

The Canvasback



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Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

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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

A wonderful grouping of decoys by the Hollys, the founding family of the Havre de Grace school of decoy making.

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The Canvasback

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*From
the
President*



Dear Museum Member,

Since our last issue we have had four successful museum functions: The Decoy Festival, Volunteer & Carver's Appreciation Day, Annual Yard Sale, and the Sporting Clay Shoot.

Carver's Day was enlarged this year to include the volunteers, without whom the museum could not function. This year for the first time, the event was held outside under a tent and a buffet dinner was served. A short auction was held to help defray expenses. In the future, we hope to entice even more members to participate in this event.

Our next function will be the 12th Annual Duck Fair to be held on the museum grounds September 11 & 12. Again, this promises to be another fun event. The auction that will be held has many exceptional pieces to offer this year. No admission is charged, yet the Duck Fair continues to be a major source of income for the museum.

We have been notified that the museum will be the recipient of grants from the Maryland State Arts Council, Harford County, and the City of Havre de Grace.

The annual membership drive is scheduled for September. Members are the backbone of the museum. Please renew your membership when due and encourage a friend to join.

Yours truly,

John A. Carriere, M.D.
President, Board of Directors

Tax deductible contributions can be made to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The museum was incorporated in 1981 as a non-profit organization which exists to document and interpret waterfowl as this art form applies to the social and economic life of the upper Chesapeake Bay region.

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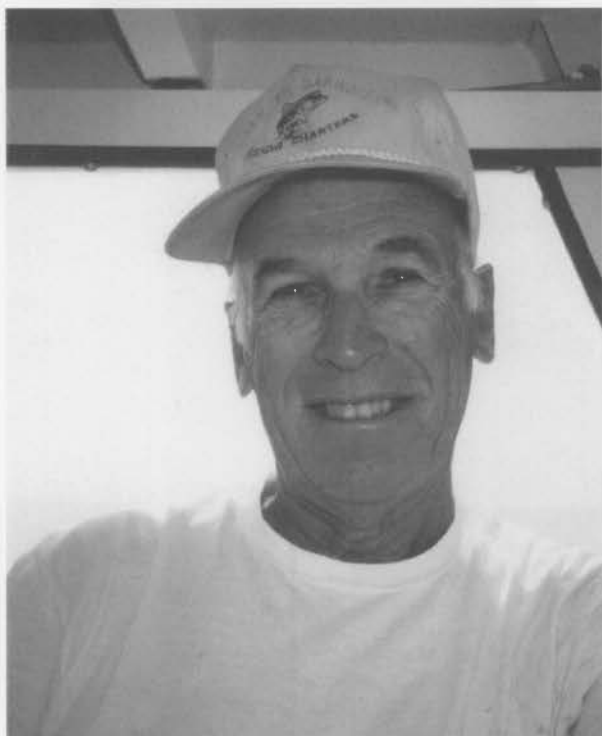
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Captain Edwin M. Darwin: A Carver's Tale

Interviewed by Kim Martin



Captain Edwin Darwin was born and raised in Baltimore City, and has spent much of his life on the Chesapeake Bay. While he taught at Southern High School in Baltimore City for thirty years, many people know him best as the captain of the "Becky D."

The "Becky D" is a charter fishing boat that has been guided by Captain Darwin for thirty-nine years. While teaching, he took the boat out on weekends and summers.

Since retiring from the public school system in 1987, he has been a full-time charter captain; and a very popular one at that. Members of his fishing parties are the first to sing his praises, commenting on his expertise in finding out where the fish are biting.

Captain Darwin has also acquired another talent in his fulfilling and adventurous life. He has picked up carving, specifically fish carving. He began carving in 1990 and actually began by carving ducks. However, he quickly changed his subject matter to his favorites; fish and fishing. He sums up his conversion best, "Seeing the bay at sun up and sun set, its many moods and seasons, has made me aware of nature. The closeness and its wonders has made me a believer as it does to all watermen. To be able to create a semblance to nature's creations is a small tribute."

Taking time out of his busy schedule, Captain Darwin has answered a few questions for *The Canvasback* on his carving techniques.

Canvasback: How did your carving evolve from duck decoys to decorative fish carvings?

Captain Darwin: Duck carving is great fun and quite a challenge. I enjoy doing the ducks, but my livelihood and first loves are fish and fishing. There is a beauty in the shape, motion and color of fish. Most of my carved fish are duplicated from live models of recently deceased catches. I have fished for and caught all of the fish I carve.

CB: Describe the various steps and techniques you employ in producing a fish carving.

Darwin: To duplicate a fish and make them look realistic, color photos must be taken immediately since the true colors fade and/or change rapidly. There are also many fish identification manuals available. The original fish is frozen or cast to preserve the shape, dimension, and spatial relationship of the fins and body parts. I cut an outline of the fish on a band saw. The features are cut with a knife or power tools. The scales are burned in or penciled on. Paint is either air brushed or hand painted using acrylics. High quality eyes are purchased at a taxidermy outlet or specialty store. A final coat of acrylic gloss is applied.

CB: Do you prefer carving or painting?

Darwin: I enjoy carving equally as well as painting. Both present equal challenges.

CB: As a carver, what goals do you set for yourself?

Darwin: As a carver, my goal is to create as realistic a representation as possible in my eyes. I only have to

please myself.

CB: What is your favorite species to recreate as a fish carving? Why?

Darwin: I am fortunate to be able to guide fishermen. The Chesapeake Bay is a wondrous place. We have a large variety of game fish, residential and migratory. The Striped Bass or Rockfish is the primary game fish. Bluefish, sea trout, Spanish mackerel, large drum, plus many others are our migratory fish.

During cold weather months I have had the good fortune to fish Mexico, Belize, and the Bahamas. My favorite fish and a challenge to catch is the permit. It is extremely difficult to hook and very hard to land. I am currently carving a permit.

CB: Do you emulate another carver's style? If so, who influences your style the most and in what ways?

Darwin: I don't emulate anyone's style, knowingly. I am remiss by not doing research as to other carver's creations. Perhaps in the future, when I retire, I'll find the time. I am certain that there are masterpieces being made.

CB: Has your style changed over time?

Darwin: Certainly, my style has changed. Hopefully for the better. Anyone who stays static cannot progress.

CB: Please describe one of your favorite fishing stories.

Darwin: This happened a few years ago. I picked up my fishing party at the Hilton Hotel dock in Annapolis. The six men enjoyed the day on the bay. We caught many striped bass and they averaged from ten pounds to eighteen pounds. They were caught trolling. One of the party spent most of the day speaking to or standing near me.

When we returned to dock the gentleman that had been with me shook the hand of all the others and left the boat. The person who had booked the trip told me that they found my friend very nice. I questioned who he meant by my friend. He stated the man who spent the day near me.

I told him that I had never seen this person before. He replied that neither he nor his crew knew him. Then I questioned how the man came to be on the boat.

The party was eating breakfast at the hotel restaurant, when the man in question asked where the group was going. They said, "fishing." He replied, "I'm going fishing, too." So he did!

Book Review

FLOATING SCULPTURE

The Decoys of the Delaware River

By H. Huster and Doug Knight

Reviewed by C. John Sullivan

Those who have an interest in decoys generally have some knowledge of the significant differences in regional carving and painting styles. These differences result from the area's wildfowl species, uniqueness of the habitat, and traditional carving styles passed on through the generations. This book is dedicated to one of those unique regions, that of the Delaware River. For most of us, when we think of the Delaware decoys we think of black ducks and the Blair or English family carvers. However, this is not accurate. As this book points out there is a broader group of decoys and makers with roots to the 1700s. The earliest recorded use of decoys on the Delaware River was in 1796 by ornithologist Alexander Wilson to hunt mallards.

