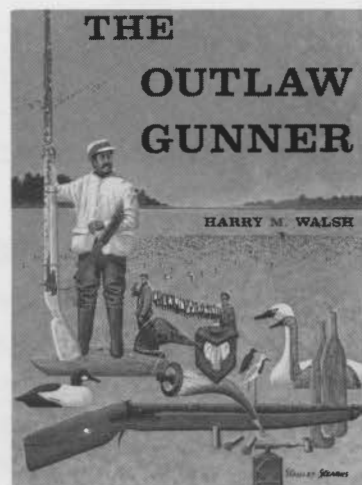
In the 1800's the first efforts were taken by individual state governments to control the amount of ducks and geese taken each year. One of the earlier conservation measures taken by Maryland in 1782 specified hunting hours and outlawed the use of fixed and swivel guns (punt and battery guns). In 1918, the federal government enacted the Migratory Bird Act. As a result, market gunning became illegal. Subsequent conservation legislation (1935) terminated the practice of "baiting," the use of tollers (live ducks as decoys), and the sinkbox use in Maryland. Up until 1918, the market gunner profession was well respected.

As Mr. Walsh is a native of Chestertown, Maryland, it would follow that his book would reflect his strong ties to the hunting in the Chesapeake Bay region. He enters some wonderful old stories as they were obtained from interviews and he presents additional information resulting from his research of old periodicals and public records. As a perfect compliment to his writing, he includes some 150 seldom seen old photographs. Fortunately, Walsh was able to capture and research much of his information through personal accounts. I for one have never questioned the accuracy of information, if the story was a good one!

The author presents, in excellent detail, the methods and equipment that were used by market gunners, illegal hunters, and trappers. Although most of these have been outlawed for years, it is fortuitous that when this book was written several personal accounts were recorded and enabled the history to be preserved. Included in the book are specific chapters concerning the market gunner, the tools of the trade (guns, decoys, tollers), baiting methods, night hunting, punt and battery guns, and the deadly sinkbox.

I like the writing style of the author in that he chooses neither to condone nor condemn the outlaw gunner, but rather simply record and educate from an historical standpoint. As a matter of interest, the author was one of the original founders of the annual Easton Waterfowl Festival.

The Outlaw Gunner is 178 pages and was first published in 1971 by Tidewater Publishing, Centerville, Maryland. As of 1986, the book was in its eighth printing. *The Outlaw Gunner* is available at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum gift shop for \$13.50.

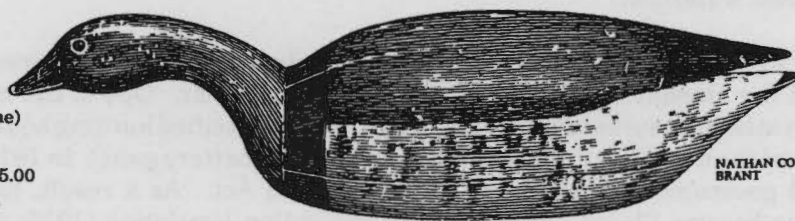


By Bill Smart

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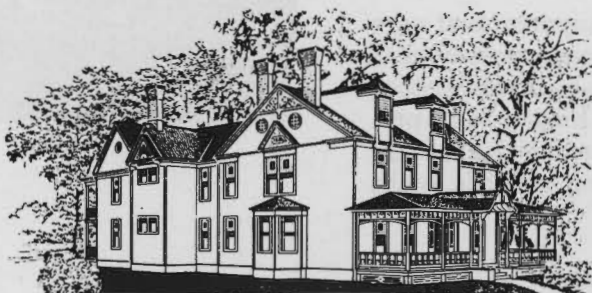
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BODY BOOTING

After 30 years of gunning in fields overlooking the Sassafras River, I ventured away from the cozy blinds along Lloyd's Creek to try a type of waterfowling which my grandfather called "simply crazy." I tended to agree with him when contemplating standing alone in the cold water, miles from shore in the dead of winter. I even thought of the "Ancient Mariner" and his words echoed in my mind as I drove to Havre de Grace that rainy day:

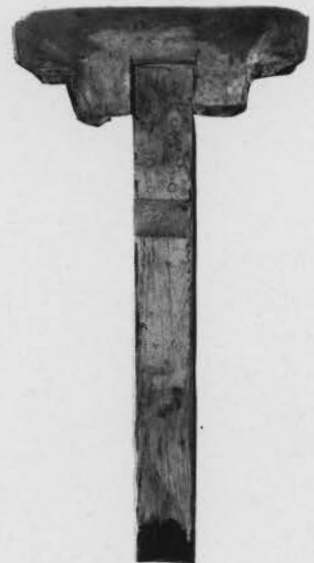
Alone, alone
All, all alone
Alone on a sunless sea
And never a "duck" took pity on
My "body" in agony.

I was soon to learn that whatever pain was associated with body booting was quickly transformed into joy once the birds started tolling.

Like many other Marylanders, I have been long attached to gunning and I have always sought to gain a greater historical perspective about various waterfowling techniques. One such hunting style which fascinated me was body booting. Having researched the topic in published sources, I sought to gain even greater insights by speaking with some original booters so to hear their stories. I called Bobby Jobes to gain his help in locating one or two of these men. He said he would, but only if I would go booting. Desperate for knowledge, I agreed.

Called one of the "toughest sports in Maryland," body booting (also called stooling) took up where sink boxes left off when they were outlawed in 1935. This type of gunning derives its name from the coverall boots (originally seine-haulers gear) used by hunters while they stood alone in water up to their chests, sometimes as far as two miles offshore. The Susquehanna Flats is the perfect place for body booting, with miles of shoal water and a 2 foot tide change, as well as one of the only places it is practiced.

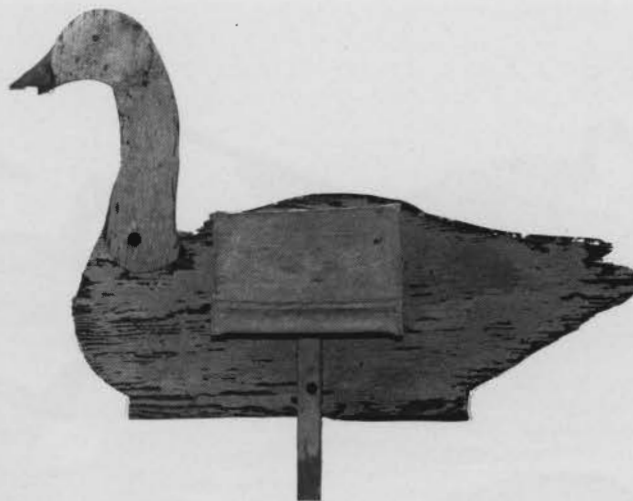
Elmer Simpkins and Johnnie Hines are among those who popularized this sport in the late 1930's, only taking a break from it during World War II. They, and others like Will Beck and Donald Asher, turned to this hunting style because no government agency ever questioned its legality and it was considered "half the trouble of using a sink box." Some gunners felt that the hunter was even more concealed when body booting, but Captain Harry Jobes disagrees with this notion, believing that a gunner was lower to the water in a box and could see the ducks coming in better. But he does



Above: Seat from the museum's collection.

Below: Swan stake from the museum's collection.

Photos by Howard Miles



By John Quarstein
Original Artwork by Durant Ball

concede that body booting is the best alternative to sink boxes.

Booting has changed since the 1950's primarily due to the lack of game, temperature changes, and equipment improvements. The typical booting outfit 40 years ago would either be seine-haulers gear (rising only to the armpits) or surplus navy body suits, which the gunner would then cover with a canvas hood painted the color of the water and camouflaged with images of canvasbacks or a white hood if the Flats were filled with ice floes. This simple gear, as well as the colder water, limited many to about 40-60 minutes in the water (sometimes with ice floes constantly hitting your back "you got out quick"). Usually only one man would be in the 100+ decoy rig at a time, jumping into the water from the layout boat after testing the depth. The other hunters would then stand guard while waiting their turn 300-400 yards away in the cabin boat, ready to use the layout boat to pick up cripples or to pick up the gunner upon signal. Once in the water the gunner would stand, partially hidden by a goose (or swan) silhouette decoy, upon which he would also place his gun and shells. Jimmy Pierce, who has booted since he was 15, feels it was simply great gunning, the ducks or later the geese, would "knock you down there were so many." However, some old timers, like Bennett Keen, felt that the sport "seemed hardly worth it for the present limit (1953) of four ducks." You had to have been "bit by the tick" to have practiced this sport then.

Today's body booting has changed, fewer birds but improved equipment enabling a dedicated booter to stay in the water almost all day. There are seven rigs from Havre de Grace, North East, and Perryville that still practice this sport. The best time now for booting is after Christmas, when the ponds begin to freeze over and the geese need to get to water. All of the booters hope to be out in the water when bad weather moves in as "it makes the geese crazy," almost insuring good gunning.

