

The Canvasback

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

Compilation of events
from the year 2003.



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Members and Good Friends,

This winter has brought a sense of new beginnings in so many ways. The museum is launching the gallery enhancement project as you read this. The new computers have been up and running and the majority of archived records have been transferred and updated. Our board members, with the fund raising leadership of Allen Fair have raised \$46,000.00 to assist in paying off the museum's \$60,000.00 repair debt of 2001. Under the quiet leadership and dedication of board members Bob Haase and Jay Freeman Wright our Raffles and Clay Shoot fund raisers have been showing a revitalization and were such great successes in 2003 we are anticipating an exciting season this new year.

Unfortunately a part of our new beginnings include the position vacancies of our Curator Diane Rees and our Visitor Services/Education Specialist Kay Morrison. Diane and her husband (and regular volunteer) Nick have moved back to Diane's home in the UK and Kay is taking time off from working full-time to stay home and spend more time with her family. Diane and Kay have made great contributions to the professional workings of the museum, updating and upgrading the workings of our collections management and educational offerings. We are working now to have those vacant positions filled by the spring season.

Margaret and I are staying busy working on the many projects that make this museum as wonderful and unique as it is. Mindy Elledge our finance officer and Julie Stranger our temporary registrar are incredible points of support when it comes to keeping our business operations on course. We look forward to seeing and working with our many members and business friends in this New Year!

Sincerely,

Debra Pence

The Good....
The Bad...
And the Ugly
2003
Weather



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From the President



Dear Museum Member,

With the start of the New Year also comes the renewed commitment and enthusiasm for our museums continued success. The staff and board of directors look forward to the new challenges ahead. We are excited about the plans for this years temporary exhibits and the implementation of the new plan for our introductory gallery.

The continued growth of our museum depends on your involvement. Volunteers, along with board and staff all working together are a major part of the museums continued success. Several times over the last few years I have been reminded by a member or two of occasional short falls or missed opportunities. My reply to these observations is simple! Get involved! Although grants, donations and gifts are essential, they alone are not enough! We need your insights, encouragement and above all commitment of time!

The capital campaign for the building restoration project of 2001 has been a success. Allen Fairs personal and volunteer contributions to this project are to be highly commended. He has been most generous with his contributions of time, energy and financial assistance over these many years.

We are all saddened by the passing of Charter Member, Mrs. Helen Jobes. Over the past 30 years Helen has been a recognized and respected figure in the carving community. If you ever had the privilege of meeting Helen, I am sure you would agree that she was always a warm, professional and courteous business woman and friend as she carried out the Jobes family business. Our thoughts and prayers are extended to Captain Harry and the entire Jobes family.

We hope that all of our members find opportunities to visit the museum and participate in some of our events this year! If it were not for your many levels of support we would not be able to carry out our ultimate mission of preserving and portraying the heritage of decoy carving traditions of the Susquehanna Flats and Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick Vincenti".

Patrick Vincenti
President

Funded in Part By:

MSAC • City of Havre De Grace • Harford County • The Drescher Foundation

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 decoys as this art form applies to the social and economic life of the upper Chesapeake Bay region.

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At the Water's Edge of History

Waterfowling and Decoy Making on Perryville's River Shore

by Chad Tragakis

The men smiled as they rowed swiftly back to the ship. They would eat well tonight, but Captain Smith and the others would never believe them. To think that it took only three shots—three shots!—to bring down 150 birds. This was an amazing place indeed...

The town of Perryville, Maryland traces its roots to the year 1608, when Captain John Smith, the first European to navigate the Susquehanna River, surveyed the area. It was at this time that members of Smith's crew are reported to have, "brought down one hundred and forty-eight fowls with three shots," early testament to skies full of ducks and geese. The region was formally established in 1622 when Edward Palmer obtained settlement rights to what is now Garrett Island. Another early resident, John Bateman, settled the southern-most part of the adjacent shore, naming it Perry Point after his wife, Mary Perry.

In this early period, the bounty of fish and waterfowl was extraordinary and settlers harvested both in abundance. At the end of the 17th century, the town was known as Lower Ferry, a nod to the principal means of crossing the river there and an important economic force for local residents. In the early 1700s, it was known simply as Susquehanna. But when the town was finally incorporated in 1882, local leaders chose the name Perryville, acknowledging the regional significance of Perry Point and once again, honoring Mary Perry Bateman. Captain Hazlett F. Owens (1800-1892) was one of the first settlers in the burgeoning village. He grew wealthy working his way up the ranks from sailor, to owner and captain of his own ship and finally, to owner of a number of shops and businesses in Perryville. At one time, he owned the entire tract of land along the river shore and virtually all of the property that encompassed the new town. Owens' legacy and love for the waters off of the Susquehanna River shoreline would live on for generations.

Just as the ferry had been crucial to earlier local trade and commerce, the advent of the railroad in the 1830s renewed the region's prominence as a major regional transportation center. In

1866, when the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore (PW&B) Railroad completed the first rail bridge across the Susquehanna at Havre de Grace, Perryville became a true railroad town. Perryville next supported the PW&B's immediate successor, the Philadelphia, Baltimore & Washington (PB&W) Railroad and its later successor, the famous Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). All this was a boon to Perryville's watermen. By 1900, the bustling town's huge PRR depot and station provided the critical means for exporting fish and fowl to the lucrative markets of Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia while simultaneously importing from those same cities wealthy sport gunners, or "sports," to their shores. For several decades at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Perryville exploited the crossroads between the rapidly modernizing American economy, with its rising industry and new technology—and an earlier, simpler age. To the commercial watermen, the bounty of ducks and fish seemed without end.

But things simply could not go on at that rate forever. The hard economic times of the late 1920s and early 1930s, which had been slowly but inevitably chipping away at the fortunes and vitality of Cecil County, finally caught up with the region. The PRR reduced the number of trains that stopped regularly in Perryville. Commercial fishing, still incredible by today's standards, waned due to the ongoing construction of river dams and decades of over-fishing. And while the skies were no longer black with migratory waterfowl, sport gunning continued to flourish. But it too was changing. Federal limits on ducks were being imposed (and enforced) and the sinkbox, once as common and ubiquitous on the Susquehanna Flats as the mighty canvasback, was on the way out. "Bushwhacking," a unique form of duck hunting made famous on the Upper Chesapeake Bay (described

below) and shore blinds became the order of the day as hunters were forced to turn to other means of pursuing waterfowl. Market hunting, illegal for many years by this time, continued quietly, but on a much smaller scale than in previous decades.

As for decoys, the town's most famous maker, Ben Dye (1827-1896), had been dead and gone for some time. He lived on, however, in the fact that many of the decoys he made, some more than 50 years earlier, were still seeing service in Perryville rigs. By the 1920s, noted Perryville makers George W. Jackson (1844-1927) and Taylor Boyd (1856-1944) were out of the decoy-making business altogether - the elderly and infirm Jackson having recently passed away and Boyd having moved to Baltimore. This left a pair of middle-aged watermen (known locally as "Ace" Owens and "Hen" Davis) as the heirs apparent to the Perryville decoy making legacy. It also left a shoreline full of thrifty men, good with their hands and in need of decoys, looking eagerly to the pair for instruction, and to their patterns for inspiration as to what a "Perryville decoy" ought to look like.

With that as scene-setting, this article focuses on a relatively small stretch of Perryville's Susquehanna River shoreline — from the B&O Bridge south to Perry Point. It attempts to capture a slice in time, primarily the late 1930s and 1940s, and the essence of that important period in waterfowling and decoy-making lore, so that it is not lost to history forever. A number of sources were consulted in researching this topic, among them, genealogical records, family histories, early newspaper accounts, and other historical documents and manuscripts. But the best sources are always primary, and the bulk of the accounts contained herein come from those who lived them — who served as eyewitnesses to this small part of American history.

Perryville

The smell of coal was strong in Perryville of the 1930s, a constant reminder of the presence of the mighty PRR and of the good fortune it brought to the waterfront community nestled in the corner of Cecil County. The entire strip between the river and the town was owned by the PRR, and the railroad made good use of most of it. Just in front of town, the huge switchyard included rows of track and prominently featured a roundhouse in the marshaling area. There was a large coal tipple, several water towers, and cowcatchers and other railroad equipment stored and strewn about. There was also a large holding pen for livestock, as animals could travel only so far by rail before needing to be let out, fed and watered. Steam was still king, but in 1935 electrified trains began service in the county, heralding what was to come.

From before the 1930s through to the 1950s, there were roughly ten parcels of shoreline along the Susquehanna River in Perryville. A half dozen of them included wharfs. The PRR owned this entire stretch of shoreline and leased these parcels to watermen for the princely sum of \$10 per year. It is not surprising to learn, then, that the majority of these properties were leased to PRR employees. Working for the PRR was the proverbial "family business" for generations of Perryville men, and dozens of them worked the water in season and the rails the rest of the year. Convenient furloughs issued by understanding bosses in the winter months of December through February helped make this possible. Seven to ten day shifts on (with an equal number off)

made the system further conducive to hunting. Additionally, since fewer railroad employees were needed in the summer, the men were also able to dedicate substantial time in these warmer months to fishing.