The authors combine their experiences gained through years of Delaware River decoy collecting and the writing

skills of Mr. Knight who had written numerous articles for national sportsmen's magazines. Their combined efforts resulted in a work filled with history and pictures capturing the past and present day carvers and their decoys. The forty-three brief carver histories provide the reader with a combination of useful data, examples of their work and point out tips to aid in the identification of their work. Included too are sections addressing the "lesser known, unknown, and others" and decoy profiles.

Although this book was published in 1982, I consider it an excellent resource. Furthermore, the book is organized in such a manner that it is easy to read and flows quite well.

Floating Sculpture is 169 pages and was published in 1982 by Hillcrest Publications. This book is available in the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum gift shop for \$ 35.00.



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Museum News

1999 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival Poster Contest Winner

Every year the Decoy Festival Artist Committee runs a contest open to all Harford and Cecil County high school students. This contest entails creating a design for the festival poster. Throughout the years, our festival posters, have been works of art. Many patrons of the festival have fine collections of past festival posters.

This year's contest winner was Casey Anderson of Havre de Grace High School. For those who did not see his design, Casey drew in the foreground a Canada Goose from the side at the water's edge. In the background are geese and other ducks floating patiently in the water. As the grand prize winner, Casey received \$100 and his poster was chosen as the official 1999 Decoy Festival logo.

The drawing was reproduced into 150 posters and put on sale in the gift shop and at the festival. This year not only did Havre de Grace High School participate, but Edgewood High School as well. Thanks to all the students and teachers who participated in the contest!

Eighth Annual Volunteer and Carver's Appreciation Day

This year's event, which is usually held in February, was held on June 5th on the side lawn of the Decoy Museum. Fred Gillotte, Jr., chairman of the event, came up with the idea of having a summer picnic to show the museum's appreciation to all of its carvers and volunteers who do so much all year. Vernon Bryant was speechless

when named "Carver of the Year." The event was catered by Carl's Catering, which served pit beef, fried chicken and sausage. Many of the board members of the museum donated items to be auctioned to help raise money for the museum's general operating expenses. The event was a great success and was enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

Sixth Annual Yard Sale

This year's yard sale was held on the grounds of the Bayou Condominiums and the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum on Saturday, July 17. Museum and community members donated a plethora of items for the museum to sell at the yard sale. Although it was a rather warm day, the breeze off the water made it enjoyable for all the volunteers who helped and all the shoppers who bought.

Upcoming Events

Just a note to mark your calendar for this year's Anniversary Dinner. Although it is usually held on a Saturday evening, this year's event will be held on Friday, November 5, 1999. Invitations will be mailed out in September.

Thank You!!

**The Havre de Grace
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would like to thank
everyone who donated
items to our
6th Annual Yard Sale!
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Like FATHER, Like SONS?

Identifying the Decoys of The Hollys of Havre de Grace **Part Two**

By Chris Nelson and Chad Tragakis

My Three Sons?

In Part One of this study of the founding family of the Havre de Grace School of decoy-making (*The Canvasback*, Spring 1999), we focused on the work of John "Daddy" Holly -- the man credited by Madison Mitchell as his personal inspiration. Daddy, born in 1818, lived a long and productive life, focused on the abundant wildfowl population of the Susquehanna Flats, before passing on to decoy-maker's heaven in 1892. By then, his three sons were, to varying degrees, already well-established in various aspects of the waterman's trade, including boat-building and decoy-making. But today, definitively attributing Holly Family decoys and determining exactly "who made what" is often difficult, if not impossible.

As noted in the first part of this piece, the family worked closely together for many years, and it is therefore not surprising that many clearly Upper Chesapeake Bay birds have a mixture of accepted Holly "styles," and occasionally exhibit seemingly "mix and match" heads. While we are satisfied that Daddy made three fairly distinct styles, ranging from the 1850-1870 "fat body" bird -- to the 1880s streamlined "Mitchell style" decoy (see Part One), identifying the work of his sons is more

problematic, and often, more controversial.

There does seem to be general consensus among waterfowling historians and present-day collectors that Daddy's principal successor was his middle son, James ("Jim"), who made most species of "Flats" waterfowl in two (possibly three) basic styles, probably as early as the 1880s. As we shall note below, however, opinions on the decoy-making of Jim's two brothers, John, Jr., and William, vary from the flat statement that neither made decoys which can be solidly, stylistically identified -- to equally firm views that both produced their own identifiable versions of Daddy's birds, if nothing like his range of species or sheer output.

James T. Holly (1849-1935)

Anomalies aside, no one seems to challenge the basic James T. Holly attributions, clearly illustrated in the reference works of Evans McKinney, C. John Sullivan, Henry Fleckenstein, Jr. and others. The birds are sleek and stylish, extremely well-made, and close in some ways to those of Sam Barnes (with whom he worked in his later years), but with a rounder breast, and a much finer tail—

often exhibiting a thinner, very confident upsweep (close to the late classic "Daddy" models). In profile, they are often difficult to differentiate from some Barnes decoys, as a side-by-side comparison would illustrate (Illustrations #3 and #4).



Illustration 3: Canvasback drake in original paint, c. 1910. This classic decoy exhibits characteristics of both Jim Holly and Sam Barnes, making positive attribution difficult if not impossible. A good example of the problematic and often controversial issues surrounding decoy identification. Collection of Bill Cordrey.



Illustration 4: Classic Sam Barnes canvasback drake in original paint. Compare and contrast this c.1900 decoy, by Jim Holly's friend and contemporary, to his classic canvasbacks. Collection of Chad Tragakis.

Like Daddy, it would seem we can clearly identify at least two separate styles for Jim Holly. Style #1, what we will call the "early classic" James Holly decoy, is represented well by an iron-keeled canvasback drake, originally in the collection of dealer and PDCA member Sam Huffer (Illustration #1). Its body resembles a typical "late classic" Daddy, in very early paint, with a clearly original head (which is even more clearly not made by Daddy). If anything, it resembles a prototype for what many collectors insist are Sam Barnes "high heads", and others equally



Illustration 1: Canvasback drake with iron-keel in worn original paint, c. 1890 (foreground). An excellent example of what is believed to be Jim Holly's earliest style. Sam Barnes' high-head canvasback drake (background). Collection of Chris Nelson.

firmly call James T.'s. The 1998 Easton Show featured several good examples of these "high heads," individually attributed to one or the other. PDCA members were evenly split on this -- the authors are firmly of the belief that these are Barnes decoys (or possibly, collaborations between the two).

Veteran collector Barry Serafin brought a wonderful canvasback hen (Illustration #2) to the PDCA's Holly study session (purchased from respected decoy collector,

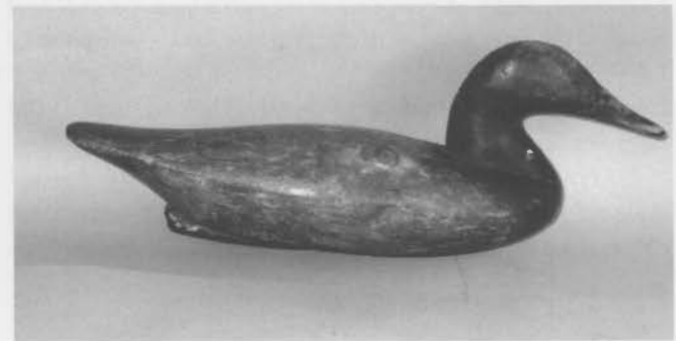


Illustration 2: Canvasback hen with iron-keel in worn original paint, c.1890. A strong match to the drake in Illustration 1, this decoy is an outstanding example of Jim's "early classic style." Collection of Chris Nelson.

scholar, and dealer Dave Fannon), which was in turn purchased by author Nelson that evening. It is an incredible match to the previously mentioned canvasback drake that served as one of the central study pieces during the meeting (Illustration #5A). The happy couple have virtually identical carving characteristics, and the same iron-rod style keel weight. Not so happily, they also share a split down the middle of the back in virtually the same spot. Prominent Chesapeake Bay collector and dealer Bill



Illustration 5A: The happy couple. A well-matched canvasback pair in worn original paint, c. 1890 by James T. Holly. Collection of Chris Nelson.