My cousin Geoffrey (serving as my photographer) and I met Captain Bobby Jobes at the Havre de Grace Yacht Basin early one afternoon to give booting a



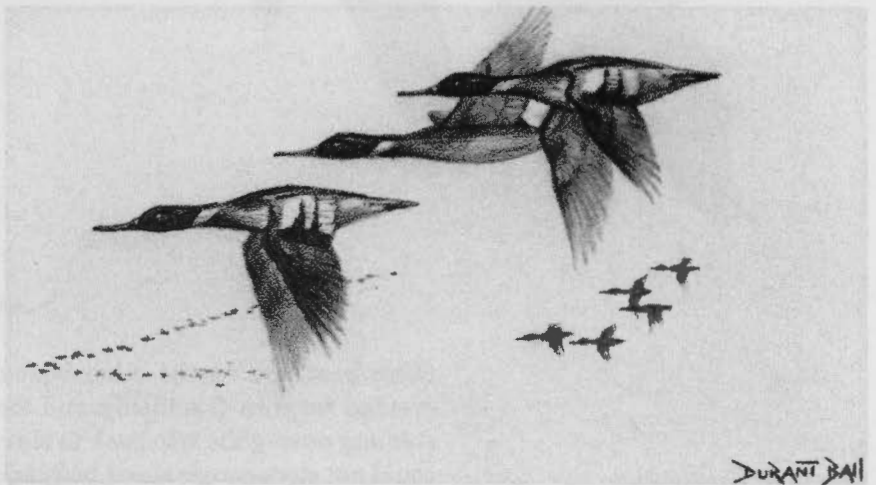
try. A cold and wet ride onto the Flats gave me some concerns about freezing, however, arriving at the cabin boat I realized these men knew their trade. A converted fishing boat (*Bay Prowler*) was equipped with a wood stove for warmth and a cooking stove (which served up some delicious venison burgers). Here I entered into a body boot, which was actually a "cold weather entry suit" or "exposure suit" covering me from neck to foot, making me feel ready to explore the moon. After a quick trip in the layout boat, we jumped overboard joining five other men amongst the decoys.

Standing in about three feet of water, I was quickly acclimated to booting by Charlie Jobses and Don Forsythe. I was equipped with my own silhouette on a pipe which was then fitted on a stake so I could turn the oversized goose to watch the birds approach. The stickup also featured an adjustable head to disguise my shotgun while in the rack and ample space for shells. The standard "keep your head down" commands were given, but the silhouette was fitted with a viewing hole, and by lowering myself in the water, I felt as concealed as being in a goose pit.

The rig itself was beautiful and very similar to those surrounding sink boxes, except the cans have now been replaced by geese. The 175+ decoys laid out in a line tapered at both ends. The layout changes with almost each hunt, sometimes in a horseshoe configuration, always depending on weather and location. The rig consisted primarily of geese, which were a mixture of V-board (which were displayed on the outer edges of the stool) and full-bodied styrofoam floaters all made by the Jobses Brothers. Towards the closest shore, several wooden canvasback, mallard, and baldpate decoys were loosely laid out. It was the first time in almost 15 years that I had gunned over wooden decoys and when I mentioned this to Charlie Jobses he merely commented that sometimes he "needed to check and see if his decoys still worked on the birds."

The first two hours were filled with stories from the men about days of gunning past, all of their comments reflecting each individual's love of waterfowl and body booting. Bobby Jobses had already primed me with a story of having 1500-2000 geese toll into his decoys at one time, commenting that he "didn't know which one goose to shoot at I was so excited and I can't even remember if I shot one." Obviously, everyone has a tale to tell, all of which made me realize that body booting was a rewarding challenge every time you do it. Occasionally, we were diverted from talking and alerted to flights of ducks darting by the outer edges of the rig, which caused us to quickly "get at ready," but being mostly mergansers they were virtually ignored with the hiss "hairy heads."

By 4:00 p.m. the rain had stopped and my feet were beginning to get cold when we were alerted by a radio call from the cabin boat that some geese were headed our way from Mill Creek. We began honking away with our callers, but I never saw the flight of four until they were 25 feet above the decoys. Two were



dropped by Don and Charlie and I was now all warmed up and beginning to understand what body booting was all about. As the layout boat picked up one of our cripples, our attention became focused on a large flock of geese which appeared ready to toll into our decoys. They finally landed about 80-90 yards off the rig - nervous, but apparently anxious to join our decoys. Charlie Jobes quieted the rest of the callers and as I squatted down into the receding tide, I listened to him singularly coax the geese towards us. When they were just at the edge of our range, nearing sunset, Jobes called the shot and two more birds fell into the bay.



I was now a believer, but my joy was cut short by a radio call from the cabin boat telling us that it was quitting time. As I heard these words two geese dropped down out of nowhere and tolled into the decoys flaring off ten feet away from me. Boy, did I want to shoot them. I watched the geese fly down the bay, but instead of disappearing into the dusk, they made a wide arching turn and drove towards us from about 350 yards away, flying fast six inches above the water. As they neared the decoys the two honkers set their wings, only to realize that hunters were there, and the geese quickly elevated up into the twilight as I have never seen before. It was a beautiful ending to a unique experience.

DURANT BAIL

The layout boat had now returned to pick us up and after loading them with our decoys, we took a slow ride back to the

cabin boat, towing the other boat due to the low tide. The cabin boat crew greeted us with friendship and food, revelling in stories of the old days of stooling during the trip back to Havre de Grace. Our cook, Merrill Dougherty, could not say enough about body booting. He proudly told us that he had been doing it for over 30 years, booting being one of his favorite outlets as a youngster. He shot his first canvasback at 14 while stooling, after being placed out on the flats with a box of shells and told "keep shooting 'til you hit one!" He is not certain that booting is the best of gunning, but the few who do try it are hooked. I now understand what he meant.

The danger of booting was never discussed while I was out on the flats and I really never thought about it (my mind being focused on the chill factor) until we had already returned to Havre de Grace. Obviously the Jobes, like other current booters, have incorporated numerous safety features: gunning with several companions, constant radio contact with cabin and layout boats, a warm

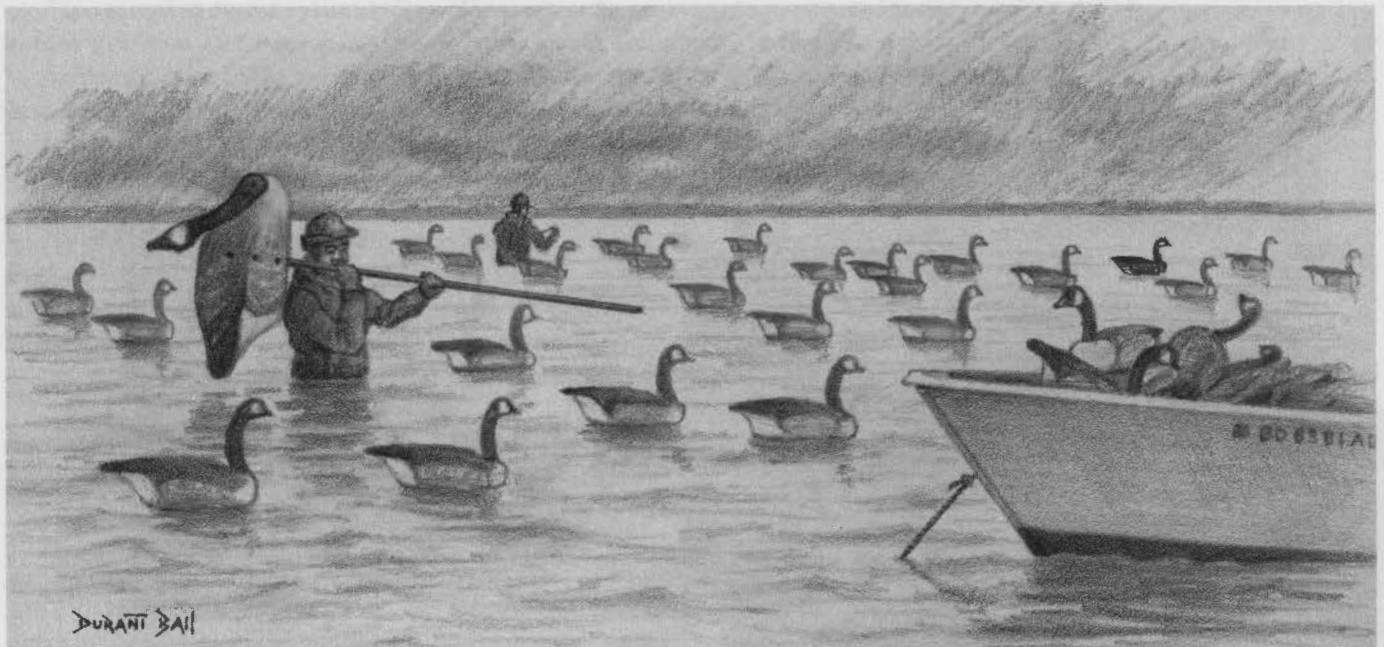
and alert cabin boat as well as effective protective clothing. However, it is still dangerous, especially if caught in an small open boat returning home during a storm. Several people have drowned during similar quick weather changes, but the freedom of being out in the middle of the flats has a definite lure that beckons gunners despite the risks. As Jimmy Pierce related to me about a friend of his, Brian Boyd, who, having checked the depth on one side of the layout boat, jumped into the water on the other side and went over his head into a shad hole. Boyd simply went home, changed his clothes, and went back stooling.

Body booting is indeed a rough sport, from setting out the decoys in the morning darkness to standing in water with ice forming or pushing the layout boat across the flats at low tide, yet the harder this type of waterfowling might be, the more glorious it is when the ducks dart by you or when the geese toll into your rig. The truth of booting is the harmony you feel when you are out on the flats alone with the water, the darkening sky, and the birds that still come to bay.

Body Booting Thank Yous

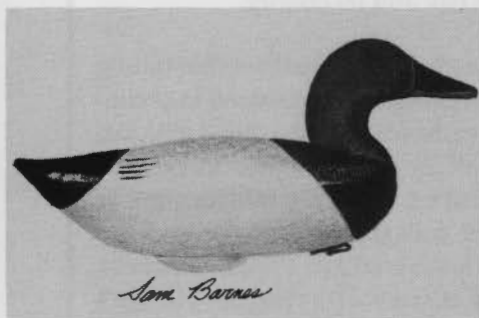
This article could not have been written without the assistance of Bobby and Charlie Jobes and their friends. Not only did they give me the unique opportunity to go body booting, they also freely shared with me their love of the bay and its bounty.