Mert Owens (b. 1911), a descendent of Hazlett Owens and a long retired PRR conductor, recalls working an average of 13 trips a month, with each shift lasting 12 hours. The men routinely made more money in a few months on the water (hunting, fishing, and guiding "sports") than during the rest of the year on the rails. "Men could make up to \$75 a day on the water," explains retired Cecil County Circuit Court Judge, Don Cole (b. 1934), a descendent of one of Perryville's founding families. "The railroad couldn't touch that kind of money." The men also enjoyed this time immensely, and, to many, it was considered recreation rather than work. "People in Perryville pretty much worked at the foundry or worked for the railroad," remembers Bill Weaver (b. 1919), a well known Perryville hunter and decoy-maker and son of a PRR engineer. "When gunnin' season came, they'd all take off. They'd do the same thing when the fish were runnin' too. That's what they done."

The following vignettes describe the parcels of land along Perryville's Susquehanna River shore from north to south and the people and events that were important to them. Notable features, occupants and landmarks from the surrounding area are also described to provide geographical and historical context.

B&O Railroad Bridge

Built in 1885 by the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad, a principal competitor of the PRR for passenger and freight transport, this bridge was once a vital link between Harford County and points west and Cecil County and points east. In the 1930s and for many years before, it was one of only three bridges across the Susquehanna (see Garrett Island, below). Part of the bridge collapsed in 1908. Several African American families lived in shanties on the river shore from this point north toward Frenchtown. Most of these men were not watermen, but mainly laborers and craftsmen. Many fished and some are thought to have sculled or gunned occasionally. It is not known if any of these men made or used decoys. A well-known Perryville fertilizer factory (known locally as the "bone mill") was located just outside this area toward the town. Today, CSX owns this bridge.

American Ice Company Property

At one time, this was a huge and bustling operation affiliated with the famous Baltimore American Ice Company. The company also operated plants nearby in Havre de Grace and Frenchtown. Ice, after being harvested from the river in the winter months, was assembled, stored, and packed here, then shipped to Baltimore and other cities by truck or rail (there being a section of track adjacent to the ice house).



Ace Owens harvests ice from the Susquehanna River, c. 1930's.

- Courtesy of Bea Owens

Harvesting ice was an important industry for Perryville—almost as important as the railroad, the foundry and fishing and gunning—and many men relied on such jobs to make ends meet during the cold season. A few years before the start of WWI, the company's huge ice house, built very close to the water, burned to the ground. Smoke rising from the building could be seen for miles. The disaster had a substantial adverse impact on Perryville's economy for some time. The property remained largely unused for years, but some locals adopted the shoreline here to launch their boats for sinkbox gunning and later, for bushwhacking. Judge Cole remembers that kids would often swim off this point in the 1930s and 40s.

Oscar Evans' Wharf

Born in Pennsylvania, Evans (1890-1966) moved to Perryville at an early age and worked at all of the town's principal occupations, first for the PRR, later at the foundry, and finally, on the water. He had a small shanty and a wharf where he loaded and unloaded fishing nets onto his boat. Oscar (known best as "Os") had two sons, Russell (1910-1966) and Oscar, Jr. (b. 1914), known locally as "Happy" Evans. Russell and Happy could often be found down on their father's docks, cleaning fish, tagging ducks, or mending nets. "We loved bein' down there," he remembers, "all three of us did." Happy explains that when his father, a PRR flagman, wasn't on a trip, "he would hang out at his wharf down on the river shore. He was banged up in an accident on the rails and after that, he was down working the water all the time." Os was very well liked by others along the river. He made at least one rig of decoys for his own use based on Ace and Hen's pattern. "He made a nice bird," Happy recalls, "not too many of 'em, but he whittled a few—canvasbacks mostly, and a few redheads and blackheads." In keeping with the times but not with the laws, locals remember that Os sold ducks through the nearby Owens and Cole fish houses (see below) and that he would occasionally gun at night.

Ernest Preston's Place

Preston (1888-1967) was a full-time waterman, fishing throughout the season and hunting when he could. His property was heavily marshland, locals remember, and full of cattails. Preston built a sturdy wharf out over the marsh onto the water and a small shanty close to shore. He relied on the water for most of his income, and local distributors, Owens and Cole, could always count on Preston to supply them with fresh fish and, in season, plenty of ducks. He was a skilled gunner and is known to have hunted often at night. He may also have served as an occasional guide for the wealthy "sports" that still came to Perryville in droves in the 1920s. He is believed to have made several rigs of decoys over his many years on the water, most of them canvasbacks, based on Ace and Hen's pattern. Locals remember Preston as a decent and kind man with a keen eye for the ladies.

George Burch's Wharf

Burch (1887-1962) was also employed by the PRR, and like many of his friends and colleagues, when not working the rails, he spent every moment he could on the water fishing and gunning. His property was laid out over a vast marsh and he built an

extensive system of walkways between his wharf and the modest shanty he maintained on shore. He always kept two boats tied to his wharf. Burch was an expert fisherman, selling the bulk of his catch through the Owens and Cole houses. He was also an avid gunner and crafted at least one rig of canvasback decoys on the pattern of Ace and Hen. He may also have made redhead and blackhead decoys. Like many on the river shore, Burch gunned at night and sold ducks illicitly to Owens and Cole. Just south of Burch's property lay a vacant section of shoreline maintained by the PRR. Burch, a friend and mentor to young Bill Weaver, wanted Bill to lease this property and establish a shore blind or a wharf from which to launch his bushwhack boat. Although the price was right, this section was, arguably, the least desirable on the river because it included a very steep bank and more marsh than any of the others. "It would have taken a lot of work to get that strip into shape for gunnin'," Bill recalls, hence its perpetual availability.

Ace and Hen's Shanty

By the 1930s, the middle-aged Asa "Ace" Louis Owens (1876-1965) and Henry "Hen" Davis (1876-1960) were considered by everyone on the water in Perryville to be the wise old men of all things hunting and fishing. Ace and Hen had been market hunters in the old days, and though these pursuits were somewhat curtailed following enactment in 1918 of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, they continued nonetheless. They ran their business efficiently and, having worked side by side for so many years, often without much said between them. Their property consisted of a large main shanty, a boating wharf at the end of a large pier, several small sheds and outbuildings, and a long boat house in which they stored fishing equipment and several hundred decoys. "I remember goin' down there to the boat house and all one side, floor to ceiling, was nothin' but shelves, and every shelf was full of decoys," recalls Melvin "Moke" Boyd (b. 1923), a notable Perryville hunter and decoy maker. "I remember it like it was today. They kept all the decoys in a shed across from the shanty."

Although most remember Ace and Hen as neat and efficient in their work, some recall the whole place was a bit of a mess, with countless sculling oars, huge racks full of nets and ducking equipment strewn throughout the area.



Hen Davis sits outside the shanty, c.1930s.

- Collection of Bill Weaver



Ace Owens sits on the decoy making table outside the shanty, c. 1930s.

- Courtesy of Bea Owens



Boats stored behind Ace & Hen's shanty, c. 1930s. Part of the marine railway is visible at left. Note the stacked rig of decoys, the PRR trains and rail yard in the mid-ground and the town of Perryville in the background.

An old sinkbox, placed up on its side, lay nearby, a relic from the recent past. When market hunting ended, Ace and Hen turned much of their attention to gunning sports. Locals remember they operated single and double sinkboxes.



The docks in front of Ace and Hen's property. A typical wharf on the Perryville River shore, c. 1930s. Note the huge racks used for spooling nets.

"When I started to hang around down there," Moke remembers, "down where that seine was, the seine was on one side, and they had a sinkbox standin' up on the other side. When I got into it, in '36 probably, the sinkbox was already outlawed. But that one stayed there all the time—up on its end. Don't know how it was standing there, but it was just standing there."

A short marine railway also laid on their property (just behind and to the north of the main shanty). It consisted of a set of old railroad track laid from the bank to the water used to launch and retrieve boats. One of the small buildings contained a motorized winch with pulleys that would be tied to the boats. Boat storage facilities were located behind their property and Ace and Hen derived additional income from local and out-of-town gunners who leased such space and used the railway to launch their craft. Bill explains: "One of the outbuildings near the main shanty there housed a large old one or two horsepower motor. And there was a ditch in the shoreline with tracks at this point that went toward the water, made of regular railroad track. Using the pulley and the track, they pulled boats out of the water. There was a rail turntable where they turned them around, and they would unload and store them there." Large boats were stored right on the tracks, locals recall, three deep each on three or four divergent sets of track. Several smaller boats were stored on blocks nearby. Ace and Hen usually kept two boats on their dock—their personal boat (a gilling skiff) on one end, and, when it was in Perryville, The Anita, William Dupont, Jr.'s (1896-1965) gunning yacht, on the other. For years, Ace and Hen served as personal hunting guides to the wealthy heir, known affectionately in Perryville as "Billy" Dupont.



Ace and Hen gently guide William DuPont's sporting yacht, The Anita, back to their wharf, c. 1930s. The B&O Bridge is visible in the background as is the American Ice Co. property just in front of it.

The shanty was a favorite gathering place for the men of the river shore. Possibly contributing to its popularity, Bill Weaver recalls that the property boasted one of the shoreline's few outhouses. As far as the main shanty goes, Bill remembers that, "it wasn't great big and it wasn't a little thing either. It was about 25 feet by 25 feet. Just a one-story thing—like a garage, about six foot tall. Leonard Brown, a tall guy that

used to hang out with 'em, he had to duck when he walked in there—he wouldn't fit under the beams...he was that tall," laughs Bill. Over their many years on the water, Ace and Hen always kept a dog or two on hand to ward off snakes and rats—perpetual nuisances to life on the river shore.