Illustration 5B: Canvasback pair in worn original paint, c. 1890 by James T. Holly. A good look at the pair's iron-rod style keel weights, the later version of the flat-iron keel. Collection of Chris Nelson.

Cordrey points out that the iron-rod style keel, here, is the later version of the flat-iron keel (Illustration #5B).

Another good example of Jim Holly's "early classic" style is found in a redhead hen (Illustration #6) in excellent original paint and condition. This decoy shows the tre-



Illustration 6: Redhead hen in original paint by Jim Holly. His earliest style (probably c. 1880s) showing tremendous "Daddy" Holly influence. Found on Long Island, New York. Collection of Chris Nelson.

mendous influence Daddy's design seemingly had on Jim during this period (1880s). A comparison between this bird and a later, circa 1910 redhead drake (Illustration #7), exhibits his contrasting styles of this particular species quite nicely.



Illustration 7: Redhead drake in original paint by Jim Holly. His later, more streamlined style, probably c. 1900-1910. This decoy, used at the "Blue Wing Club," exhibits extremely crisp carving and an unusually plain paint pattern (note the black bill). Collection of Chris Nelson.

Style #2, or late classic James Holly birds, are closer to the classic "Sam Barnes" style, and are almost always fitted with Barnes-like poured lead weights. PDCA members agreed that (aside from major differences in accepted body styles), the most obvious differences between the decoys of James and his father are found in the heads. James carved a thinner bill which sometimes appears longer than Daddy's, but actual measurement would probably discount this in fact. Often, a "James" body has an original Barnes head, and presumably, examples of Barnes bodies with original Jim Holly heads are to be found as well. James' "Style #2" heads also tend to have the "flat sides" characteristic of Barnes, but not of Daddy.

Here it is important to note once again, the working relationship that Jim and contemporary Sam Barnes shared. They served together as members of the Ducking Police for the Harford County side of the Susquehanna Flats, and many collectors feel that this relationship extended, at least to some degree, to their decoy-making as well. This would certainly help to explain the numerous similarities between their two styles — and the many, otherwise puzzling birds that turn up with characteristics of both makers. It is also worth noting again, that in the course of his boat-building business, Jim employed among his assistants Jess Poplar and Ed Pearson. These men and other such "hourly employees" most certainly may have assisted in some aspect (or aspects) of his decoy-making endeavors — again, perhaps explaining some of the many birds that look and feel almost — but not quite — like Jim

Holly decoys.

Illustrating the "late classic" style, and the mastery of form that many collectors feel is unrivaled among all Havre de Grace makers, is an exquisite blackduck exhibiting outstanding, original scratch-painting (Illustrations #8 and #9), for which Jim was renowned. As we will discuss, some experts believe William made blackducks which are virtually indistinguishable from this accepted "James" style. Previously mentioned, and further illus-



Illustration 8: Blackduck by Jim Holly in excellent original scratch paint, c. 1910. A classic decoy in all respects. Some experts believe that William Holly made blackducks which were virtually indistinguishable from Jim's. Collection of Griff Evans.



Illustration 9: Blackduck, c. 1910 by Jim Holly in excellent original scratch paint (detail of head carving). Truly, it doesn't get any better than this. Collection of Griff Evans.

trating Jim Holly's "Style #2" is an excellent, sleek red-head drake (Illustration #7), in an unusually simple freshwater paint pattern. A very rare wooden wingduck is shown in illustration #10, while an iron version appears in #11. James is known to have produced many of these now scarce artifacts -- used to submerge and conceal the canvas wings of the deadly sinkboxes. Few survive today.

Two more excellent examples of James T.'s classic form and design are found in a rare pintail drake (Illustration #12) and an Atlantic brant (Illustration #13). Interest-



Illustration 10: Rare wooden wingduck canvasback drake by Jim Holly, c. 1900. Excellent original paint. Even in this "abbreviated" format, Jim Holly's mastery of form comes shining through. Collection of Henry Stansbury.



Illustration 11: Iron wingduck canvasback drake, c. 1900. The body appears to have been made on the Jim Holly pattern, while the head shows "Daddy" influence. Collection of Henry Stansbury.



Illustration 12: A rare pintail drake by Jim Holly, c. 1900-1910, showing worn original paint. Used at the "Ottawa Gun Club" in Sandusky, Ohio. This decoy exhibits Jim Holly's unrivaled interpretation of the species. Collection of Chad Tragakis.

ingly enough, neither of these decoys saw use on the Susquehanna Flats (or the Chesapeake Bay for that matter). The pintail drake, circa 1900-1910, was part of a rig of Jim Holly decoys used at the Ottawa Gun Club in Sandusky, Ohio. The brant, made around the same time, was part of the famed "Thorne" rig, and was gunned off of



Illustration 13: Atlantic brant by Jim Holly, c. 1900-1910. One of about a dozen known from the famed "Thorne" rig, gunned off of Long Island, New York. Collection of Chad Tragakis.

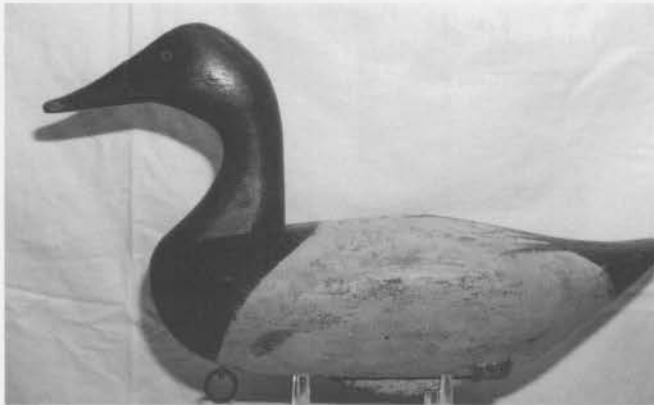


Illustration 14: A beautiful high-head canvasback drake, c. 1900-1910, in mostly original paint. Many experts would call this a "Jim Holly"—others would insist it is a "Sam Barnes." While there is a lot of "Holly" in this bird, it exhibits characteristics of both skilled makers. Collection of Bill Cordrey.

Long Island, New York. These examples, coupled with a number of Jim Holly decoys that have been collected in North Carolina and Pennsylvania, are testament to the widespread use of his exceptional birds — and of the stellar, seemingly national reputation that both he and they enjoyed.

John W., Jr. (1851-1927)

Whether or not John, Jr. ever created his own attributable style of decoy is an issue which simply did not vex McKinney or Fleckenstein. McKinney, for example, confidently shows a canvasback drake attributed to John, Jr. in his landmark work, *Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats And Their Makers*. If his attribution is correct, it has a chunky body much closer to Daddy's work than the classic "James" style. This example also has a strip lead weight much like those found on Jim Holly decoys known in other collections. Fleckenstein's example, a bluebill drake



Illustration 15: Canvasback drake in original paint, c. 1900-1910. This bird is attributed by some to Jim Holly, and that is certainly possible. But if there is in fact a "John, Jr." style decoy, this could be it. Collection of Bill Cordrey.

pictured in his, *Decoys of the Mid-Atlantic Region*, looks somewhat like the work of Jim—but not quite. While the head carving approaches that of his brother, the body seems to lack the sleek finesse and sweep to the tail that we associate with Jim's birds. Regardless, the influence of John, Jr.'s father is quite apparent here, as well.