I must also thank noted wildlife artist Durant Ball, for illustrating this article. Although my cousin Geoffrey endeavored to photograph our body booting adventure, he was far too excited with just being out in the bay and seeing all those birds to use his camera. I should have shot him, but Durant's talent saved him for another season. Durant Ball is a former college art professor and has achieved much success with his waterfowl art. He has produced numerous front covers for publications such as Federal Hunter's Journal and Shooting Guide and Virginia Wildlife as well as designed stamp prints such as the 1990 Virginia National Forest Stamp, 1986 New Hampshire Waterfowl Stamp, and the 1983 National Wildlife Conservation Stamp. Durant Ball's simple sketches helped to place my adventure into perspective.



PAUL SHERTZ,

Paul Shertz has spent the last 20 years creating images which document the Susquehanna Flats' folk art and gunning traditions. This clear, concise style enables him to produce prints which provide decoy enthusiasts with guides for understanding these "floating sculptures." Having always been partial to decoys, Paul believes that they are perfect subjects for his paintings.



The lines of a classic decoy are smooth, stylish and attractive. Add the patina of age and the scars of use, and you have a perfect model for a painting.

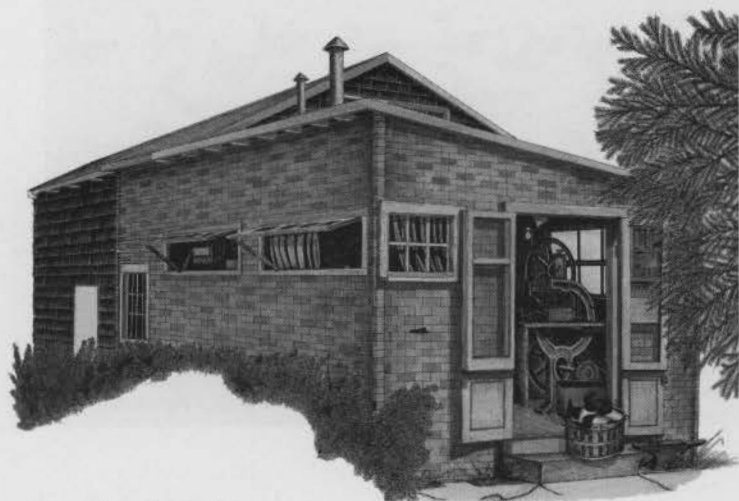
Paul's art is indeed imagery with meaning, establishing a visual historical record of decoys and their context.

R. Madison Mitchell Shop is Paul's most recent work and is a true reflection of his close involvement with area decoy makers, especially Madison himself. It is a detailed rendering of the shop, highlighting a pair of 1950's Canvasbacks. Yet, the painting expresses far more than a precise architectural view. The open door gives viewers a glimpse into the shop's interior which interjects tremendous feeling into the painting and the memories of the days when it hummed with activity. When asked what he was striving to express [with this painting], Paul replied:

Those thousands of persons who spent any time at the Mitchell Shop may know what I was trying to portray. Anyone who was fortunate enough to figure out how to open the front door with the reverse doorknob remembers walking into a wonderful world of sawdust and cobwebs and a ceiling filled with hundreds of patterns, band saw blades, and sanding belts...King Edward Cigar boxes and baby food jars filled with little do-dads were tucked away into every nook and cranny...the smells of cedar and pine filled the air, mixed with the aromas of paint, solvents, and cigarettes...Over 50 years of electrical wiring wove across the walls and ceiling, lots of old silver paint...Baskets of heads and bodies everywhere...the list is endless. The one thing no one can reproduce is the feelings you had about the people in that shop, especially, the "Old Timer."

This painting is the first of three images that Paul will create featuring Mitchell's Shop in an effort to rekindle the memories that he and so many others share.

Born in Yorkshire, England, in 1945, (his father was in the U.S. Army, his mother in the Royal Air Force), Paul came to America on the Queen Mary in 1946. He grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he first became interested in hunting upland game. Although he recognized that he possessed some artistic talent, instead of



By John Quarstein

ARTIST-HISTORIAN

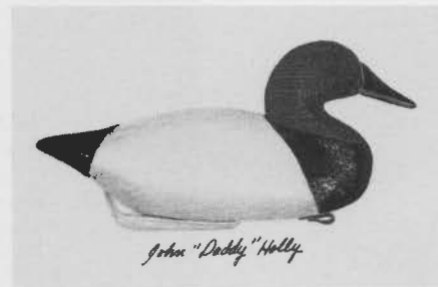
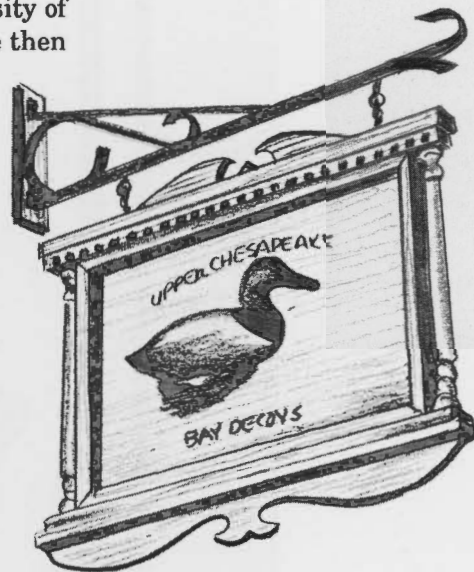
attending art school he studied Business Administration at the University of Delaware preferring to obtain his “food somewhere other than art.” He then worked for DuPont Marine Operations, retiring after 26 years of service. He is now employed by the State of Delaware’s Transportation Department.

Paul Shertz is an extremely talented, self-taught artist who believes that “historical accuracy is far more important than artistic license.” He never wanted to go to art school because he enjoyed his art too much to make it anything more than a hobby. Paul receives a great deal of personal satisfaction from his work, including the research on his topics. He started painting in the early 1970’s and became interested in waterfowl subjects as a result of his love of goose hunting. Shertz decided to paint professionally after attending a few decoy shows and DU dinners as he realized that many people enjoyed both decoys and wildlife art. Paul worked with Evans McKinney at DuPont and Evans helped introduce him to the work of decoy making. After a trip to Mitchell’s Shop, Shertz was hooked on decoys.

Although Paul “valued his thumbs too much” to become a carver, he blended his artistic talent with his interest in waterfowling to begin creating images that focused in decoys. Shertz’s first print was *Decoy Makers of the Susquehanna Flats*, which was produced with the assistance of Evans McKinney and Madison Mitchell. *Decoy Makers* defined Paul’s style as it reproduced the subtle differences of various carvers in a precise format that was both aesthetically pleasing and historically accurate. Since then, he has gone on to produce more than 15 prints, as *Harford County Canvasback*, *Waterfowl Hunting on the Chesapeake Bay, 1850-1950*, and several *R. Madison Mitchell* images, all of which serve as beautiful historical documents.

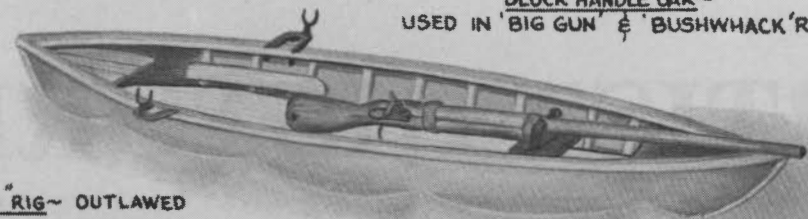
Waterfowl Hunting on the Chesapeake Bay is almost a modern version of a medieval illuminated manuscript as it not only illustrates the various gunning tools of the Flats, but it more importantly explains to the viewer each artifact’s context and meaning. Shertz’s *R. Madison Mitchell* print featuring a duotone photograph of Madison surrounded by his decoy creations takes a step further by interjecting a certain humanism into his exacting studies of decoys. Decoys themselves are “more than just a block of wood” to Paul as he sees in them hundreds of gunning stories and the lives of their makers with each crack or subtle color variation. Paul has made his mark as an artist with his ability to give pieces of our material culture relevance.

Paul primarily works with acrylics as he believes that they allow him to produce the widest range of artistic effects, whether it be the depth of oil or to gain soft effects of opaque or transparent watercolors. He only creates 1 to 2 prints per year as it takes him 8 months to form the finished image in his head. A complete painting may take Paul 10 to 100 hours, sometimes working 10 to 15 hours

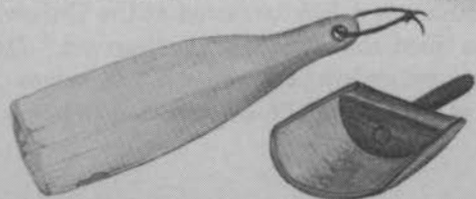




BLOCK HANDLE OAR~
USED IN 'BIG GUN' & 'BUSHWHACK' RIGS



"BIG GUN" RIG~ OUTLAWED
IN 1918 BY FEDERAL LAW.