Ace Owens was a muscular man and just a hair shorter than Hen. Bea McMullen Owens (b. 1921), Ace's niece, remembers fondly that, "Uncle Ace had to have his little nip of whiskey, at nighttime that put him to sleep." But Bill notes that neither Ace nor Hen were big drinkers. After his wife died, Ace moved in with Bea and her husband. "At one time," Bea remembers, "Uncle Ace did chew tobacco, but he didn't when we moved in with us. But he did smoke cigars—Uncle Ace did, I don't know about Henry." Hen was a tallish man with a medium build and a very full mustache in his younger days. "Mr. Davis was a very quiet man," Bea remembers, "I thought he was always very quiet." Bill agrees, adding that, "he was a very distinctive looking fellow, always neat." Moke recalls that, "he was always real straight and tall, always neat." Ace also enjoyed the comfort of his pipe and smoked it often when down in his river shore shanty. Everyone who remembers them recalls that Ace and Hen were from the old school.

A handshake sealed their word, which, as their bond, was always kept. "I remember Uncle Ace as a very easy-going, good hearted man," Bea states lovingly, "I had no problems with him." Bill, Bea and Moke believe that Ace and



Chopped-out decoy bodies from Ace & Hen's shanty rest amidst other birds from the Perryville river shore.

- Collection of Bill Weaver

Hen were best friends growing up—but don't know exactly when or how they met. Bea smiles as she recounts that, "They enjoyed what they did. I'm sure they did, the many years they done it."

"What I remember best about Ace and Hen," Bill recalls, "they were very, very punctual. They went to work at 7:30, or whatever time work was supposed to start—they quit around noon time, they went back to work at 1:00—worked until 4:30. Both of 'em, if there wasn't anything in the world to do, they still done this very same thing, just like it was a factory." Bea remembers that, "They made all their decoys down at the shanty—that was work, and home was home." Bea remembers that, "I lived here with him for many years...every day, every morning, he was up bright and early—after they retired and everything, he would go get his breakfast, go to the river shore, walk down over the hill to the shanty. He'd come back at lunchtime, have his lunch, go back down again, come home for supper and then, you know, just sat around. Once a week, Saturday, was his day he took to go down-town. He'd talk to somebody down there that he knew, and he would come back home. That was his routine." Bea remembers that, "After Henry died, Uncle Ace still took to the routine until he was 88, until he died in 1965." Today, unfittingly, there is a trailer park where Ace and Hen's property used to be, and condos in the general vicinity.

PRR Athletic Club Property

In perhaps one of the first displays of corporate America's concern for employee well-being, the PRR sponsored athletic clubs and facilities for its employees beginning in the late 19th century. In some cases, these were affiliated with the YMCA. Clubs often capitalized on local employee preferences and interests, and in Perryville, that meant gunning and fishing. Just to the south of Ace and Hen's area lay a prime piece of property that the PRR kept for themselves. It was roughly the same size as the other parcels. The property included a cement wharf and in the warmer months members would regularly hold swim meets and contests there. Skeet and trap shooting was also a popular pastime for members and the property contained all the equipment necessary for such pursuits. PRR employees and others could launch their boats here and it was common to see a dozen or so at any given time being stored in the adjacent area. Locals remember that for many years an old railroad car, positioned near the property, served as the unofficial clubhouse. In back of this property was a large old house that Moke's grandfather had lived in at one time. The men of the PRR worked hard, but they played hard too.

Captain Crate's Old Boat

A bit of a loner, Captain John Crate (dates unknown) was an older fellow who may have worked as a waterman at one time. Bill and Moke remember him as "the local wino" living in an abandoned boat left on shore. Although he is not thought to have made decoys, he is known to have fished, gunned and sold an occasional duck. At one time he leased boats to locals and visitors and some remember that, in the early days, he kept and sold live callers. Some recall that Crate, a reclusive and quirky man, kept a shanty among the black families in the enclave north of the B&O Railroad Bridge. Still others recall that he lived closer to Perry Point. Since he was an itinerant man, and on the river shore for many decades, all of these recollections may well be true. It is not known if Crate actually ever served as a true boat captain, or if the title was something of a local joke.

Dewey Fox's Property

Fox (dates unknown) was another PRR employee, either a flagman or brakeman, who made the most of his time on the river shore. His property did not include a shanty, but he had a nicely built wharf and a long pier where he kept his bushwhack boat. He made at least one rig of decoys for his own use. These are remembered as being well crafted canvasbacks on Ace and Hen's pattern. Like the other men of the river shore, Fox fished in season, gunned at night, and sold many ducks through the local fish houses. Locals remember Fox as a friendly and decent man. Today, the Susquehanna River Bridge, completed in 1940 (part of Route 40, and now named for Thomas J. Hatem), crosses the river near this location.

Vernon & Ox Owens' Boat Livery

Vernon "Burr" Owens (1905-1972) (also known as "Daddy Burr") owned the adjacent wharf and shared it with his uncle, "Ox" Owens. These gentlemen were relatives of A.H. Owens (and of Ace Owens). Their property included a shanty, a wharf, a pier, and a small 20' x 20' bungalow up on shore in which they

lived year-round. Locals remember that there were several squatters living in the area around this time, and that Vernon and Ox may in fact have been among them. "They didn't have a lot of money," remembers Judge Cole, "they lived on what they could make off the river." The old saying, the Judge recalls, was that, "Burr ate steak in the summer and soup in the winter." It is possible that they leased their strip of shoreline from the PRR, but won squatter's rights to the land that included their small home just behind it. Vernon and Ox fished and hunted in season with Ox occasionally serving as a pick-up guide to wealthy "sports" and out-of-town gunners. But the pair were not quite as active in this regard as the others on the water. Instead, they focused on renting out boats and equipment to "sports" and other watermen, and their place became known locally as the "boat livery." Both Vernon and "Ox" made decoys for their own use and for lease to the "sports" they outfitted. Locals remember these as primarily canvasbacks, all made on Ace and Hen's pattern. "They did whatever they could to earn a buck," Bill recalls. Not surprisingly, they often gunned out of season and at night, selling their take through the local fish houses for much needed income.

A.H. Owens & Sons Fish House

Next along the shoreline was the property of Arthur H. Owens, (known locally as "A.H."), a grandson of the famous Captain Hazlett F. Owens, one of the early settlers in Perryville. A.H. founded one of Perryville's two largest wholesale fish and duck businesses sometime in the late 19th century. A.H. was also the principal owner of a large general store in town doing business as A.H. Owens & Brothers. His brother, T. Morgan Owens, also owned a large ice house at one time, which he helped supply. By the mid-1930s, A.H.'s son Hanford Owens (1915-1994) was managing the thriving wharf, shipping ducks and fish to major east coast markets by rail. His employees were regular fixtures at the Perryville station, and Bill recalls that the fish and ducks were incredibly fresh, often loaded onto the trains only a few hours after they were caught or gunned.

Bill remembers the Owens property well: "Owens fish house, it was the largest building on the river at this time about 40 feet by 30 feet; it was directly across from the southern-most tip of Garret Island. There was a ramp that led down from the land to the shoreline, which must have had a steep bank. There were two boat launches, an old one and a newer one. They sold a lot of ice. There was a large icehouse to the right of the fish house and there was a long conveyor that took ice up from the river into the ice house." Although he rented his strip of shoreline from the PRR like the other men, Owens was the only man on the river who owned the land behind his strip. Moke recalls that he owned everything from Otsego Street up (about a full block's worth of property). There were two large houses near this corner, both were Owens family homes. Bill points out that the corner of the shoreline at this point along the water used to be closer to the river than it is today. The fury of wind and rain wrought by Hurricane Agnes in 1972 forever claimed much of the vast marsh that, until that time, had been so integral to Perryville's river shore.

Mert Owens, grandson of A.H. Owens, remembers that when the gunning laws changed (possession restrictions and daily lim-

its), Hanford allowed local men to hang “extra” ducks in their cooler. Ace and Hen, when not on the water or in their own shanty, could often be found here delivering fish or ducks. “Hanford always told me that Ace and Hen were like twins, remembers Judge Cole, “when one of ‘em sat down, the other would sit down —and when one got up to leave, the other stood right up.” “Ace & Hen sold a lot of stuff through A.H. Owens,” Moke recalls, “and they let Ace and Hen keep ducks in there as well, in their cool room.” “Moke and I kept ducks hung in there as well,” Bill recalls. “You know, you came home and you had 24 ducks - and nobody had enough room, so you hung ‘em in these cool rooms. They’d last a good long while. It wasn’t freezin’, but the temperature was better than 40 degrees.” “Yeah, the temperature was pretty good,” Moke agrees, “good enough to keep ice. They kept fish in there year round.”

Perryville’s Unofficial Town Dump

On the other side of the Owens fish house, was the Perryville “town dump,” a section of land owned by the PRR, but taken over by local citizens and used for disposing of trash and refuse. “Anybody could dump there,” Bill recalls, “and most everybody did.” Judge Cole remembers this as a community gathering place. “It was the town activity center,” he recalls, chuckling, “you were either shootin’ rats or shootin’ bull.”

Rodgers Tavern

Colonel John Rodgers, a hero of the American Revolution who raised a contingent of the Maryland Militia, opened his famous tavern in 1780. Conveniently located at the river ferry crossing the Susquehanna, the tavern was a favorite stop for George Washington, Lafayette and countless other 18th century dignitaries. Unfittingly, however, it was located next to the “town dump” of the 1920s to 1940s, and it was anything but dignified. There was primarily marshland in front of the tavern toward the water and the area immediately behind it backed up to the PRR rail yard and roundhouse. “It was squalor,” Bill recalls, “it was just a run down slum building that anyone who wanted to could live in.” Judge Cole remembers that in the 1930s, two families occupied the house. Looking past its state at the time, in 1932, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) unveiled a marker at the tavern, acknowledging the important role the site, and those who owned and visited it, played in our nation’s fight for independence. Today, thankfully restored to its former glory, Rodgers Tavern is again a stately historic site.

Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge

Completed in 1909, this was the PRR’s “new” railroad bridge (see below). In the 1930s, it was one of only three bridges across the Susquehanna in Perryville. There were no buildings on the Cecil County side where the bridge pilings hit land. Today, Amtrak owns this bridge.



The Susquehanna River waterfront between Havre de Grace and Perryville, c. 1930s. The PRR Bridge is visible on the right and an Owens family home sits close to the shore in the middle of the picture. Between them is the bustling A.H. Owens & Sons Fish House.

Double Decker Bridge

The Double Decker Bridge was the “old” PRR Bridge, the first bridge built across the Susquehanna in Perryville by the PW&B Railroad in 1866. Just after the turn of the last

Sunday Morning in Ace & Hen’s Shanty

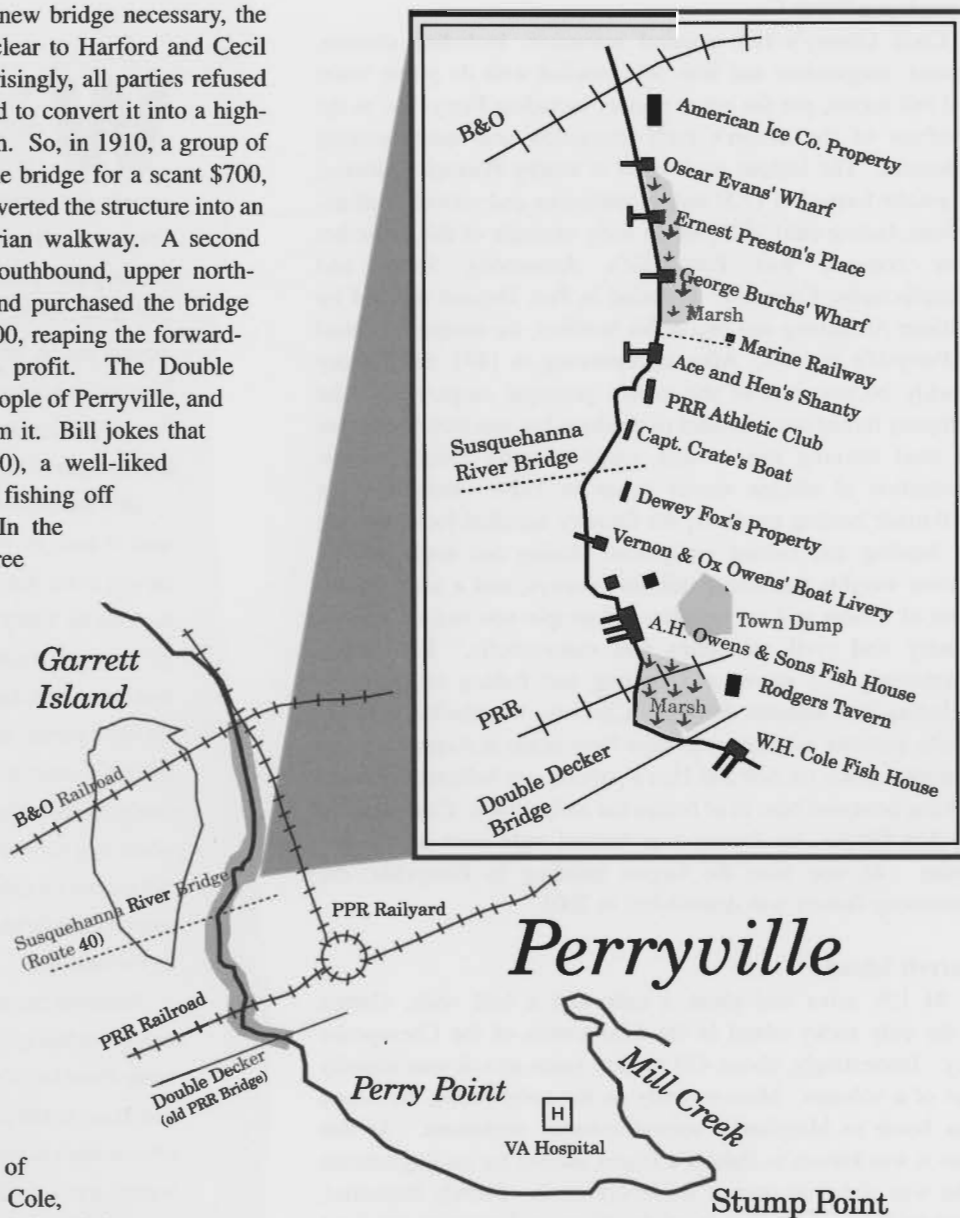
Ace and Hen’s shanty served as one of the principal gathering places for the men of the river shore. It was not uncommon to see a dozen men inside, particularly on a Sunday morning, sitting around the Armstrong stove drinking strong coffee, telling tall tales, and carving decoy heads. As a young girl, Bea Owens would often go with her parents down to the river shore on Sundays to visit her uncle Ace. “My father worked for the railroad out here,” she recalls, “and I can remember as a little girl, my parents taking me down there, down to the river shore, and seein’ ‘em working and making decoys.” She was impressed by the bushel baskets full of canvasback heads tucked in every corner of the shanty. “They had piles of them,” she says, still amazed after more than half a century. Bill describes a typical Sunday: “It was just like anywhere you’d go to drink coffee and talk—like if you’d go to Dunkin’ Donuts. If those guys were makin’ heads, the other guys would just stand around talkin’—sitting or something.” Conversation was invariably about hunting or fishing, locals recall, but town gossip, the weather, politics and bad jokes were all fair game. “They’d be in the conversation,” Moke adds, “and they never quit carving—they’d just keep carving on the heads.” “On the ceiling,” Bill continues, “it was only about that high (just over six feet). They had all these patterns pinned on the rafters. Also on that ceiling and on the walls was the first ice, first snow, the high water-line from different floods; they had it marked either in paint or heavy chalk.” Top harvests of ducks, biggest fish caught, and prices yielded were also recorded for posterity. “All that was the real history in there, in the shanty,” Bill adds.

century, when rail officials deemed a new bridge necessary, the PRR offered the old bridge free and clear to Harford and Cecil Counties and later, to the state. Surprisingly, all parties refused the gift claiming that the costs required to convert it into a highway bridge would be unjustifiably high. So, in 1910, a group of private investors took possession of the bridge for a scant \$700, invested an additional \$89,000 and converted the structure into an automobile toll bridge with a pedestrian walkway. A second level was later added, lower being southbound, upper northbound. In 1923, the State of Maryland purchased the bridge from the investment group for \$585,000, reaping the forward-thinking investors a very handsome profit. The Double Decker Bridge was popular with the people of Perryville, and locals could often be seen fishing from it. Bill jokes that Frederick "Milt" Baldwin (1905-1990), a well-liked railroad policeman, "spent more time fishing off that bridge than he did working." In the 1920s and 1930s, it was one of only three bridges across the Susquehanna in Perryville and at one point, locals recall with pride, it was the only double decker bridge of its kind in America. The bridge remained in use until 1940 when the new Susquehanna River Bridge was officially opened. It was dismantled during WWII, and the reclaimed scrap iron was used to aid the war effort.

W.H. Cole Fish House

Just on the other side of the bridge and not far from Rodgers Tavern was the long wharf and large fish house established by William Hazlett Cole (1837-1920), another of Captain Hazlett F. Owens' grandsons. Cole, known to family and friends as "W.H.," founded his fish and duck wholesale business in 1889. It rivaled that of his first cousin, A.H. Owens, and for years it was one of the best known landmarks on Perry Point. In addition to his waterfront business, Cole also founded a specialty store in town carrying outdoor clothing and a full range of hunting and fishing accoutrements that catered to local hunters and out of town "sports" alike. In the early days, this store was another favorite gathering place for the men of the river shore, especially in the evenings.

After Cole's death, the business was managed by his son, William Hazlett Cole, Jr. (1864-1946), known to family and friends as William, Will, or "W.H. Two." The Cole fish house was a good-natured competitor with A.H. Owens, but as friends and relatives, the establishments were never at odds, and there was always more than enough business to go around. Cole bought fish and ducks in season from the men working the water and the fish house's large ice box always kept them fresh and ready for sale and transport. When not tending to the day's business, William



Detail of Perryville's Susquehanna River shore, c. late 1930s, from the B&O Bridge to Perry Point. Map by Drew Hawkins.

could be found out on the Flats fishing, or pursuing his first love, gunning. His younger brothers Clarence (1866-1944) and Maurice (1871-1937), Judge Cole's grandfather, were often found down on the docks. Maurice was a crack shot and won and placed in many local, regional and state tournaments. His abilities with a ducking gun remain legendary. William's nephew, Donaldson, Sr. (1906-1980), Judge Cole's father (known to most as Don), later became his business partner and helped manage the fish house. Don was also a great hunter. He was a family friend of the Weavers and he used to take young Bill hunting, "probably when I wasn't really old enough to gun," he remembers sheepishly. In the 1920s and 30s, the Cole property featured the only shanty on Perry Point. By the early 1940s, business was slowing down and so was William. The fish house quietly ceased operations and the shanty was soon demolished. Today, the old site is just a short walk from the Veterans Administration (VA) campus.

Armstrong Stove Co.