Sullivan, Cordrey and other Upper Bay scholars agree that John, Jr. and William (both of whom never married), moved into Daddy's Alliance Street home after his death, filled his remaining orders, and effectively took over his decoy-making business. (James at this time lived only two

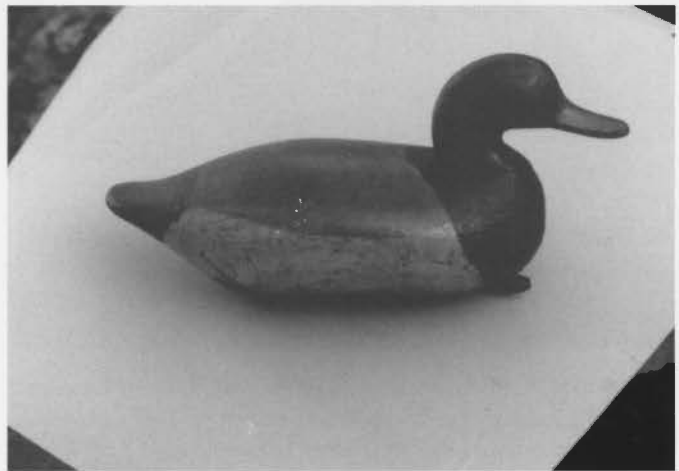


Illustration 18: Redhead drake in excellent working repaint, c. 1890-1900. This decoy clearly shows the characteristics of "Daddy" Holly, but at the same time, it suggests that John, Jr. may have had a hand in making it. Collection of Chris Nelson,

blocks away with his wife and two daughters). These experts disagree with McKinney and Fleckenstein, however, regarding whether or not a "John, Jr. style" decoy can be earnestly identified. On the whole, PDCA members tended to think the latter two may be right, as do the

authors. If so, John, Jr.'s heads are uniformly bigger than anything we typically associate with Daddy, although some appear close (only thicker) to the one found on the "Style #3" decoy donated to The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum by Madison Mitchell (see Part One). A "Daddy" decoy purchased from longtime dealer Dave Keating (see Part One) would seem to be a good example of this style. Other known examples appear to resemble "Daddy" redheads, but again, having slightly thicker heads.

With the exception of Fleckenstein's example (the circa 1900 bluebill) and an attributed canvasback drake (circa 1915) that appears in the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum Catalog, *Captured in Wood*, what these birds do not seem to have is any resemblance to the uncontested



Illustration 16: Bluebill drake in original paint, c. 1910. "Holly family" style abounds in this unusually proportioned decoy. Its sturdy but unrefined form suggests that it may be the work of John, Jr. or possibly William Holly. Collection of Bill Cordrey.

James T. style. The bodies are not usually streamlined, and do not look remotely like those of Barnes. Likewise, the heads look nothing like either a "James" or a "Barnes." Even so, many knowledgeable and respected dealers and collectors firmly identify redheads in this style as "James T.'s," while equally knowledgeable colleagues call them "Daddy's." Interestingly enough, what these birds do often have are lead strip weights, such as on a particularly fine redhead purchased from Dave Fannon (Illustration #18), who feels the bird is a "Daddy." It is indeed a beautiful decoy and a wonderful example, branded "RC" for the early 20th Century American artist, Roland Clark. The plot thickens when one considers that Daddy died in 1892, and the same basic decoy is attributed as a circa 1900-1912 "James T. Holly" by both Sullivan and Fleckenstein. The more one studies this bird, the more it suggests that it is not by James. And if it is too late to have

been made by Daddy, but is obviously a "Holly," then why isn't it a "John, Jr."? PDCA members were willing to consider this — as are the authors. A final example from *Decoys of the Mid-Atlantic Region*, a circa 1880 redhead drake, is attributed by Fleckenstein to either John, Jr. or William. This is one of the well-documented birds from the Bartlett and Hayward rig (fitted with an inletted, cast-iron ballast weight with the initials T.J.H. for Thomas J. Hayward — made in the Bartlett & Hayward foundry). Sullivan and other experts firmly attribute these birds to "Daddy." As in the case of the aforementioned "RC" branded redhead, in many respects (head carving, body style -- among others), it clearly does resemble a "Daddy." But could this style be the missing link between John, Jr. and John, Sr.? It is certainly plausible.

William "Bill" Holly (1847-1923)

Perhaps then, the only real mystery is the designation (by McKinney, Fleckenstein and others), of a "William Holly style" decoy. The example found in McKinney's excellent reference work is a blackduck, which, as noted earlier, is difficult to differentiate from the accepted "James" model. It might also be noted that the head on this decoy is similar in quality to that found on the teal attributed to James by Fleckenstein and several other experts. The examples found in Fleckenstein's *Decoys of The Mid-Atlantic Region*, (a circa 1910 Canada goose and a circa 1910 bluebill drake), both look like they could have come from the hand of James. The goose, perhaps, is not quite refined enough to be considered "classic" Jim Holly, but, as noted earlier, there are a multitude of factors that



Illustration 19: Bluebill drake in original paint, c. 1910. While some experts attribute this decoy to William Holly, it clearly exhibits the sleek, classic form of his brother Jim. This bird and about ten of its rigmates were gunned in North Carolina. Collection of Griff Evans.

effect what a maker's output might look like on any given day. It is likely, however, that the bluebill was in fact made by Jim. A nearly identical decoy (one of about ten known from a rig gunned in North Carolina) (Illustration #19), was recently sold as a "Jim Holly," and one would be hard-pressed to prove otherwise. Additionally, the heads on many "William" decoys look virtually identical to those made by Jim (perhaps supporting the theory that the brothers worked in close tandem). Still, if these birds are in fact by William Holly alone, then clearly he was influenced more by his brother James than by his father (or seemingly anyone else for that matter). In any case, given what we know, it appears far more difficult to establish an acceptable "William" style than a probable "John, Jr." style.

It is vital to note that even if John, Jr. and William did create their "own" attributable styles of decoys (albeit

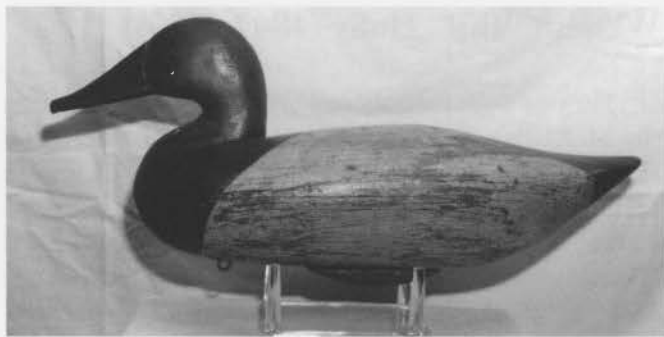


Illustration 17: Canvasback drake in original paint, c. 1900-1910. This classic decoy exhibits a body that is unquestionably "Jim," but a head that keeps one guessing. It could be the work of Jim and John, Jr. or William. Collection of Bill Cordrey.

only slightly unique — and heavily influenced by Daddy and/or James), they too, worked closely with one another, and presumably with their father and brother for many years. (Again, James is known to have worked with makers Barnes and Pearson among others — similar working relationships may also have been established by John, Jr. and William). Thus, even if we identify examples of what we collectively postulate to be "typical" John, Jr. and "typical" William styles, there remain myriad examples of decoys with multiple characteristics — forever denying absolute attribution. This bittersweet truth, the product of what was simply the joint-production of watermen's tools by friends, colleagues and family — is at the same time clarifying and beguiling.