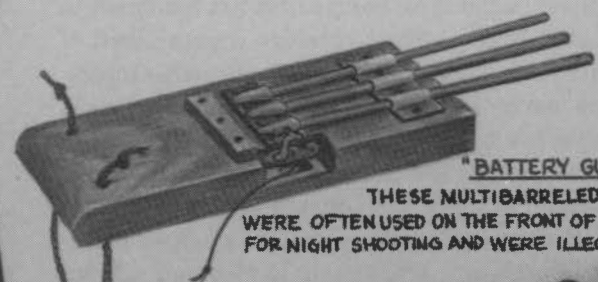


HAND PADDLE & BAILER FROM
"BIG GUN" RIG

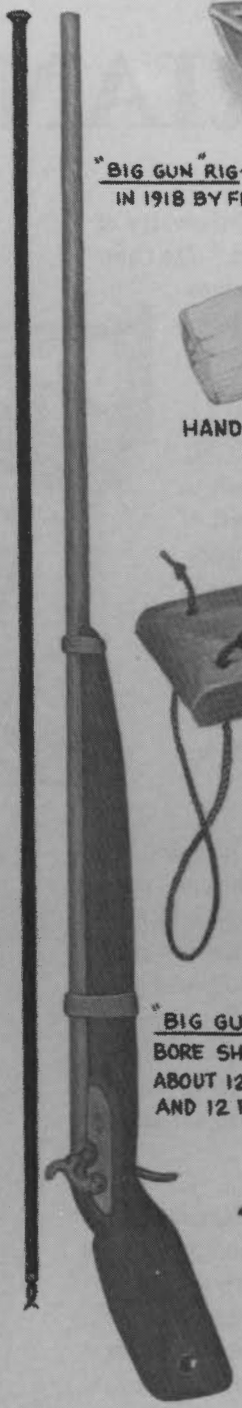
GUNNING LIGHT ~
OFTEN USED ON THE BOW OF A BIG GUN



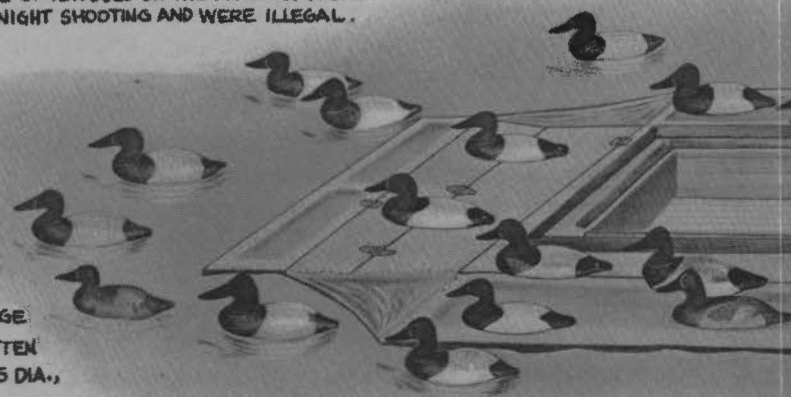
Waterfowl Hunting Chesapeake Bay 1850-1900



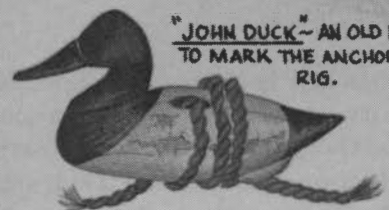
"BATTERY GUN"
THESE MULTIBARRELED GUNS
WERE OFTEN USED ON THE FRONT OF A SKIFF
FOR NIGHT SHOOTING AND WERE ILLEGAL.



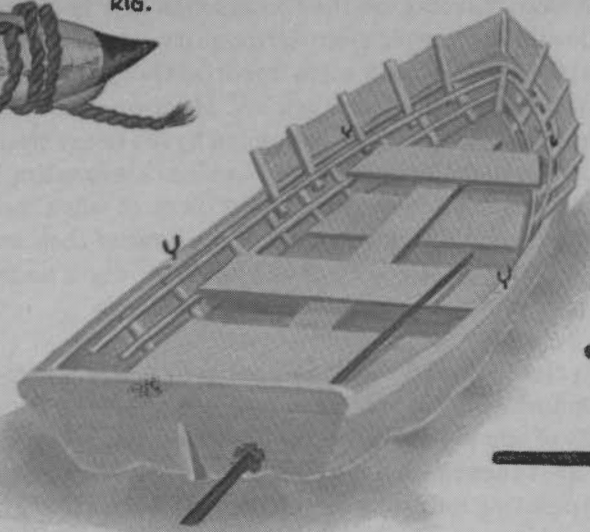
"BIG GUN" ~ THESE LARGE
BORE SHOTGUNS WERE OFTEN
ABOUT 125 LBS., 1 1/2 INCHES DIA.,
AND 12 FEET LONG.



"THE SINKBOX" ~ SURROUNDED BY 30
THE FINEST CANVASBACK HUNTING IN
THE CANVAS WINGS DAMPENED THE WAVES



"JOHN DUCK" ~ AN OLD DECOY USED
TO MARK THE ANCHOR OF A SINKBOX
RIG.



"BUSHWHACK RIG"

THESE LARGE SKIFFS WERE ROWED
UPWIND OF A DECOY RIG. WHEN
DUCKS LANDED IN THE DECOYS, THE
BOAT WAS "SCULLED" TO THEM
USING A SINGLE OAR THRU THE
TRANSOM. HUNTERS HID BEHIND
THE CURTAIN ACROSS THE BOW.

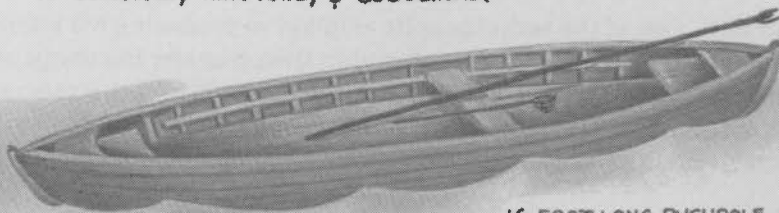
"ICE BOX"
THESE RIGS WERE
USED IN A MANNER
TO THE SINKBOX
THEY WERE A
HOLE CHOPPED

ICE HOOK
ICE BOX

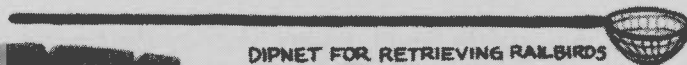
"RAILBIRD SKIFF" - IN EARLY FALL, HUNTERS WOULD POLE THESE WIDE, DOUBLE-ENDED SKIFFS THROUGH FLOODED MARSHES IN SEARCH OF SORA RAIL, KING RAIL, & BOBOLINKS.



GUN RIG



16 FOOT-LONG PUSHPOLE FOR "RAILBIRD SKIFF"

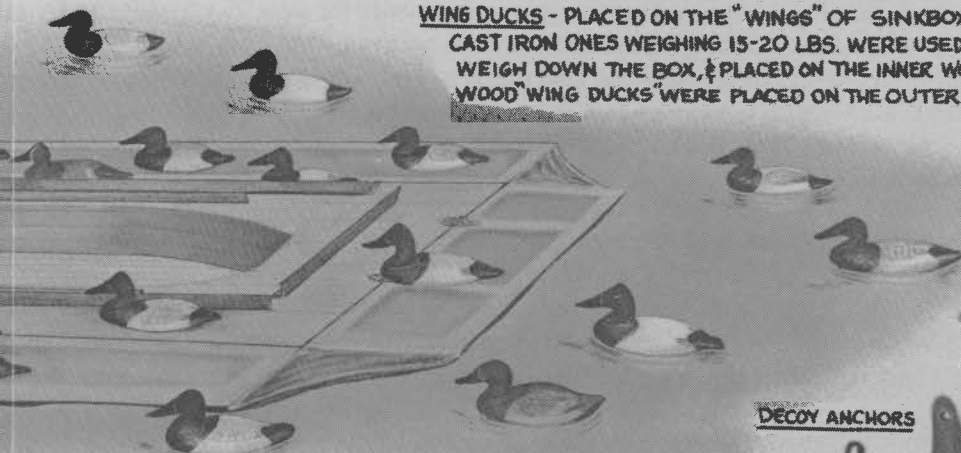


DIPNET FOR RETRIEVING RAILBIRDS

*Hunting on the
Chesapeake Bay
1900-1950*



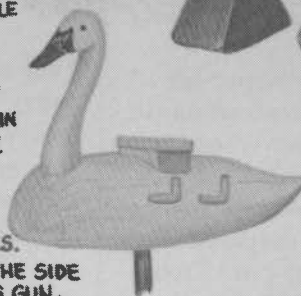
WING DUCKS - PLACED ON THE "WINGS" OF SINKBOX - CAST IRON ONES WEIGHING 15-20 LBS. WERE USED TO WEIGH DOWN THE BOX, & PLACED ON THE INNER WOODEN DECK. WOOD WING DUCKS WERE PLACED ON THE OUTER CANVAS WINGS.



300-500 DECOYS, THESE SPECIALIZED RIGS PROVIDED IN HISTORY. THE HUNTER LAID IN THE COFFIN-SHAPED MIDDLE, WHILE WAVES. THEY WERE OUTLAWED ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY IN 1935.

"BODY BOOTING SWAN" -

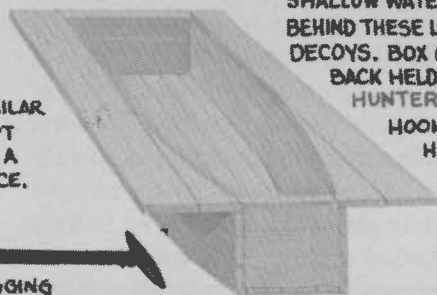
HUNTERS WOULD STAND IN SHALLOW WATER & HIDE BEHIND THESE LARGE DECOYS. BOX ON THE BACK HELD THE HUNTER'S SHELLS. HOOKS ON THE SIDE HELD HIS GUN.