Cecil County's rich mineral resources, including chrome, granite, magnesium and iron ore, coupled with its prime water and rail access, put the entire region, including Perryville, at the forefront of the nation's early extraction and manufacturing industries. The famous iron works at nearby Principio Furnace, originally formed in 1720 and, in numerous and various configurations, lasting until 1925, are an early example of this. Another later concern was Perryville's Armstrong Stove and Manufacturing Company. Founded in Port Deposit in 1854 by William Armstrong and two of his brothers, the company moved to Perryville in 1888. After incorporating in 1891, the foundry quickly became one of the town's principal employers. The company turned out a number of products but was best known for its coal burning ranges and wood burning chunk stoves. Production of electric stoves began in 1924. Besides these well-made heating products, the foundry satisfied local demand for hunting and fishing equipment, turning out keel weights, bottom weights (anchors), sink box decoys, and a wide assortment of fishing and net weights. "Principio was mainly revolutionary and civil war guns and cannonballs," Bill notes, "Armstrong was stoves and hunting and fishing equipment - including iron sinkbox decoys." Cast iron wingducks on Holly family patterns are known to have been made at Armstrong and examples made on Ace and Hen's patterns are believed by some to have been cast here in or before the early 1930s. Conveniently for Ace Owens, the factory was located right next door to his house. At one time the largest building in Perryville, the Armstrong factory was demolished in 2001.

Garrett Island

At 198 acres and about a mile and a half wide, Garrett is the only rocky island in the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay. Interestingly, about 430 million years ago, it was actually part of a volcano. More recently, in the early 1600s, the island was home to Maryland's second colonial settlement. At this time it was known as Palmer's Island, named for an Englishman who was slated to open a university on it. Shortly thereafter, Captain William Claiborne of the Virginia Company obtained rights to the island and set up a famous trading post there in 1634. The B&O Railroad purchased it in the mid-1800s to support their planned rail bridge. The island was soon christened Garrett for B&O's then chairman, John W. Garrett (1820-1884). Bill's mother-in-law remembered that Garrett Island housed a huge fishing float in the 1920s and that it was not uncommon to see one of the local "buy boats" making trips from the island to either side of the river shore. Oscar Evans also remembers a large herring fishery and packing house on Garrett Island in the 1920s and the famous Silver, Spencer & Co. of Havre de Grace, one of the last of the large enterprises, maintained salting and packing sheds there. By the 1930s, however, as Judge Cole remembers, the island was pretty much abandoned. "When I was a Boy Scout, we used to camp out on the island from time to time - we'd be the only ones there," he remembers. B&O sold the island in 1998 and conservationists are now working to protect its rich natural, wildlife and archeological resources.

Bill and Moke

William Ernest "Bill" Weaver was called "Reds" in his gunning days, owing to his bright shock of red hair. His first job after high school was working for aviation pioneer and manufacturer Glenn L. Martin (1886-1955), a notable Chesapeake Bay duck hunter himself. Upon returning home from the navy after World War II, Bill opened a hardware store that also sold guns and hunting equipment. He became part of Perryville's modern history when, in 1947, he began selling television sets. Over the next ten years, he and his partner sold most of the TVs that Perryville residents owned, helping to bring a new eye on the world to the people of his small town.

Bill's brother-in-law and best friend Melvin Elwood "Moke" Boyd went to work for the Conowingo Power Company in Elkton after serving in the Army during WWII. "I come from a huntin' family, a duck huntin' family," explains Moke. "My father, W. H. Boyd (1892-1975), he was a railroad engineer too — and he was a sinkbox man. And they used to take them sports out of Philadelphia and New York. He had a partner by the name of Ed Cooling, and they had a barge with like a cabin on it. And they used to tug it over to Stump's Point, over to Stump's Island, and anchor it there for the winter. And that's where they gunned out of. They gunned sinkboxes. Yeah, he was a real gunner. He used to take a furlough from the railroad when duck season come in. He could make more money that way then he could on the railroad."

Necessity being the mother of invention, Bill recalls the 1937 experience that prompted him to fashion his first rig of decoys: "Our family friend Don Cole, he was a nut on duck hunting. And I started goin' down to Mill Creek—boy, I don't know how old I was. I couldn't have been much more than 11 or 12. But I went gunnin' with him a lotta' years—and, you know, even as a kid, you'd get tired. We'd shoot ducks, I had my father's double barrel shotgun to carry and when it got dark, when you wasn't supposed to be shooting, these ducks would come in and you'd shoot 'em, and then you'd have to walk out in the cold water up to your waist to get the damn things. And what went through my imagination, if you had a decoy set in here, that duck would fly closer to that decoy, and you wouldn't have to wade a way out there to get wet. You'd just wet your knees probably. So, Don's uncle and his father, Clarence and Maurice, both of 'em had sheds full of decoys. Well, he let me have two of these decoys - and based on them, I made some. Crude things they must have been, 'cause I didn't have any equipment other than a hatchet and that kind of stuff, and I just painted 'em up black. But they looked like decoys and they worked! And the next time out, in the evening when those ducks came up from Shippley Point, they darted right into the decoys! I didn't have to walk out as far as we used to. That's what influenced me, and from then on, it was only decoys."

The River Shore Regulars

Throughout the 1930s and 40s and in to the early 1950s, dozens of local men spent every free moment they could on the Susquehanna river shore, hard at work or hard at play. Ace and Hen's shanty was always a favorite gathering spot. Regulars included brothers Tom, Ed and Frank Bines, all born just after the turn of the last century. Tom Bines, Oscar "Happy" Owens' father-in-law, worked as a carpenter at Perry Point and at the Armstrong foundry. After retiring, he spent a lot more time down on the water. He was a renowned sculler, teaching a young Moke Boyd the finer points of this important skill, and winning many contests in Harford and Cecil Counties. He built beautiful bushwhack boats and made at least one rig of decoys, not surprisingly, canvasbacks on Ace and Hen's pattern. His brother Ed Bines also made decoys, a few of which have been positively identified today.

Bea Owens' uncles, brothers Ivan, Beau (dates unknown) and Eddie McMullen (1924-1974) were often found down on the river shore and in Ace and Hen's shanty. Although these men did not make decoys, they were avid hunters. Regrettably, Eddie lost part of his arm in an unfortunate gunning accident. Frank "Old Man" Hornberger (1880s-1964) was another local who made decoys. He was often accompanied by his son Ira Hornberger (dates unknown). One day when Ira was running late and his regular gunning partner didn't show up, Frank allowed Bill and Moke to gun with him. This was an incredible privilege for the young pair. They only regret to this day, however, that they were never able to gun with legends Ace and Hen. Otho Mount (1900-1978), a fixture down on the water, owned his own boat and was a well-regarded gunner. Leonard "Brownie" Brown (1911-1961), a Maryland State Police officer, was the tallest of the bunch. He had to duck when walking into or out of Ace and Hen's shanty. He worked as a waterman, fished and built his own bushwhack boat. Sadly, he was killed in the line of duty.

Bill Weaver's father-in-law, Harold Wettig (1899-1970), was another river shore regular. Wettig wore many hats over the years, working as a waterman, a carpenter, a foundryman, at one of the fish houses, and later as a contractor. He fished and gunned throughout the 1920s and 30s with regular partner "Betty" Bourse. Bill notes that everybody on the river shore had a regular gunning partner and Judge Cole explains that nearly everyone in Perryville had a nickname. Two gunners from the river shore whose nicknames he remembers well are "Preach" Bounds (son of a local clergyman) and "Rooster" Potter. The origins of the latter nickname remain a mystery. Judge Cole recalls that both men each made at least one rig of canvasback decoys on Ace and Hen's pattern. He also remembers old Theodore Jackson (1891-1966) a notable sinkbox gunner and his son, James "Ten Penny" Jackson (1916-1994) who made several rigs of decoys on his own patterns. The decoys Ed Bines made were influenced more by Ten Penny's birds than by those of Ace and Hen. Judge Cole also points out that Joe Coudon (1860-1947), a wealthy gentleman farmer from nearby Aiken (now part of Perryville), was known to make his way down to the river shore from time to time in the 20s and 30s. Coudon, an avid gunner and talented decoy maker, crafted his own rig of canvasbacks but is best known for the folding silhouettes, fanciful reliefs and other decorative carvings he made.

Notably, when the time came for Ace to sell the shanty (and for the PRR to find a new lessee for their property), Tom Bines eagerly stepped in. He purchased the shanty and its full contents (including the few remaining birds from the Owens-Davis rig). At one time, Bill had a large rig of Ace and Hen's birds inherited from his father-in-law. Back then, old decoys cost only 30-cents each and his wife burned more of them in the Armstrong wood stove than he would care to remember. Today, save for one lone survivor

Nature's Wrath:

Over the years, the floods and storms that pounded the shoreline took a heavy toll on the watermen and equipment that were a part of it. There were notable floods in 1929 and 1930 and there was significant flooding as a result of the major Chesapeake Bay Hurricane of 1933. To this day, Bea can still picture the damage caused by the flood in 1929. "It was like nothing I had ever seen before," she remembers vividly. "Barrels used to store and transport fish over on Garrett Island came loose and floated all the way to shore. They were found and recovered all over the shoreline." The extreme winter of late 1935 produced severe snow falls and completely froze over the Upper Bay and its tributaries. The resulting major ice jams in February and early March of 1936 contributed to a significant flood on the Susquehanna River on March 18 of that year - the Great Spring Flood of 1936. Train service was temporarily suspended to and from the Perryville Station. 1938 saw the November storm of record up until that point, when the Thanksgiving Day Storm dumped more than 14 inches of snow on Harford and Cecil Counties.