A final noteworthy point that we must not forget, is that for two generations, Holly Family birds were *the* decoys to have if you were a gunner or guide in the Upper Chesapeake Bay region (and elsewhere for that matter). In many respects, they were the benchmark by which all others were judged. The Hollys were truly the innovators

of the Havre de Grace style, and such strong and long-lasting influence must not be discounted. There were probably dozens of makers, professional and otherwise, who tried their hand at fashioning their own rigs of "Holly" decoys, some more successfully than others. Again, this may help to explain some of the countless decoys encountered today that echo the Holly design, albeit softly.

It may be that when we finally get into our time machine, we will discover that Sullivan and other experts are correct, and that neither William, nor John, Jr., made their own unique styles, but rather (and understandably), copied those of their pioneering father and brother. Or, it may be that we will discover that there is actually a "Style #4 Daddy," and a "Style #3 James" model, and that in their old age, they not surprisingly became a little bit clunky. This might suggest that the "John Jr." redhead and the "William" goose (among others), were made by Daddy and James respectively. Further still, we may instead discover that the attributions made in early reference works were right on the money.

Hooray For "Holly" Wood

As we stated in our introduction to Part One, the decoys of the Holly Family remain among the most historically and artistically important to collectors today. They have enjoyed the celebration and important scholarship of C. John Sullivan, J. Evans McKinney, Henry Fleckenstein, Jr. and others — and we feel that because of their vital role in decoy and waterfowling history, they deserve continued serious study. The purpose of this article was twofold: to make an attempt at identifying the decoys of the Holly Family, yes — but perhaps more importantly, to present what we do know, along with collective wisdom and a few of the theories held by many in the decoy collecting community (to that end, employing the experience of numerous veteran collectors and the membership of The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association).

Perhaps we raised more questions than we answered. Our hope is that we helped to advance decoy scholarship by continuing this discussion. And it is a discussion that is far from over. Without the time machine, it never really can be. In the meantime, all we can do is study and compare the many wonderful Holly Family birds in our collections and see if the attributions match up. We do hope Helen Chappell had the right idea — and that at this very moment, "Daddy," James, William, and John, Jr. are looking down at us, pleased that we hold them and their work in such high esteem. Indeed, we do.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND....

Should I Feed My Decoy?

By KARLA MATSSON, M. A.

At one time or another, every curator feels compelled to write about collection care. As most of this literature is geared toward museum professionals and not toward collectors, it is generally extreme. My intention is to explain standard museum procedures and how it can apply to collectors. There are no groundbreaking new innovations revealed here, just a review of everyday care that everyone forgets about now and again.

Using art history jargon, decoys are polychrome wooden sculptures. As such, the recommended atmosphere for their storage and display is 70 degrees fahrenheit and 50% relative humidity. Most buildings can not maintain this ideal year round. It is the extremes that must be avoided, particularly with humidity. A safe range for humidity is 35% in the winter and 55% in the summer. Old paint is very brittle and does not shift with the changes of its wooden support. Low humidity shrinks and cracks the wood, flaking the paint, while high humidity swells the wood, crackling the paint. Other evils of high humidity include mold growth and oxidizing nails. Sudden fluctuations are the most damaging, as wood needs time to safely adjust. Small hygro-thermograph recorders are available and inexpensive to record fluctuations. They are worth the money to know what the atmosphere in your house really is doing to your collection.

Keep decoys out of direct sunlight. Ultra-violet light will fade and embrittle the paint over time. It will also exacerbate the aging of any oils or varnishes that coated the decoy in the past. Sunlight also generates heat that can quickly destroy any finish.

If you handle museum artifacts, the staff should ask you to wear white cotton gloves. If they do not, it is a good opportunity to rebuke them. The point of wearing gloves is to prevent the salts, oils, and acids that exude from your skin from coating the decoy. Over time, handling dam-

ages painted surfaces, but the biggest threat to the well being of a decoy is accidental damage. Loose paint and body parts are most vulnerable during handling. Wearing gloves is a constant reminder to be careful while moving decoys. If the paint is quite loose, latex gloves are safer than cotton, as they can not snag the rough edges. I have not met a collector yet that will wear gloves without coercion. I suggest that you handle decoys as if they were made of glass. In other words, be gentle.

Cleaning decoys is best kept simple. If the paint is sound, dust with a clean soft rag. If the paint is fragile, carefully use a soft brush or a puff of air. If the paint is very fragile, do not touch it, call a conservator. A soft brush is also great for dusting in the little crevices around the bill and neck that a rag can not reach, as well as inside the pits in cork decoys.

Do not wash decoys. If you must, just use a damp Q-tip dipped in distilled water. Avoid soaking the decoy in water, which will swell the wood and leave mineral deposits. If this is not enough cleaning, a mild soap can be used with caution. A diluted paint thinner will remove old wax, but test it on the bottom to make sure it will not remove paint as well. Don't "feed" your decoy. Oiling painted wood creates a dark film that obscures colors and brush marks without improving the decoy at all. Worse yet, oil is very difficult to remove. The same holds true for varnish, it darkens with age and is nearly impossible to clean off. Really, the only choice is between wax and abstinence. If you feel compelled to spruce up your decoy, use a sparing coat of plain wax. It is removable and affords your decoy with some protection against dirt.

Within the museum community there is a lot of debate about restoration: what is okay, how much is okay, and how should it be done? The answer is this: how do you view your collection? Is it a historical collection valuable

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for material culture or is it an art collection valuable for aesthetics? A historical emphasis wants all of the dents, dings and dirt left in place for what they can tell an astute observer about the use of the artifact. To clean and repair the object removes historical evidence. On the other hand, what is interesting in material culture is distracting in art, therefore, restoration is acceptable. Responsible restoration does not make a decoy look like new. Museum conservators strive to make their work invisible to casual observers, but obvious on close inspection. This can be accomplished in many ways, often by slightly altering the paint colors or patterns. Responsible restoration is also reversible. If a treatment cannot be undone, don't do it.

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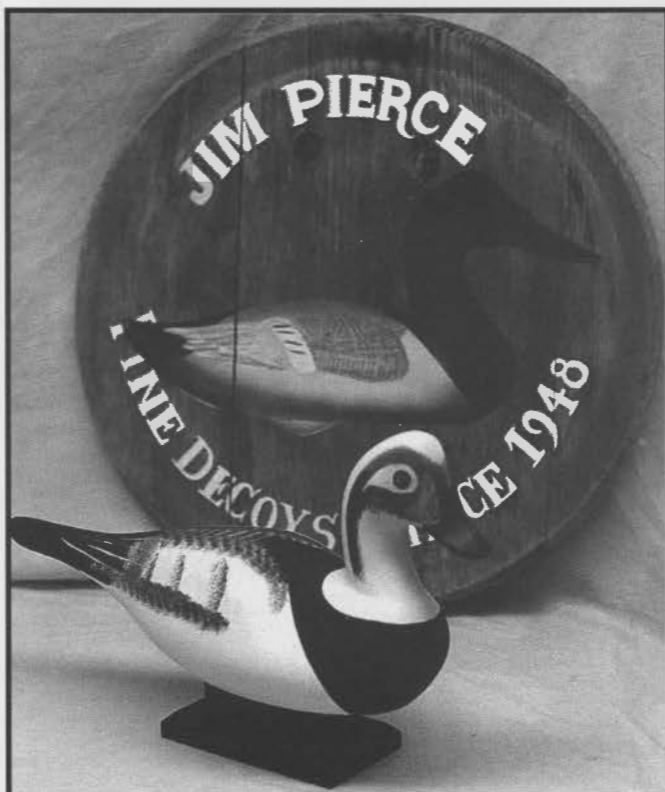


Decoy Museum Tours

Noble Mentzer is shown demonstrating decoy carving to a group of young visitors. Parents and teachers: remember when planning field trips for your classes, scout troops, daycare facilities, or other groups, that the museum offers guided tours. School tours are free to classes K-12 and tours can be arranged at only \$1.00 per child for other groups. Skilled carvers will enthrall your children with demonstrations of their craft. Please contact the museum in advance to schedule your visit. Your children will long remember their trip to the Decoy Museum.