DECOY ANCHORS



WERE
ANNER SIMILAR
BOX, EXCEPT
PLACED IN A
ED IN THE ICE.



FOR DRAGGING
BOX ACROSS ICE

"PARKER" DOUBLE BARREL 10
THE ULTIMATE IN
BLACK POWDER SHOTGUNS



*Paul W. Sholly
© 1980*

SKULLING OAR FOR BUSHWHACK RIG

per day. One of the techniques he employs in producing his intricate prints is to complete individual scenes on mylar, then transfer the image onto the main sheet. As in Waterfowl Hunting, he used the sinkbox as his central image then worked for hours trying to put together the smaller components in a layout that would achieve the desired effect.

The Canvasback is Paul's favorite decoy to reproduce in an artistic format. He believes that Canvasback decoys have the most classic lines:



Whether they are the small, jaunty birds by the Dudley Brothers from North Carolina...The Crisfield, Charlestown, or Havre de Grace styles of the Chesapeake Bay...to the Mason Premier Blocks from Detroit, they just have great lines.

His favorite waterfowl to paint is the Canada Goose, probably because he has spent so much time hunting them. Paul believes his hunting gives him a great advantage as he is able to interject into his work reflections gained while watching the birds work from river to field and especially the wondrous excitement when a goose takes a tumble and tumbles into the decoys.

Paul has been collecting decoys and gunning accoutrements for over 25 years, which he uses as models enabling him to achieve such accuracy. He finds it difficult to pick whom he considers to be the best decoy maker, especially since he has been fortunate enough to have known so many great ones personally. Yet, he can identify several Chesapeake Bay makers who have attained a plateau others wish to achieve:

Lem and Steve Ward made the finest "Counterfeits" for mantels for so many years...of course, I spent many years in Madison's shop...Speed's [Charlie Joiner] birds are the most attractive "working" birds around...but for the true working bird, Bob Litzenberg's hand-chopped Charlestown styled birds are hard to beat.

A Note From Paul Shertz

I am very happy to be able to use my talent to help remember all of those decoys and why they were made, except for one day in the early 1980s. I was at a small show in Loch Raven when I was approached by a father and son with three Charles Wilson teals. Pristine - original paint - and they didn't know what they were. The father thought he should sell them and I was prepared to be the willing buyer until his son saw the bird on my print (Decoy makers of the Susquehanna Flats) and said "Look Daddy, there it is." The father said, "Well, they must be something special if they're on that picture, so we will give them to your cousin" and off they went. For once I wished that I never had become a reference for decoys and I really wanted to be that kid so I could've asked my Dad for those teals!

His collecting gives Paul Shertz insights that enable him to produce images which serve as valuable guides to collectors.

Paul almost stopped painting as a result of a heavy downpour in July 1989. The storage locker containing all of his prints and originals was engulfed by 9 inches of rain, which destroyed all of his work. Shertz was devastated, yet, was prompted to paint again as a result of one of those special people you meet around decoys. Bob Litzenberg sought him out, merely saying "I heard about your accident" and gave him \$100 to buy some art supplies so to help Shertz get started again. Paul has since returned to documenting decoys with his pristine series on Mitchell's Shop.

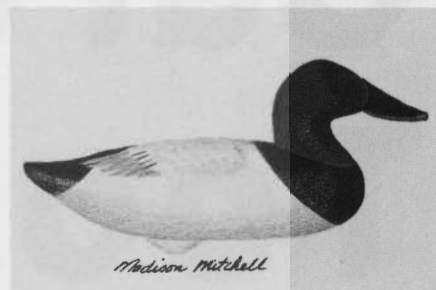
The three prints that Paul Shertz has created epitomize his ability to achieve such intricate detail as well as his love for decoys and their makers. "Madison

asked me once, "Shertz recounted, "when will you do a picture of my shop? But when you do, make sure you put some decoys in it!" Since Madison Mitchell's passing, Paul Shertz series becomes a very fitting tribute to this wonderful man and to the family of carvers who grew up around him. It is also a tribute to the artist himself, a true historian.

Author's Note

I had the opportunity earlier this summer to go into Madison's shop with Jimmy Pierce and Paul Shertz. They both reeled off stories that made Paul's print seem far more than just paint on paper. "A flash of thousands of memories, with nuggets of history everywhere you look," Paul commented. "To have been a part of this shop is to have been a part of a special family—living in a very special world of its own." They both nodded in agreement as they wondered "how many heads were made here" and laughing how some stories in the shop would become truly tall tales when four ducks being shot during a hunt would become forty.

Madison Mitchell's Shop is a fabulous time capsule and Paul Shertz's newest print is just one reflection of the many memories that are preserved within its walls. *Mitchell's Shop* exemplifies Shertz's ability to interpret decoys as an art form with life and meaning. The Decoy Museum is offering ninety of these prints, the proceeds going towards the restoration of Mitchell's shop. Funds generated from the sales will enable the museum to use this building as an interpretative symbol of decoy making.



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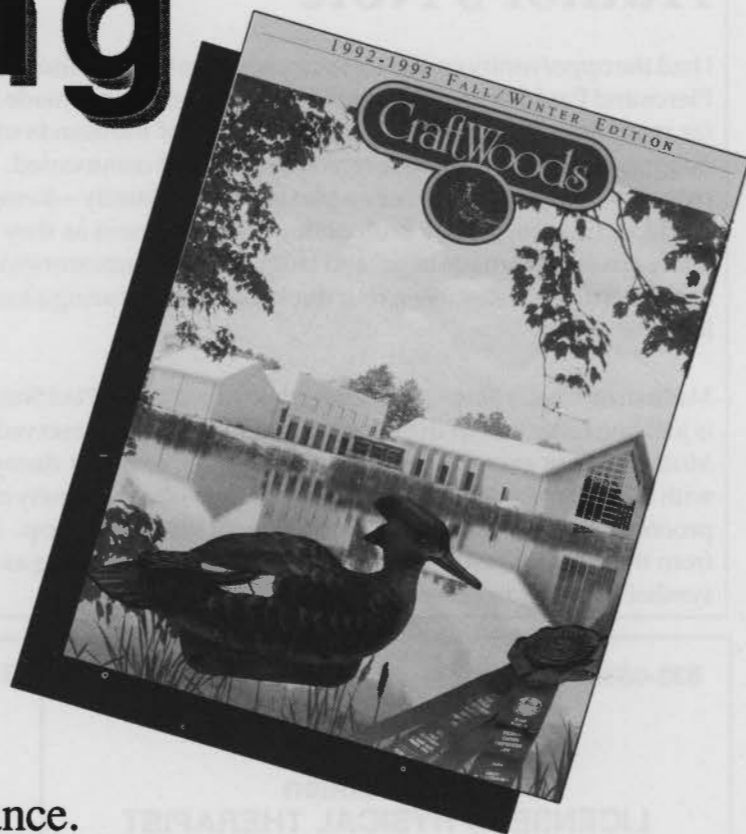
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Cleveland Canvasback

When you think of great old decoys, your mind might harken back to the days when thousands of canvasbacks came to the Susquehanna Flats each year to feast upon the succulent celery grass. Those were the days when leading sportsmen would also travel to the flats each fall to enjoy hunting perhaps this greatest of all ducks, the "King Stogie." Local legends include stories of President Grover Cleveland coming to Havre de Grace to gun for Canvasbacks during the 1880's.

The Decoy Museum has recently received a fine symbol of this heyday of 'can' shooting from museum member Lou Nolan in the guise of a 'Cleveland Canvasback.'

The Cleveland Canvasback can not be attributed to any known upper bay decoy maker nor is it similar to birds produced by Holly or any other circa 1880 area carver. The body of this Cleveland example is 14-1/8" in length and 7-3/8" in width, with its head being 3-7/8" in height. There is no evidence of wing details, however, the decoy is marked with a large "E" above the blacktail painting.

The Cleveland Canvasback epitomizes the simplistic folk art beauty of the beginnings of large scale decoy making along the Susquehanna Flats. It is a wonderful addition to the museum's collection.



By John L. Kronau

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*Linda Robinson
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*Keith Jobes.
During auction time his
Canvasbacks stole the show
and won the hearts of many.*

Highlights from the 1993 DUCK FAIR

By Norm Smith, Chairman

Photos by Ralph Broth

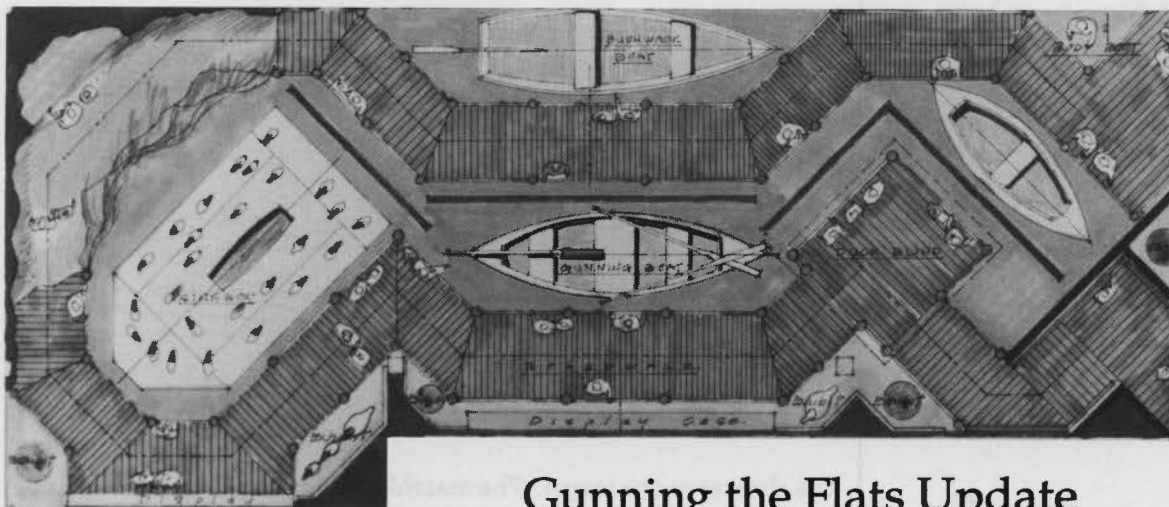
The two day Duck Fair drew an estimated 3,000 visitors. Nearly \$12,000 was raised to help support the daily museum operations. Thanks to all of the exhibitors, volunteers, and donors for your help in making the 1993 Duck Fair the best yet! We look forward to seeing you all again next September 10-11, 1994.