The men of the river shore were well seasoned, and though it battered them, they grew stronger with each torrent they faced. Ace and Hen in particular were renowned, almost awe inspiring, for their keen sense of oneness with nature. "One time I remember we was bushwhackin' down there below the battery," Moke recalls. "Our boat was at the island, Stumps Island, and they come up around Carpenters Point there, come out and come real close to us. And they said, 'keep your eye on that weather up there, she's gonna' blow here after a while,' and by God, it did blow too. Let me tell you, we went and got our decoys up fast as we could - they had got theirs up already, earlier," he laughs. The pair was uncannily in touch and in tune with their surroundings and with nature. But perhaps that might be expected of two men who, for so very long, lived near, worked on and were connected to the river, were almost a part of it. That said, Judge Cole remembers with a smile the great irony of Perryville's two premier watermen, Ace and Hen: "Neither one of 'em could swim. It seems one or the other of them would have to be rescued every summer or every hunting season."

from Ace and Hen's last rig, all Bill has from their shanty are a few dozen body blanks in various stages of completion. Bill recalls that when Tom Bines took over the lease on Ace and Hen's property and purchased the shanty and decoy shed, "I came down here and there was a great big pile of chopped out blocks." Oscar Owens remembers that Tom was going to burn the three to four foot pile of chopped out bodies, but Bill, thinking he might finish them some day, saved a few, which it turns out, have been purely for posterity. "I didn't take 'em all, but I took a few. And I don't know what happened to the rest of 'em, but they were blocks that they were working on that they hadn't finished." Hanford Owens, Ace's cousin, is believed to have received the bulk of Ace and Hen's old rig several years before Tom moved in.

Bill and others recall that Owens, Davis and some of the other men working the Perryville river shore may have been members of the Order of Odd Fellows, a secret benevolent and social society that was popular in Maryland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A photograph, circa 1930s, of the Perryville chapter exists, with Ace, Hen and others believed to be among the sixty or so members from town. Originating in England, the fraternal organization was introduced into the U.S. in 1819 and the grand lodge of Maryland and the United States was formed in 1821. The fraternity appears to have made its greatest foothold in Maryland and so, not surprisingly, headquarters for the U.S. Society was located in Baltimore. In 1886, none other than Walt Whitman gave a lecture at the Odd Fellows Hall in nearby Elkton.

Memories of a Perryville Childhood

While the older generation was hard at work (or play, as the case may be) on the river, a younger generation was watching with awe and anticipation, waiting to try their own hands at the joys and challenges of hunting and fishing. Happy Evans vividly remembers the sinkboxes out on the Flats, and though he was never able to gun from one, he fondly recalls body-booting in the 1930s for "cans, redheads and blackheads." Bill's early foray was fishing. "I was probably no more than 10 or 11 when I started going down to the river shore there on Sundays, or anytime I had a chance to go there, 'cause you used to go down there and fish off the wharf," he thinks back, fondly. "To me, there was nothin' better than that." There was plenty to keep them busy when they weren't being chased off the piers or hunting rabbits. Money was earned skinning catfish and performing other odd jobs for Hanford Owens or William Cole, or laying railroad ties for the PRR at forty-cents an hour, "big money back then," Mert remembers. In winter, the kids would help guide ice cutters into place and help haul ice back to the houses where it was packed in sawdust to insulate it. Nearly every youngster (and many adults) trapped muskrats to supplement their income. Mert remembers that you could usually get 25-cents for the meat, but pelts were sent to Sears Roebuck's Raw Fur Marketing Service where they were sorted and graded. A check would be delivered by mail within a few weeks, and while they might amount to only a few dollars, Mert gleefully remembers the value and importance of that extra money in those days.

A notable young man from Perryville was Stan Bailey (1910-1995), one of Mert's closest friends. Stan's father, William Bailey (1885-1970), owned and operated a 26-foot eastern shore dead-

rise called The Barbara. Built in the 1920s by Walter White (1893-1965) of Dames Quarter, Maryland, the boat slept five and towed a complete double sinkbox outfit (including decoys made by Ace and Hen, among others) and two bushwhack boats. William Bailey's brothers, George (1886-1964) and John (1883-1965), partnered in the family's guide business. In the 1920s, the Bailey family maintained shoreline property near the American Ice Company and would often launch their boats there. Another of Mert's good friends was Albert "Ab" Campbell (1910-1989). Campbell started making decoys as a teenager in the late 1920s for his own use and to supplement the sinkbox rig operated by the Baileys. "He was always very handy with such things," Mert recalls. Young Albert also served as a pick-up guide for the Baileys and other Perryville guides when they over-booked "sports."

Mert, Bill and Bea all claim that skating on the Bay (when the ice was more than 8-inches thick) is one of their fondest childhood memories. Mert also remembers swimming in the summertime: "We'd swim from Perryville to Havre de Grace (almost one-mile) where we'd walk around and get into mischief." As a kid, Bill used to swim at the Veterans Administration pool with the patients. The local Boy Scout troop was allowed in one night a week. He recalls that many of the patients were shell shocked veterans of the Great War, and that the doctors believed that contact with normal folks (like Scouts) could be rehabilitative for them.

Although Ace and Hen both married and enjoyed comfortable homes in town, they never had children. It is possible then, that in looking to share a lifetime's worth of knowledge and experience, they took a particular appreciation in the interest local youngsters paid to their riparian pursuits. "Neither of 'em had kids," Bill remembers, "and I guess they looked on us that way." Mert also recalls that, in many respects, Ace and Hen were like surrogate fathers to Albert and some of the other boys that hung around on the wharf.



Classic Owens and Davis canvasback drake, c. 1920s, with slight swimming attitude.



*Canvasback pair by Owens and Davis, c. 1920s.
- Collection of Pat Vincenti.*



Decoys

The men along the shore made primarily canvasback decoys. Mert Owens remembers that, "Most of the local men tried to make their own birds — some were better at it than others. They were always tryin' to out-do each other. But even then, you could buy 'em for one dollar each from anywhere easily." The men particularly prized white pine, obtaining it from logs floating down river or recycling it from buildings being renovated. Mert recalls that, "Those fellas were always trying to get white pine. Whenever some became available, you'd see 'em all down there tryin' to get it." Bill remembers that, "you usually didn't trim it much, so if it was fairly close to the appropriate size, that's what you went with." This resulted in birds that maintained a similar overall appearance and consistent lines, but that varied somewhat in size and dimensions. According to Bill, carving heads was considered a leisure-time or rainy day activity, done primarily, "when you didn't have any real work to do." Other such work included repairing gill nets (which always needed mending), making eel pots, repairing and refitting boats and boat equipment, and organizing and storing nets. Moke agrees, remembering that, "Ace and Hen and the other men knitted nets and made decoy heads on bad weather days."

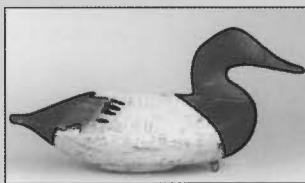
Initially, decoys made on the river shore were all hand-chopped and since the majority are thought to have been patterned on Ace and Hen's designs, most share basically the same look. In some cases, this makes it difficult to determine exactly who made a particular bird. Over the years, collectors and locals have discerned a number of tell-tale characteristics that they feel help to distinguish the work of Ace and Hen from that of other makers on the river shore. Some knowledgeable collectors insist that, without fail, Ace and Hen's birds feature a triangular carving or "diamond" at the lower base of the bill. Bill remembers some of the older locals insisting that Ace and Hen never brought the ridge line straight down the back of a decoy, but instead slanted it ever so slightly to the left or right. Historian and decoy maker, Evans McKinney

(1913-2000), one of the first to document the decoys of Owens and Davis (first to Davis alone and later to the pair as a "carving team"), describes the birds as having flat bodies with V-bottoms; small flat surfaces in the center of the bottoms; and wide, thick tails carried on a straight line from the high chine line, just one inch below the top of the back. He describes heads of medium height with thick bills. When found in original paint, he notes, there is no wing detail found on the drakes.

In addition to their standard canvasbacks, Ace and Hen made over-sized birds, wingducks, at least a few high-heads, and some with heads in a slightly forward or "swimming" position. Bluebills and redheads are also known; the bluebills exhibiting roughly the same pattern, only slightly smaller and the redheads displaying more rounded, domed heads. Some of the redheads and bluebills also exhibit more roundness to the body carving and have been described by some collectors as having a "rocking horse" look to them. A handful of miniatures have also survived, with some attributed solely to Hen, and others known to have been made by Ace, still in the Owens family. "Uncle Ace did make some miniatures," Bea explains, "they carved the little ones just for fun. Some have the wings out, and some are regular. I don't know when he made them, but I found some of them in a box in the attic."

Ace and Hen probably made several thousand decoys over their many decades spent working the water. The earliest of these probably date to around the turn of the last century. The last of them, to the early 1950s. The bulk of their production, however, likely dates to before 1934, when rigs of hundreds of birds were required for use around sinkboxes. Their general style varied surprisingly little over 50 years of decoy-making, particularly when considering that the pair worked together, dividing the duties required to craft fine birds. It is also completely possible that, from time to time, they employed the assistance of one or two of the better carvers working on the river shore or in town.

They are sleek, beautiful birds with some features not associated with most Cecil County style decoys, a nod, to the influence of



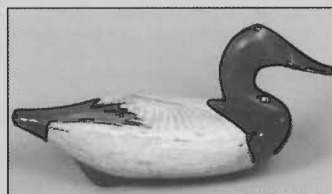
An oversized canvasback decoy by Ace and Hen, c. 1920s.
- Collection of Jim Trimble.