Photo courtesy of Noble Mentzer.



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Exhibit Update

FISH CARVINGS

Captain Edwin Darwin has lead an adventurous and fulfilling life. A full-time charter captain on the Cheasapeake Bay, Captain Darwin pays tribute to his hobbies of fish and fishing, on and off the shore. In 1990, he took up carving and has since produced highly detailed fish carvings. All of his carvings have been replicated from his own live catches.

The exhibit includes both freshwater and salt-water fish, and many of the carvings are set in their natural habitat. The collection of Darwin fish carvings will be on display in the museum from July 1999 through December 1999.

DUCK MOUNTS

A collection of well preserved taxidermy mounts will be on display from July 1999 through December 1999. The mounts are from the collection of Michael Affleck and include pintails, Gadwalls, hooded mergansers, buffleheads, teals, and wood ducks. The mounts were prepared by Mike Dyson of Perry Hall, Maryland.



OWL DECORATIVE CARVING

Ken Clodfelter has generously placed his prize-winning great horned owl on loan with the Decoy Museum. The full-size and very life-like decorative carving is now on display in the Main Gallery for all to enjoy.

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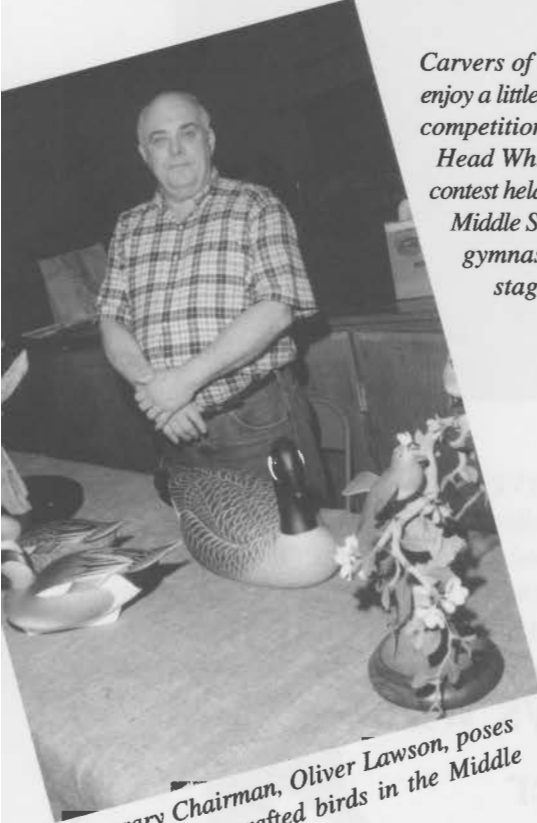
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In case you didn't attend the festival...

Carvers of all ages enjoy a little healthy competition in the Head Whittling contest held on the Middle School gymnasium stage.



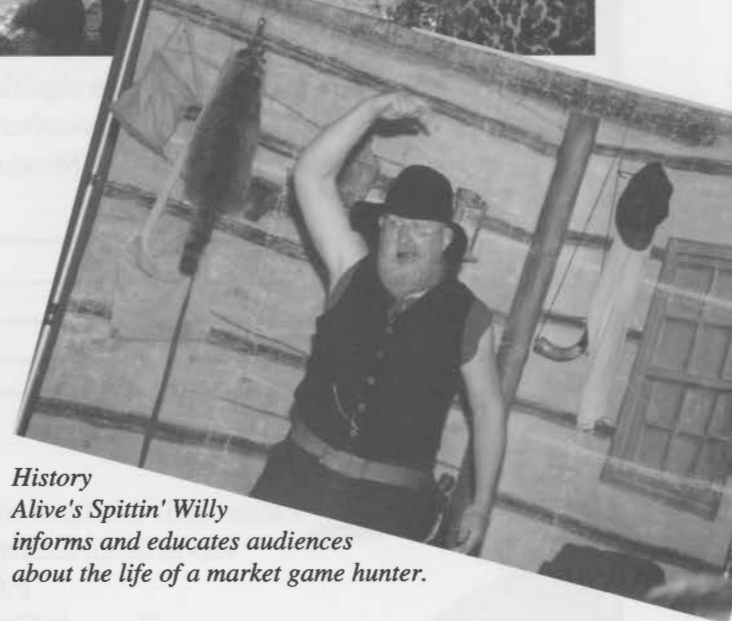
Honorary Chairman, Oliver Lawson, poses with his finely crafted birds in the Middle School gymnasium.



Gene Byrd and his well-trained Chesapeake Bay Retriever demonstrate retrievals to the Decoy Festival audiences.



Exhibitors like Laura DeNardo and Mary Carol Larrimore have quite a following and can be seen yearly at the Havre de Grace Festival.



History Alive's Spittin' Willy informs and educates audiences about the life of a market game hunter.

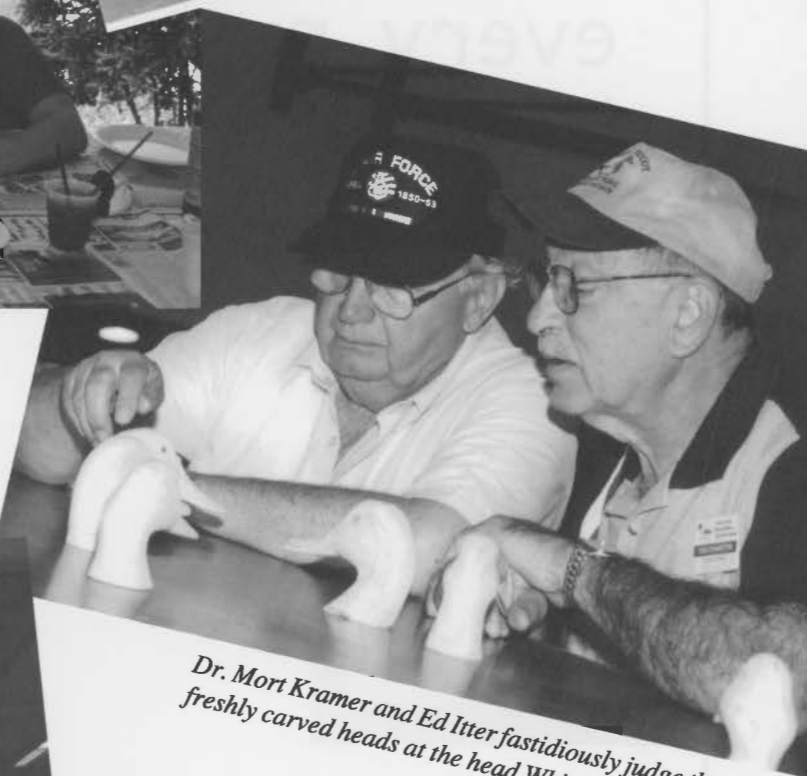
Summer Canvasback 1999

Judges Butch Larrimore, Fred Gillotte, Jr., and Warner Taylor inspect buffleheads in the water tank at the carving competition.