*Shelly Jobes.
The third generation of Jobes decoy
makers are quickly making a name for
themselves in the decoy world.*



*Stenciling was a popular
activity for parents and children alike.*



Gunning the Flats Update

The *Gunning the Flats* exhibit has recently received several “new” artifacts, two of which are firearms that help this exhibit interpret technology’s impact on waterfowl hunting. The steps to provide hunters with an effective ignition system which is part of a 500-year transition in weapons production. These two shotguns help describe weapons development that set the stage for the manufacture of market gunning tools during the post Civil War era.

The flats about our anchoring place were almost covered with wild waterfowl. I do not remember ever seeing so many at one time, before or since, although I have often seen large numbers of them. One of our men discharged his piece at a flock on the wing, when they appeared like a cloud and were spread over a space of a quarter of a mile every way. The ball passed almost through the flock before it chanced to hit one, and it hit but one.

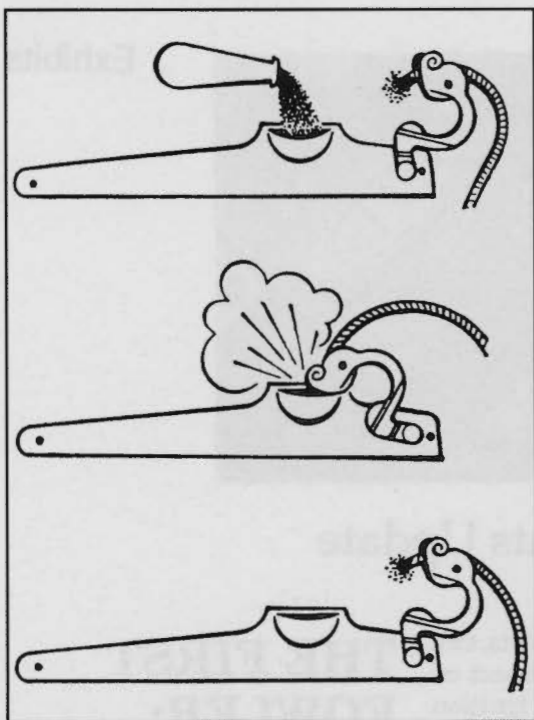
A Revolutionary Soldier Writing
From Head of the Elk, enroute to
Yorktown, 1781

Probably the first firearm to throw lead into a bird filled sky over the Susquehanna Flats was a flintlock. Early settlers were amazed by the Chesapeake Bay’s abundant game and sought the most effective tool to harvest this bounty. The flintlock was the obvious choice and this type of ignition dominated American arms manufacturing for over 150 years until replaced by the percussion system.

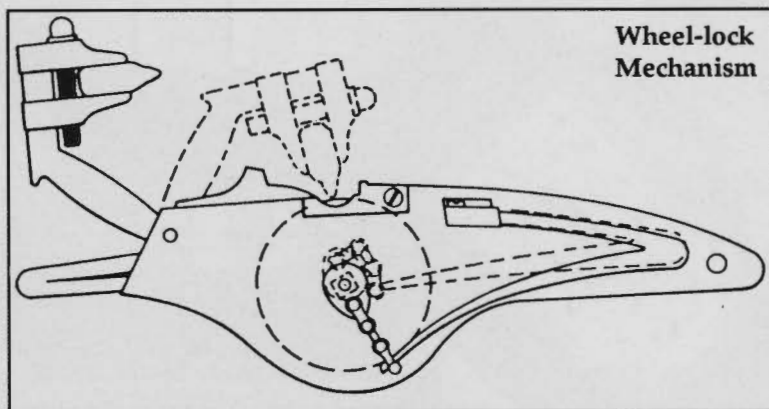
Since the European “discovery” of gunpowder (attributed to Friar Roger Bacon) in the 13th Century, people have sought to harness this explosive force into a tool for killing man and beast. Directing gunpowder’s destructive force was first achieved with simple wrought iron muzzle loading cannons, yet by the mid-1500’s two systems had been created which enabled the fabrication of working hand-held killing devices. The matchlock was a simple system, lacking in precision and in ingenuity since its lock merely lowered a serpentine handle containing a burning match onto a powder-filled pan. Obviously, the matchlock proved to be a temporary solution as it was almost as hazardous to

THE FIRST FOWLER: The Rise and Fall of the Flintlock Ignition System

By John Quarstein
Photos by Howard Miles



Three stages in the ignition of a matchlock

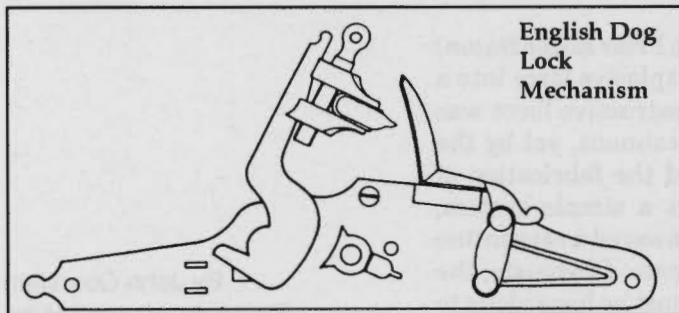


Wheel-lock Mechanism

the shooter as the target. The matchlock's major competitor was the wheellock, which was developed in Germany around 1520. Instead of the troublesome match, the wheellock system featured a rough edged wheel that revolved under a spring tension against a lump of iron pyrites (similar to a cigarette lighter). The resulting sparks ignited the powder filled pan which fired the gun. The wheellock was very reliable and operated faster than a matchlock, but it had its disadvantages as well. It was rather more expensive to produce and was a very complicated mechanism to repair. Without a spanner or key to wind the wheellock's spring, it could not be fired. A better solution was still required.

Credit for the flintlock design is generally attributed to Marin Le Bourgeois of Normandy sometime between 1610 and 1615. However, the flintlock was the outgrowth of several European designs that flourished during the 16th Century. By 1550 gun manufacturers began creating snapping locks operating on a spring system which utilized a flint, striking steel to create the sparks needed to ignite the powder. The snaphaunce (from the Dutch for snapping or pecking hen) appeared in the Netherlands around 1550. The basic mechanism was that of a spring-loaded arm, the "cock," which carried a shaped piece of flint in jaws at its outer end. The pan was now covered by a steel "frizzen," an arm which was hinged ahead of the pan and which had an upturned and concave face at its force end. The relative positions of cock and frizzen were so arranged that when the cock fell forward, under the impetus of its spring, the flint was driven hard across the curved face of the frizzen so as to strike sparks. This led to complex interplay of mechanisms which allowed the struck sparks to pass into the pan and ignite the priming.

- 1 Lockplate
- 2 Cock
- 3 Tumbler
- 4 Combined Sear and Trigger-lever



English Dog Lock Mechanism

Other versions of this system appeared in Southern Europe known as the Miquelet or Spanish Lock. This lock was simpler, with an exterior spring and its frizzen shaped to form a pan cover, so that the powder was not exposed until the actual moment of ignition. The Miquelet also had a "half-cock" position as a safety measure. The final step prior to a true flintlock was the "English or Dog" lock which used a combined frizzen and pancover. This lock featured a manually operated "dogcatch" (from whence it obtains its nickname) which hooked into a notch on the backside of the cock and offered a primitive safety for the weapon. The dog lock could be loaded and carried at the

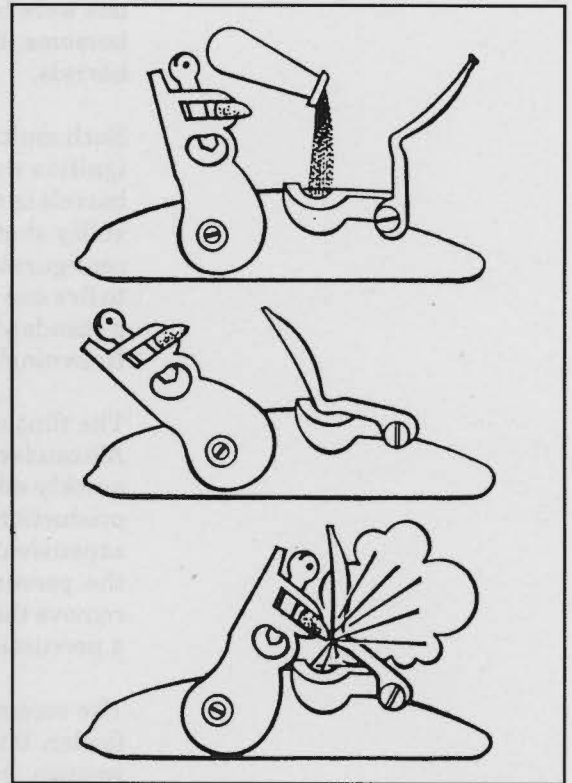
ready for hunting with its catch providing a safety which prevented the gun from "going off half-cocked." The dog lock became the predominant gun in America from 1620 to 1670, prospective colonists were advised to bring such weapons with them, as Edward Winslow of Plymouth, wrote in 1621:

Let your piece be long in the barrel with a dog; and fear not the weight of it for most of our shooting is from stands [blinds].