Owens and Davis redhead decoy, c. 1920s, exhibiting a "rocking horse" look.
- Collection of Pat Vincenti.



Two styles of miniature canvasbacks made by Ace Owens, c. 1950s. Other miniatures have been credited solely to Hen Davis.
- Owens Family Collection.



Canvasback decoy by Albert Campbell, c. late 1930s - 1940s.



A rougher hewn canvasback decoy, c. 1930s, made on Ace and Hen's pattern by one of the men along the river shore.

- Collection of Bill Weaver

Perryville's proximity to the Susquehanna River. They could be compared to tiny yachts; with their wide decks, gentle grading, high chine lines, and sterns that slope down into confident, flat tails, balancing the form and line. Proud heads with expressive curves and life-like looks rest atop these well made bodies. For the men of the Perryville river shore, these decoys were the gold standard. And rightly so, for the Owens and Davis birds had supplied the market, served the captains of industry, and navigated the change from sinkbox to bushwhack boat with ease. They had worked so well for so long, that there simply was no need to look for inspiration anywhere else.

It can be said with some confidence that the rougher examples which have surfaced along the river shore were not made by Ace Owens and Hen Davis. That is not to say, however, that all the fine and well crafted examples come from their hands. To be sure, but a few of the men on river shore produced quick and crude but serviceable rigs - often not taking much time to smooth bodies or refine head carving. Others spent a bit more time on their birds, hoping the investment would reap rewards out on the Flats. Some of these men purchased finished heads from other makers, including Madison Mitchell. But a few of men on the river shore, producing hand-made decoys on the patterns of Ace and Hen turned out well made birds that some locals consider to be on a par with those of the undisputed masters. If this is true, then some of these decoys may forever be misattributed to Owens and Davis. And thus, while we may never be able to positively attribute the decoys of Oscar Evans, Ernest Preston, George Burch, Dewey Fox and other men of the Perryville river shore, it is important to note that they crafted them, used them and that they served their makers well.

Fishing

An old adage for Perryville watermen was: Gunnin' from October to April, fishin' from April to October. In the spring, once the gunning season came to an end, attention was turned to fishing. Shad and herring were the primary quarry and elaborate net systems and fishing floats were used to catch them. The spring run lasted through the summer and into the fall. "In the summer, they done about the same thing as in the spring of the year, goin' for rockfish, catfish and bass. From spring 'til freeze," Moke remembers. Shad hatcheries were established in nearby Havre de Grace in 1873 and although the true heyday was long past by the 1920s, the waters off Perryville still proved to be a profitable fishery for American shad, river herring, and striped bass (rockfish). For many people up and down the east coast, since before the American Revolution, herring (salted and fresh) was synonymous with Perryville. In the old days, much of the catch was also smoked and some was used as fertilizer by local farmers. "Primarily, the main things would be shad and rockfish," Bill explains, "and herring would be with the shad season. But they were migratory, so when they wasn't here, they'd always have catfish. Year round stuff would be bass, catfish, perch, there's a lot of stuff that stays year round. Sturgeon was pretty much gone when I was a kid, in the 1920s. Carp was popular here at one time, especially with the Jewish communities in the larger cities nearby. I remember during the Jewish holidays we had rabbis come from all around to bless the fish. I remember what they used to say about carp, you need to cook it on a plank, throw away the carp and eat the plank."

"For herring and shad, they used mostly drift nets, or anchor nets," Bill notes, "also called anchor gill nets. Only time they seined, they seined for bass, they seined for carp, and they seined for rockfish." "Fike nets or trap nets," Moke says, "that's what they used mostly to catch perch and catfish." "A fike net is also called a hoop net," Bill adds, "had funnels in 'em, had about three funnels in 'em." The men also used handmade "pots" to catch eels in the spring, summer and fall which were sold primarily for use as fish and crab bait. "Then there was another group of men on the river that used what they called pound nets," states Bill. "They started at the shoreline - fenced off half a mile, and put a pocket at the end. The fish hit that end, and you caught the fish right in the pocket. They didn't fish them every day, they'd just check it every few days. Especially when the herring we're here. The pound nets stayed in all year. If the ice didn't pull the stakes out, the stakes were in all the time." Ace, Hen and the men of the river shore used primarily anchor gill nets and drift nets. "Uncle Ace was a master net maker," Bea remembers, "and he told me that my grandmother on my mother's side came from New Jersey, and

A Perryville Duck Dinner

While the men of the river shore sold a fair number of the ducks they took, an equal number it seems found their way onto the tables of Perryville's kitchens and dining rooms. "I can remember Uncle Ace bringin' the ducks home here, and cleanin' 'em - taking the feathers off," recalls Bea, "he was good at that. He could do it in no time. I ate a lot of duck growing up, and I cooked a lot of 'em too," she thinks back, laughing. After Ace's wife died in 1951, Bea and her husband moved in to his home to help take care of him. "He loved his potatoes and string beans on the side," she remembers, "but Uncle Ace liked almost anything. He was an Owens, and the whole family was like that, they would eat most anything. I don't think he would turn anything down," she chuckles, "but I used to roast the ducks . . . and the fish." "All my father ever ate were canvasbacks," remembers Judge Cole. "Seems like he'd have a 'can' every night of the week, sometimes two. But they'd really smell up the kitchen when you cooked 'em. They stank!" Moke recalls that Perryville families living near the water would often enjoy fresh stewed tomatoes, peas and other garden vegetables with their ducks and fish. Bill remembers lots of boiled cabbage, ham, and pot pie. Judge Cole remembers canvasback dinners with fresh baked bread, potatoes, spinach and beans. "Lots of rockfish," he remembers happily, "and my grandfather always had oysters."

that she was a sister to Ben Dye. And Uncle Ace told me that my grandmother taught him to make nets—seine hauling nets. I never knew that until he told me, because she died when I was three years old.”

Floating wharfs made especially for fishing were used by the men. “They’d lay ‘em out in a straight line,” Moke remembers, “these were stationary across the bay. They had brake shoes off the railroad that they used for anchors, and about every 20 feet, they’d put an anchor on. They used cork at the top for floats and brake shoes at the bottom for weights. The railroad supplied a lot of fishing equipment,” he says, chuckling. Scrap from the nearby Armstrong foundry was also used. As these nets were hauled in, the weights were quickly removed and tossed aside. It was exhausting, back-breaking work. “You had to really work ‘em,” Moke recalls.

The Conowingo Dam and its hydroelectric facility, constructed on the Susquehanna between 1926 and 1928, was one of the largest power plants in the world at the time. The dam, unfortunately, had a pronounced impact on the ecology of the Upper Chesapeake Bay region. Commercially important migratory fish, particularly shad and rockfish, were blocked from completing their arduous journeys upstream to their historic spawning grounds, some as far north as Binghamton, New York. Other dams previously built on the lower Susquehanna to support hydroelectric facilities included York Haven (in 1904) and Holtwood (in 1910), significantly reducing populations of vital fish stocks. Further reductions brought on by the Conowingo and Safe Harbor dams in 1928, sped the end of commercial fishing in the region, at least on the scale witnessed up to that point. Fortunately, beginning in the 1960s, efforts were made to ensure passage for migratory fish through these facilities, and though they have met with mixed success, such restoration remains a priority for federal and state government agencies.

Bushwhacking

“The fall, that’s when they started gunning,” Bill recalls. “And when gunnin’ season came, they put all that fishing stuff aside.” This is what they lived for, he

remembers. “Gunning didn’t start as early then as it starts now. Conditions were altogether different. Seems it was much colder then. It used to skim over with ice all the time.” The men based along the river shore did the lion’s share of their gunning and fishing down on the Susquehanna Flats. But beginning in the 1940s, a handful of locals established shore blinds and did some occasional gunning for marsh ducks. “Yeah, some of the men ‘long the shoreline would occasionally hunt mallards and blacks in the marshes and the creeks nearby,” remembers Oscar Evans. “But nearly every bird we went for back then was a diver; ‘bout 80 percent ‘cans’ and 20 percent redheads and blackheads,” he recalls.

At the end of the sinkbox era, bushwhacking became the primary form of gunning on the Flats. Once the decoys were set out, a bushwhack boat (or “sneak boat”) would be positioned upwind about 400 or 500 yards away. “A bushwhack rig consisted of 125 ducks, sometimes a few more than that,” Bill explains, “and you were about a quarter of a mile from ‘em. Mallards would fly right across ‘em. But diving ducks - canvasbacks, blackheads and redheads, they’d decoy. And that’s about all we ever hunted.” The boats, about 16-feet long and built especially for this type of hunting, were painted white and had a curtain of white canvas wrapped around the gunwale to help conceal the gunner, who remained crouched below it. Once a group of ducks alighted to the decoys and nestled among them, the hunt was on. “You could always tell canvasbacks,” Bill recalls, “because ‘cans’ always circled the stool, came into the wind.” In the aft of the bushwhack boat, the “sculler” used a single oar mounted through a hole in the back of the boat to quietly propel the craft toward the birds.