Local carver and volunteer Noble Mentzer helps a young duck lover paint his own decoy.



Honorary Chairmen abound throughout the festival. Pictured here (l-r) are past honorary chairmen: Charlie Bryan, Captain Harry Jobes, Captain Bill Collins, Ronald Rue, Captain Roger Urie, and this year's chairman Oliver Lawson.



Dr. Mort Kramer and Ed Itter fastidiously judge the freshly carved heads at the head Whittling Contest.

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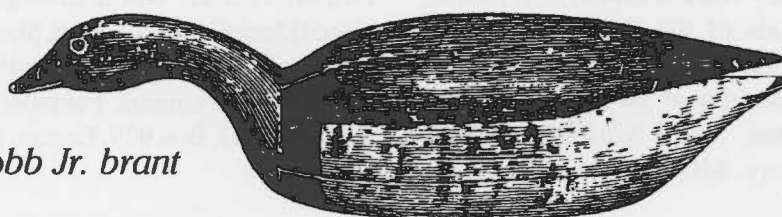
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CALENDAR

September

11 & 12

12th Annual Duck Fair. Havre de Grace, MD. Wildlife carvers and artists on exhibit, retriever demonstrations, children's decoy painting, live & silent auctions, head whittling contest, children's activities and more. Held on the grounds of the Bayou Condominiums & Decoy Museum. Free Admission. Saturday: 9am - 5 pm & Sunday: 10 am - 4 pm. For more information: (410) 939-3739.

19

Southern Maryland Antique Fishing Tackle & Hunting Equipment Show & Sale. Waldorf, Maryland. Held at the Holiday Inn, 1 St. Patrick's Drive in Waldorf. For more information: (301) 362-1535 days.

19 & 20

The Downeast Wood Carving and Wildlife Show. Wells, Maine. For more information: Dr. Lou Wilcox (410) 873-2944.

25 & 26

17th Annual Ocean County Decoy & Gunning Show. Held at the Tip Seaman Park, Pinelands Regional High School and Middle School, Tuckerton, NJ. Sponsored by the Ocean County Department of Parks & Recreation. 500 Exhibitors, Attendance 50,000. Music of the Pine Barrens, Movies, Demonstrations and Guest Speakers. Many contests going on both days. For more information: Wells Mills County Park, 905 Wells Mills Road, Waretown, NJ 08758 or (609) 971-3085.

October

1-3

Chesapeake Wildlife Expo - Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art. Held on the grounds of the Ward Museum in Salisbury, Maryland. Frank & Frank Sporting Collectibles Decoy Auction held on Sunday at 10 a.m. For more information: Jane Rollins, Ward Museum, 909 S. Schumaker Drive, Salisbury, MD 21804 or (410) 742-4988 ext. 106.

4&5

Carroll Carvers 9th Annual International Festival of Carving. Westminster, Maryland. For more information: Ron Clements (301) 854-0067.

31

Hunting & Fishing Flea Market - New, used, abused & antique. Held at the Lancaster County Convention & Exhibit Center, 345 West Main Street, Leola, PA. 250 tables available for vendors. Hunters, Fishermen, Trappers, Archers, Collectors, Charters, Taxidermy, Gun & Knife Dealers are all welcome. Tables are only \$20 each (8 ft.) and no limit. Sign up now! Free parking and good food. For more information: Ron Funk, R & S Enterprises, 34 N. Vantage Road, Paradise, PA 17562 or (717) 442-4279 evenings.

November

5

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum 13th Anniversary Dinner. Celebrate the evolution and growth of the museum. Join members and friends for an entertaining evening of great food and merriment. Proceeds directly benefit the museum. Held at the Bayou Restaurant in Havre de Grace. For more information: (410) 939-3739.

12-14

28th Annual Waterfowl Festival. Easton, Maryland. Over 450 exhibitors display an assortment of antique & new decoys, paintings, photographs, carvings, sculpture, collectibles, handmade crafts and more in 18 locations around this charming historic town. Also featuring Retriever Demonstrations, World Championship Goose, and Regional Duck Calling Contest, Shooting Exhibitions, Seminars, Decoy Auction. Free shuttle buses run entire time of festival to all locations. For more information: Waterfowl Festival, P. O. Box 929, Easton, MD 21601 or (410) 822-4567.

1999 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival Carving Competition

Winners Compiled by Ed Watts

MINIATURE OPEN BEST IN SHOW

- First Place:** Jim Hazeley
1841 Wheatland Avenue Lancaster, PA 17603
- Second Place:** William Cowen
8 N. Whites Bog Road Brown's Mill, NJ 08015
- Third Place:** Eddie Cheezum
P.O. Box 213 Ridgey Road Hillsboro, MD 21641

GUNNING STOOL

- First Place:** Charles H. Prinz
458 Blueridge Drive Dayton, OH 45415
- Second Place:** Sean Fisher
P.O. Box Queenstown, MD 21658
- Third Place:** Chuck Broomell
6277 N. Lemon Street East Petersburg, PA 17520

SMOOTHIE, HUNTING

- First Place:** Jeff Beach
3620 Country Club Road Crisfield, MD 21817
- Second Place:** Jeff Beach
3620 Country Club Road Crisfield, MD 21817
- Third Place:** Arthur ("Whitey") Fronett
8241 Del Haven Road Baltimore, MD 21222



Allan Schaubert, Bobby Jobses, and Dan Carson were the winners of this year's Head Whittling contest, sponsored by Mitchell-Smith Funeral Home.

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- First Place:** Henry W. Stoehr
651 Santa Maria Lane Davidsonville, MD 21035
- Second Place:** Dale H. Heitkamp
17 North Atwood Road Bel Air, MD 21014

- Third Place:** Henry W. Stoehr
651 Santa Maria Lane Davidsonville, MD 21035

DECORATIVE, LIFE-SIZE NON-FLOATING

- First Place:** Jim Hazeley
1841 Wheatland Avenue Lancaster, PA 17603
- Second Place:** Jim Hazeley
1841 Wheatland Avenue Lancaster, PA 17603
- Third Place:** Brad Wiley
RD #6 Newcastle, PA 16101

HEAD WHITTling CONTEST

- First Place:** Allan Schaubert
- Second Place:** Bobby Jobses
- Third Place:** Dan Carson

Exhibitor Mike Eicholtz displays his talents in the Head Whittling Contest.



12th Annual Duck Fair

Honorary Chairman - Joe Cook

Saturday September 11, 1999

- 9:00 am DUCK FAIR OPENS
Children's Activities
Bake Sale Open
Free Raffle Registration
- 10:00 am 1st Silent Auction Begins
- 10:30 am Battery Gun Firings
- 10:50 am Intro. Honorary Chair
- 11:00 am Honorary Chair Head
Whittling
Live Auction Registration
- 11:30 am Battery Gun Firings
- 12:00 pm 1st Silent Auction Ends
- 12:30 pm Battery gun Firings
- 1:00 pm 2nd Silent Auction Begins
- 2:00 pm Live Auction Begins
- 3:00 pm Live Auction Ends
2nd Silent Auction Ends
- 3:50 pm Drawing of Free Raffle
- 4:00 pm Fair closes for the Day

Sunday September 12, 1999

- 10:00 am Duck Fair Opens
Children's Activities
Decoy Painting Tent
Bake Sale Opens
Free Raffle Registration
1st Silent Auction Begins
- 11:00 am Open Head Whittling
- 12:00 pm Retriever Demonstration
1st Silent Auction Ends
- 1:00 pm Retriever Demonstration
2nd Silent Auction Begins
- 2:00 pm Retriever Demonstration
- 3:00 pm Retriever Demonstration
2nd Silent Auction Ends
- 3:10 pm Drawing of Free Raffle
- 4:00 pm 12th Annual
Duck Fair
Closes

Saturday Event Highlights

LIVE AUCTION

Join us under the big tent for a live auction. Preview Starts at 10:00 a.m., bidder registration is from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Auction runs from 2:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

HONORARY CHAIR DECOY HEAD WHITTling

This is a great opportunity to catch a glimpse of the fine art of decoy carving. Observe our Honorary Chairpeople as they address carving challenges, exchange stories, and quickly whittle out duck heads.