The flintlock was the end point in design evolution of flint and steel weapons. It combined the best features of what had gone before it into a safe and reliable weapon, inexpensive to manufacture, and easy to repair. A true flintlock exhibits the following characteristics: the frizzen and pan cover are in one piece, retained in position by a strong spring; the sear moves vertically and engages in a "tumbler" with two notches to give full and half cock; and the mechanism is entirely concealed on the inner side of the lockplate. The "tumbler" was a steel cam attached to the axis shaft of the cock, so that movement of the cock was reproduced inside the lock by the tumbler and the sear could perform its controlling functions by acting upon the tumbler instead of directly upon the cock. As in the snaphaunce, the flintlock's cock or hammer held a piece of flint in a vise, which when striking the frizzen ignited the powder-filled pan. Flintlocks began to appear in America by 1660 and by 1700 it was the primary weapon throughout the colonies.

Even with a sharp flint and a clean touch hole, the flintlock was not expected to fire more than seven times out of ten. It was prone to misfire, or no fire at all under damp conditions. The lock action was not instantaneous, but could be distinguished as three separate events: first, the fall of the cock and striking of sparks; second, the ignition of the priming; and third, the explosions of the cartridge and ejection of the bullet. In hunting, the snap of the flint and flash of the priming often alerted the game which was no longer there when the shot arrived. Hunters became adept at forecasting how far and in which direction the birds would fly and aimed off accordingly. The flintlock kept hunting as a game of chance instead of a reliable method of filling the pot. Still the flintlock reigned supreme as the best hunting tool until it was quickly replaced by the introduction of the percussion system during the 19th Century.

The Decoy Museum has obtained two fine shotguns which help illustrate the flintlock ignition system and the rapid change to the percussion principle. The first weapon is a flintlock double-barrelled 16-gauge shotgun. The flintlock's lockplate indicates British manufacture and the gun has replacement Belgium barrels. This 16-gauge was probably made circa 1830-1850 and should be considered a "trade gun," being made for exchange with Indians for fur pelts by organizations such as the Hudson Bay Company. This assumption can be made because this flintlock is a late version of a system which was already being replaced by the more reliable percussion system. Nonetheless, its double barrels are another step in firearm development; as multi-barrelled guns came into vogue in the late 18th Century. These weap-



Stages in the working of a flintlock.



ons were based on the principle that if the ignition system was slow and cumbersome, then why not increase the hunter's chance by the addition of more barrels.

Such multi-barrelled weapons were manufactured as volley guns whereby one ignition was used to fire several barrels at once usually featuring three to seven barrels (a noted English huntsman, Colonel Thomas Thornton, had a 12-barrel volley shotgun). The other, and more lasting arrangement, was a twin barrel configuration, with a lock and trigger for each barrel, which allowed the hunter to fire one or both barrels at his command. The double barrel shotgun became a standard fowling tool for the entire 19th Century until replaced by John M. Browning's pump and automatic designs.

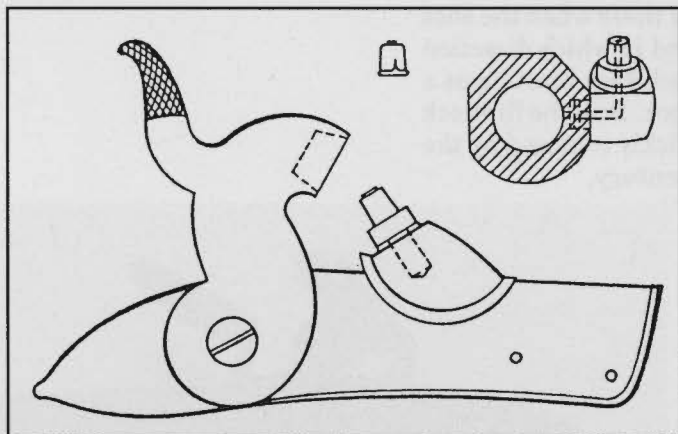
The flintlock principle was replaced in the early 19th Century by Reverend Alexander James Forsyth's percussion principle. This latter system was quickly adapted by gun makers and by the 1840's few flintlocks were under production. However, many gun owners opted to avoid purchasing a new (and expensive) gun and would convert their flintlock to percussion. Fortunately, the percussion system lent itself to conversion; it was relatively simple to remove the flintlock's pan, frizzen, and hammer from a gun and replace it with a percussion device.

The second weapon recently acquired by the museum is a converted percussion fowler. It is a special piece as it is a mixture of gun parts, assembled as a market weapon and then converted to percussion so as to extend its use. The fowler's lockplate is marked L. Pomeroy/US/1833 which indicates that the lock was originally made for the Model 1816 US Flintlock Musket. Although the 1816 Musket was made in large quantities by government arsenals at Springfield and Harpers Ferry, manufacture was also contracted to numerous private gun makers. Pomeroy, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, made 21,600 of these guns for the U.S. Army and state militias between 1817-1836. The lock on this fowler is a Type III configuration and is dated 1833. It has been converted following the "French style" or so called "drum and nipple" conversion. This conversion

from flint to percussion entailed removing all external lock parts with threaded holes plugged, the flash pan cut and ground flush with the lockplate, hence remnants of the pans are usually kept intact. A drum type bolster holding a nipple (to channel the percussion cap spark) was then threaded into the enlarged touch hole.

The "Pomeroy" fowler has a civilian style floral engraved

Percussion lock with copper percussion cap and detail of drum and nipple "French Style" conversion.



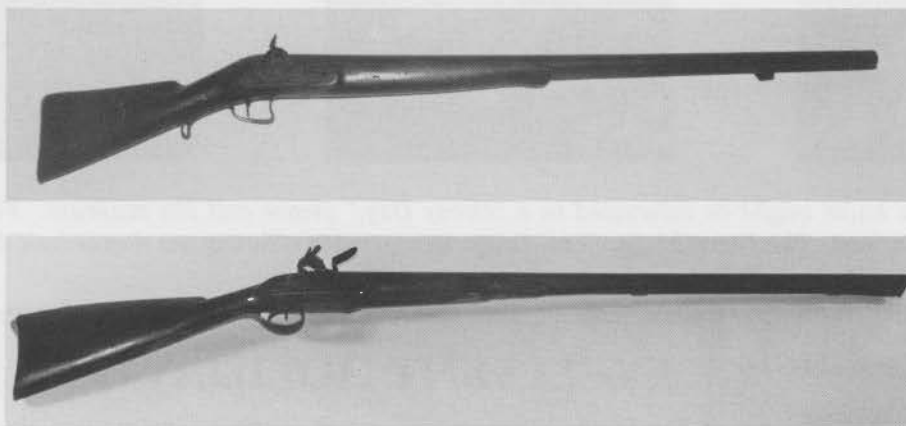
A view of the "Pomeroy" fowler lockplate.



hammer and trigger. The walnut stock was efficiently carved to hold both the lock and its 44-1/4 inch English-made barrel, which features a ramrod channel. The brass buttplate appears to have been utilized from a British Brown Bess (Model 1763) musket. This weapon's configuration reinforces the practice of gunners using whatever parts available to provide themselves with the most effective killing tool.

The 16-gauge flintlock shotgun is a good example of the first ignition system used for harvesting game in America as well as being a sample of efforts to increase the gunner's bird killing ratio by its twin barrels and locks. When coupled with the converted "Pomeroy" fowler, the museum is able to detail the rapid transition from flintlock ignition to that of percussion. These shotguns help illuminate the first efforts to enhance man's harvesting of waterfowl on the Susquehanna Flats.

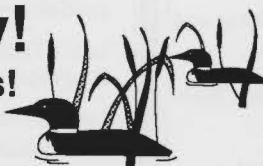
*Below: Converted
percussion fowler.
Bottom: 16-gauge
flintlock shotgun.*



Special Sale!
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Members Only!

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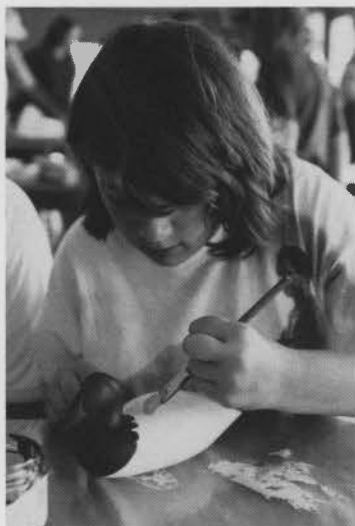
on all Gift Shop Purchases
Candlelight Tour Day

Sunday Dec. 12th Only! 11AM to 8PM

Yes, that's right, mark Sunday Dec. 12th on your calendar. You'll be able to save 25% on all of your purchases at the Decoy Museum's Gift Shop. It's the Museum's way of saying thank you for your support during the year.

Education

Conowingo Birding Camp had a "Decoy Day" at the museum where young birders had a chance to paint a Joey Jobs canvasback under the guiding hand and watchful eye of Henry Gonzales (not pictured), Joey Jobs (center), and Capt. Harry Jobs (right).



If you, or some one you know might be interested in a "Decoy Day," please call the museum. Fees are charged depending upon the activities. The Decoy Museum is always interested in offering one day or half day combination tours and classes called "Decoy Days."