Sunday Event Highlights

THE DECOY PAINTING TENT

Join the spirit of the Duck Fair by painting a miniature mallard or canvasback drake to take home with you. Originally set up for our younger visitors, this activity attracts decoy lovers of all ages. Just \$5.00 charged for materials. Don't miss participating in this event under the big tent.

RETRIEVER DEMONSTRATIONS

Tim Carrion and Gene Byrd will introduce you to every hunter's best friend. Learn the hand signals and whistles that are used to communicate between the hunters and their hard working dogs. Watch the dogs demonstrate marked and blind retrieves.

1999 Duck Fair

Honorary Chairman:

Joe Cook



The 1999 Duck Fair Committee is pleased to announce Joe Cook of Havre de Grace, Maryland as this year's Honorary Chairman.

From an early age Joe's interests lay in the area of woodworking. As a boy he whittled, winning an award for a lamp he carved in high school. He continued to whittle through his young adulthood. Once married, Joe also took a liking to painting. He became more interested in decoys when he visited a relative in Edgewood, Maryland. Decoy carving allowed his love of whittling and painting to unite. Starting out carving decorative birds, Joe took classes from Bill Veasey in New Jersey. It was not until 1987, when Joe broke his back, that his hobby of decoy carving became a full-time career. Since that time his carvings have come a long way. He has studied under fine teachers such as Jimmy Pierce, Jeff Moore, Patrick Vincenti, and Dan Carson.

Joe carves working and decorative decoys. He carves both flat bottomed and round bottomed decoys. He also carves miniatures as well as an occasional songbird or flying duck. Joe has been involved with the Decoy Museum since he moved into the area. His skill in carving and constant interest in the museum have made him an obvious choice for Duck Fair Honorary Chairman.

Weekend Carving Demonstrations at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

July 24, John Ingoglia
 July 25, John Nickle
 July 31, Ken Clodfelter
 August 1, Art Boxleitner
 August 7, Barb Wachter
 August 8, Wayne Thayer
 August 14, Leonard Burcham
 August 15, Charlie Pierce
 August 22, Dick and Linda
 Robinson
 August 28, Butch and Mary Carol
 Larrimore

August 29, Joe Cook
 Sept 4, Barb Wachter
 Sept 5, Charles Jobes
 Sept 11, John Clark (Duck Fair)
 Sept 12, Bill Streaker (Duck Fair)
 Sept 18, Joe Cook
 Sept 19, Joey Jobes
 Sept 25, Ken Clodfelter
 Sept 26, Bill Schaubert

If you are interested in becoming a weekend carver on any OPEN dates, please contact Pat Vincenti at (410) 734-6238. Thanks!

CLASSIFIED

For our members we offer free classified ads to buy, sell, and trade decoys or related objects. Please keep ads under 15 words. For non-members, the cost is \$5.00 for 15 words. Mail your classified ads to: Decoy Museum, P.O. Box 878, Havre de Grace, MD 21078.

FOR SALE: Hand carved decoys by Wilfred Bush. Three different sizes, twenty different kinds. Prices start at \$35 a pair. Call (309) 346- 2510 or write to 275 Derby Street, Pekin, IL 61554 for price list.

WANTED: Old waterfowling & shorebird hunting photos. Duck, goose, and swan neck and leg bands. Old duck hunting books. Dean Dashner, 349 S. Green Bay Rd., Neenah, WI 54954 or call (920) 725-4350.

FOR SALE: North Carolina Back Bay Battery Bird, circa 1890. Nelson Ball Blue Bill dated 1921. Call (410) 472-2390.

FOR SALE: 1981 Maryland Duck Stamp Print. Remarque by Lem Ward & Jack Shroeder. Special edition. Call Jim Kelly at (410) 825-1522.

WANTED: New Jersey, Delaware River, Crisfield, Sterling -Wards, Illinois River, Ducks, Geese, Swans & Mergansers. Call Herb at (212) 861-1414.

WANTED: Ducks and geese of the East Coast , New Jersey, N.Y., New England, and Illinois River. Call Herb (212) 873-2004.

WANTED: Decoy or body with "Reckless" Brand. Call Dan at (410) 586-2378.

FOR SALE: R. Madison Mitchell collection for sale. All ornamental decoys "Christmas Birds." Call Bakers Decoys (410) 586-4670.

BUYING: Any decoys, including miniatures, pictures, photos, and memorabilia of Douglas Jester (1876-1961) of Chincoteague, Virginia. Call Fitz Godwin at (703) 528-9800 or write to 26C Auburn Ct., Alexandria, Virginia 22305. All is of interest for purchasing, especially pictures of Mr. Jester's carving decoys or any pictures of his boats.

FOR SALE: Blue Bill Decoy Collection - two drakes & nine pairs, McGaw, Pierce, Bryan, and more. Call Jim Kelly at (410) 825-1522.

FOR SALE: 22" x 34" original painting by Lynn R. Kaatz 1979, titled "Ottawa Goose Hunt," \$2,900.00. Phone (410) 939-4536.

WANTED: Daniel Baker III Goose full-size goose decoy, 1990. Call Matt at (410) 586-9585.

Vernon Bryant Decoys

(410) 287-8548



As many of you know, this is the last year for the pancake canvasback decoy. It will no longer be available after the end of December 1999. Each species in this series is available for five years and then is retired. This year's pancake pintail will be available at the Havre de Grace Duck Fair in September as well as the other species.

Pancake Collectible Series

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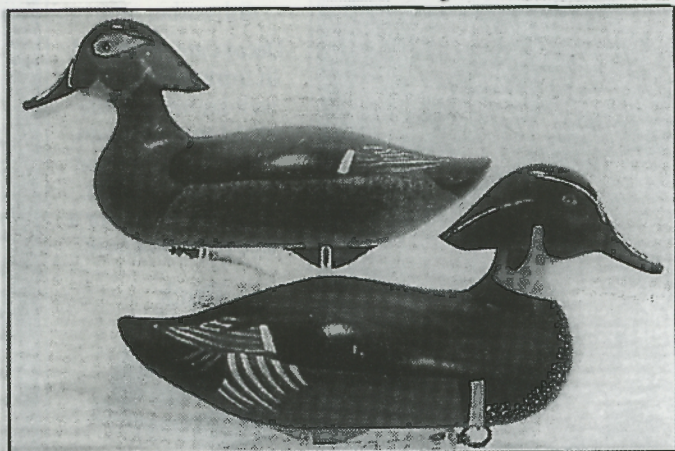
SPORTING COLLECTOR'S MONTHLY



VOLUME 11 NO. 12

RW PUBLISHING

DECEMBER, 1998



Madison Mitchell Wood Duck Pair goes for \$5250 at FRANK & FRANK Oct. auction. (See pg. 9)

AD DEADLINE FOR JAN. '99 ISSUE IS DEC. 5th
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