The Canvasback Back Issues

Winter 1992 Inaugural Issue: Bob Litzenberg: Elkton Carver Interviewed

Spring 1992: Jim Currier: Havre de Grace Carver Profiled

Summer 1992: Severn W. Hall: North East Maryland's Master Painter

Fall 1992: Paul Gibson: Decoy Maker and Painter

Winter 1993: The Deadliest Device: Sink Boxing on the Flats- SOLD OUT

Spring 1993: Bill and Allan Schaubert: 1993 Decoy Festival Honorary Chairmen

Summer 1993: Memories of R. Madison Mitchell, Sr.- SOLD OUT

If you would like any of these issues, they can be purchased at the museum or through the mail by check or money order at \$3.00 per issue plus \$1.00 per issue for postage.

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum
Attn: Canvasback Back Issues
P.O. Box A
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

EXCELLENT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

The Decoy Museum has a select number of prints available for purchase. The price does not include sales tax or shipping charges.

Paul Shertz: <i>Mitchell Shop Restoration Issue</i> signed by artist and numbered	\$100
Paul Shertz: <i>R. Madison Mitchell Decoys</i> signed by Madison and artist and numbered	\$100
Louis Frisino: <i>Gunning the Flats</i> signed and numbered copies available immediately!	\$100
Louis Frisino: <i>Gunning the Flats</i> medallion numbered Reservations still being accepted for this print	\$150
Louis Frisino: <i>Gunning the Flats</i> pencil remarked and medallion Reservations still being accepted for this print	\$250

Fall Raffle Tickets are Available!

Now with 3 chances to win!!

- 1st Prize:** *Gunning the Flats* print by Louis Frisino signed and numbered
2nd Prize: Pair of Jim Pierce Mallards
3rd Prize: Jim Pierce Black Duck

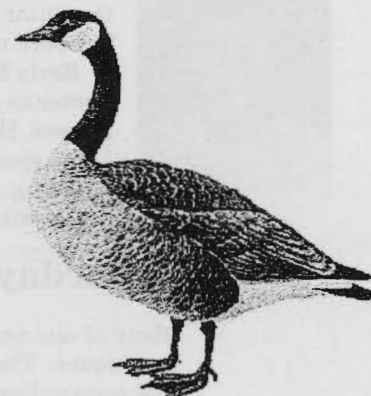
Drawing will be held at 8 p.m. on December 12th at the conclusion of the candlelight Tour and the 25% off sale at the Museum Gift Shop.

Chances \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!!

Susquehanna Flats Club Membership Off to a Big Start

Word spread quickly that the Susquehanna Flats Club annual giving association is an excellent membership option. Even before the official kickoff of the club on September 1st, five people had joined: William Koch, John W. Simpers, Jr., Donald F. Wilson, Joseph Mitchell, and Madelyn Shank. For their membership, these five members will be receiving a signed and numbered copy of Louis Frisino's *Gunning the Flats* print in addition to the following benefits: 1 year subscription to *The Canvasback*, invitation to museum events and special programs, year round admission for member and three guests, 10% discount in the museum store, and reduced fee for carving classes plus a ticket to each of the annual dinners, one ticket to other special events, and one weekend pass to the Decoy Festival. Plus for their initial donation, they will receive a 14 karat gold Canvasback Susquehanna Flats Club pin created exclusively for Susquehanna Flats Club members by local artist John L. Spangler.



You can join at anytime so don't miss out on this membership option that gives you so much more.

Work on *Gunning the Flats* Exhibition Continues

The construction crew headed by Ed Watts has made excellent progress on the indoor exhibit boardwalk. If you would like to help with the construction, please call the museum.

We're Headed to Easton

As we mentioned in the Summer issue, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Waterfowl Festival for our *Gunning the Flats* exhibition. The annual Waterfowl Festival makes grants such as ours possible. This year, once again we will have an exhibit at the Waterfowl Festival November 12-14, 1993 and join 500 of the country's most prestigious wildlife exhibitors. We will be located in the Easton High School so if you're coming to Easton, Maryland, stop by and say hello!



Photo by Sherry Ramey

Staff Notes

Decoy Museum Welcomes Arlene Grace as Administrative Assistant and Karla Mattsson as Collections Intern



Arlene B. Grace is our new administrative assistant who joined our staff in July. Before coming here, Arlene spent 13 years as an oral surgery assistant and receptionist. She is a life-long resident of Havre de Grace and enjoys the many pleasures our town offers. Her interests include listening to music and playing the guitar, crocheting, touring D.C. museums, reading, and nightly walks around Havre de Grace. She has been married for 21 years to Charles A. Grace, Jr., and has an 18 year old daughter, Mercedes.

Karla Mattsson joins us from Midland, Michigan, where she was working at the Chippewa Nature Center as a museum assistant. Karla has a Master of Arts in Museum Studies from the University of Kansas. Her special interest is in archaeology, and she has attended field schools in Michigan and Italy. In her spare time, Karla enjoys creating textiles, especially historic costumes, painting, sketching, and sculpting. Karla will be assuming responsibilities for the care of the museum's collections and will also be assisting with educational programs and the production of *The Canvasback*.

Saturday Seminars Scheduled

Many of our readers have requested that we offer single day classes which emphasize different carving techniques. The following classes have been scheduled and more detailed information (cost, supplies, etc.) and registration forms will be mailed to members when these sessions are confirmed. Class size will be limited.

Jim Pierce: Fundamentals of Flats Style Oils

Saturday, January 22, 1994. 1-4 p.m. Cost TBA

Ken Clodfelter: Techniques of Feather Burning

Saturday, January 29, 1994. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. w/ break for lunch. Cost TBA

Charles Bryan: Creating Silhouettes

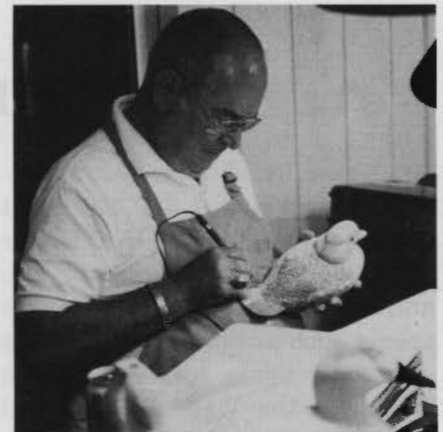
Saturday, February 5, 1994. 1-4 p.m. Cost TBA.

Weekend Carving Demonstrations

at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

November 6,	Joe Cook	December 18,	Jack Simperts
November 7,	Barb Wachter	December 19,	Rick Rappaselli
November 13,	Butch and Mary Carol Larrimore	December 25,	Closed
November 14,	Butch and Mary Carol Larrimore	January 2,	Charles and Bob Jobes
November 20,	Linda and Dick Robinson	January 8,	Charles Bryan
November 21,	Bill Weaver	January 9,	Charles Bryan
November 27,	Warner Taylor	January 15,	Nick Birster
November 28,	Leonard Burcham	January 16,	Harold Goodman
December 4,	Butch and Mary Carol Larrimore	January 22,	Joe Cook
December 5,	Butch and Mary Carol Larrimore	January 23,	Bryon Bodt
December 11,	Joe Cook	January 29,	Warner Taylor
December 12,	Art Boxleitner	January 30,	Joey Jobes

Visit the Decoy Museum this November, December, and January to see demonstrations of contemporary decoy carvers and waterfowl artists. Enjoy this unique opportunity to meet and talk with these wonderful artists.



Ken Clodfelter recently donated a lamp and a painting palette for all weekend carvers to use— Thanks Ken!

Thanks to all of the carvers- Dottie Wise...

And thanks to Dottie for coordinating the Weekend Carver Schedule

Santa's Bag is Overflowing



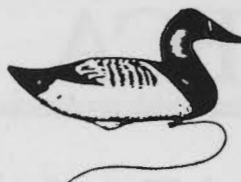
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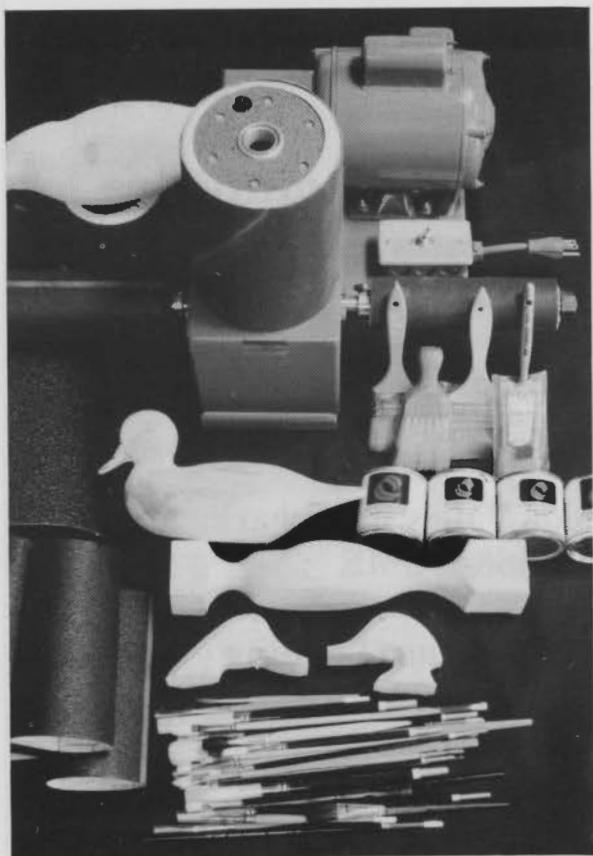
(Select Now - A Small Deposit Holds 'Til Christmas)



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