“After sculling in quietly and getting into position, a lot of guys would smack their gun on the boat before shooting to get the birds’ attention,” Bill says, “and they’d have the gun at the ready, and as soon as they got off the water, they’d get their first shot in.” The first shot was taken when birds were one or two feet off the water; second and third shots, once ducks were up on the wing. “You mostly always got ‘em shooting up,” Moke explains, “you couldn’t kill ‘em on the water as easily as you could if they got up off the water.” Bushwhacking usually entailed one gunner and one sculler per boat, but often a second gunner would join. “If you were going with the wind, the bird has to get up into the wind,” Bill points out, “so they generally turned that way - one side or the other - and you knew where they were gonna’ go if he turned. If there was two of ya’ huntin’ - if you was on this side of the boat, you knew your ducks was comin’ that way. The duck would automatically instinctively turn depending on where he was in the stool of decoys.” Which man took which side of the boat would always be decided by the gunners beforehand, Bill explains. “And always keepin’ his gun at the ready, the guy who was sculling took a final shot or two,” Moke adds.

“Three shots could get you nothin’,” Bill remembers, “or, three shots would get two or three birds. It depended on your marksmanship.” Dogs were not used to retrieve the ducks when bushwhacking. The birds had to be picked up by the gunners (sometimes using a hook device to reach into the water). “When we first started bushwhacking, you couldn’t use a motor at all,” remembers Moke. “You had to row back. That’s why I had two sets of oars in the boat. You could spend a lot of time out there pickin’ up your birds,” he laughs. “Later, you had to take it off when you were shooting, and the only time you could use it was after, when you were retrieving cripples. But toward the end, everybody took the motors off.” Bill notes that he and Moke were always fortunate enough to have a motor. “Moke and I built a new bushwhack boat in ‘54 and we bushwhacked until probably 1960, maybe a little longer.”

Moke remembers that, “canvasbacks and divers was about all ya’ got bushwhacking, but one time, we had that goose; caught him at the two-mile point. First one I ever seen down there.” “First one we ever saw,” Bill adds, “first goose we ever shot. Three of us shot it,” he laughs, “Michael (Bill Weaver’s son), Moke and I.” Moke’s brother, Arthur “Mick” Boyd, was the only member of the crew who can’t claim credit for the rare bag. “That was the longest scull Moke ever made,” Bill chuckles.

Although the ducks were not as abundant as in preceding decades, a few hours on the water were usually fruitful. “On good days, I remember a lot of 24 duck days,” states Bill, “so we must’ve been allowed six a piece. That would be 12, then we’d hide 12 on the boat, so you had two day’s limit. Mostly, that’s what you got. Course, a lot of days, you come out of there with nothin’. And we’d have been out there all those hours, sometimes, more

than eight or ten hours. I would bet that the average day, wasn't more than five or six ducks."

Bill and Moke nostalgically recall the seemingly endless quest for the perfect gunning position. "They had an imaginary line on the Flats," Bill explains, "you couldn't go across that line until after 4:00 o'clock. And I never did it, but a lotta' guys used to run down in there and put a lantern on a stick, on a stake. And when the time would come to set out, the other guys, they'd see that light and they would go past that part of the Flats. Everybody was out there by daylight—and seems like by 3:00, 3:30 in the afternoon, everybody was comin' in. It was always long before dark." "Most of the men always came in early," Moke agrees, "they was never late getting' in...but they'd leave at daylight, they'd always be down there before daylight."

Room to Let

From before the turn of the last century up through the 1930s, leasing rooms to wealthy sport gunners in the winter was a cottage industry for many Perryville families. Bill explains how his father's job with the railroad afforded numerous opportunities to reach out to prospective guests. "My father William White Weaver (1884-1963) was a PRR railroad engineer. He worked out of Thurlow, Pennsylvania, which is Chester, and he would be gone like three days, and then he'd deadhead home. While waiting in the station somewhere, he met all these different men that were coming to Perryville to hunt. And one of the people that he met wanted a place to room. That quickly turned into something that my mother would handle. We had an extra room, and she would room these hunters, 'sports' we called 'em. And they would come to the house, she'd feed 'em, pack 'em lunch, and somebody else would do the duck hunting [guiding] part. Hunting waterfowl wasn't in my background, everything was field hunting. And when I got old enough to hunt, my father took me field hunting. My father was still a rabbit and upland bird hunter and the dogs, he raised Bluetick hounds. He had nothin' to do with waterfowl. But I was so impressed by the sporty clothes. They all were wealthy people and they had nice shirts, and they had nice coats, and nice pants, beautiful guns. Everybody was really impressive. They were originally from Philadelphia, New York, Washington. But once we got 'em going, they were coming from wherever that railroad went. My father would meet 'em at that station and we'd give 'em a place to stay. Everybody in Perryville did it. So my mother picked up extra money doin' that. Anyhow, that's probably what made me wanna' be a duck hunter."

A Visit to Madison Mitchell's Shop

After World War II, with stateside pursuits turning back to more important matters, like duck hunting, many gunners from Perryville called on Madison Mitchell for their decoy needs. Some hunters simply had Mitchell turn bodies for them, others purchased rigs of completed birds that saw many years of service on the Flats. Although they had been out separately plenty of times growing up, Bill and Moke started gunning together in 1939. The first decoys they made, a small rig of roughed out canvasbacks, were heavily influenced by the birds of Ace and Hen. "I was hunting with another guy, Absalom 'Abbie' Jackson (1920-1975)," Bill recalls, "and we started making decoys. Then, before I went in the service, I bought a bushwhack boat off of Ivan McMullen. What a boat it was. They had it, this big bushwhack boat they wasn't usin', down at the fish house. I said I'll give 'em \$10 for it. And I rebuilt it, and made some decoys, and Pop-Pop (Bill and Moke's

father-in-law) had some decoys. We were all set for gunning. And then I went in the service. Abbie had the boat and the decoys and when I came back, I didn't have any decoys. Didn't have any boat hardly, but I rebuilt the boat. And that started it all over again. That's when Moke and I made new decoys. We made a lot of decoys then."

"We had Mitchell turn the bodies for us," Moke adds. "Moke went to work at the fire company," Bill remembers, "and he'd get a pole, and we'd take 'em over there to Mitchell's shop in Havre de Grace and they'd turn 'em for us. What was it, get one turned body for every three turned?" "Yeah," Moke laughs, "one from three. Madison Mitchell, he was a good businessman. You gave him three bodies and you got just one back. At that rate, it took a whole load of wood to get your rig. Whole group of us used to take wood over there for bodies. One time, another boy and I took a load of rougher scrap wood over and asked Mr. Mitchell if he'd turn 'em, and he said, 'well I don't really use that kind of stuff anymore,' he said, 'I don't want that.' And I said, it's okay, we both have fireplaces. And so we got back in the truck

and we started to pull out and he come runnin' up to the door and he says, 'well, just throw 'em right there in the corner of the shed. I'll take care of 'em.' About three days later, we got the call. The boy I was with had an old Ford, four door. It had no backseat in it, we just used it for gunnin'. We went over there and we filled that thing clean to the roof in the backseat with bodies. Mr. Mitchell had cut 'em out that quick," laughs Moke. "Guess he must've needed to fill a big order and really needed the wood." "But you know a turned body isn't necessarily a finished decoy by any means," Bill points out. "It needs an awful lot of work between

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—Bill

gettin' that, and getting the breast put on, tail put on, smoothed out, head fitted on, and we made our own heads."

Gunnin' For The Market

Many Perryville men made the majority of their annual income during gunning season. "We had the iron foundry here in town," Bill recalls, "and about half the guys in the foundry would knock off when gunnin' season started." The same held true for the dozens of men working for the PRR. "Mostly they were after canvasbacks," Bill remembers, "but they didn't always succeed. Mainly canvasbacks, redheads, and blackheads. Then you had a thousand and one, what we called 'em, 'trash ducks.' They would be mallards and teal, buffleheads, goldeneye. On the market, you'd get about seven dollars a pair for canvasbacks, you'd probably get five dollars a pair for redheads, and mallards was about four dollars. Kept going all the way down — blackheads was only two dollars a pair, dollar a piece. Still big money in those days, but you'd always go for the canvasbacks." "Same thing with fishing," Moke adds, "you'd always see 'em goin' for the shad, 'cause they'd pay seventy-five cents for the fish and they'd get three dollars and a half for the roe." Everyone in the supply chain got their cut as the birds worked their way from the gunners, to the Owens and Cole fish houses, to the distributors, all the way to the restaurants, and ultimately, to the plates of the wealthy urbanites who patronized them.

Market gunning and related practices still persisted, even after numerous laws were passed to prevent it. Bag limits had been set at 25 ducks per person per day in 1916. In 1918, the season was restricted to a three month period between November 1 and January 31. Laws passed in 1927 prohibited the shipping of game (including ducks) out of state. And although they would never consider themselves scofflaws, most of the men of the Perryville river shore, to one degree or another, were outlaw gunners. Gunning at night and shooting over limit were commonplace. Gunning out of season was also a regular occurrence, and occasionally, even baiting was considered standard operating procedure for many men. Bill remembers that selling illicit waterfowl wasn't the exception, but rather the rule. "Everybody would sell a few ducks. It wasn't unusual at all for anyone to sell a few ducks." When the laws changed, both Hanford Owens and William Cole allowed local gunners to keep "extra" ducks hanging in their coolers, each bird marked for identification so they could be retrieved by—or so payment could be made to—their rightful owners. "Anybody that hunted had a customer for a few ducks," Bill relates. "A.H. Owens would buy the ducks and ship 'em to New York or Baltimore, or wherever."

"Across town, them guys in Charlestown, hell they had regular customers," Bill exclaims, explaining that these prevailing attitudes were by no means unique to Perryville. "They'd take 'em out to the station, place 'em in a barrel, they'd go right to New York. I don't know how they did it. It was illegal to sell ducks, but I don't think anyone ever done anything about it. Everybody still sold ducks regardless of whether it was illegal or not," he says. "You never heard of anyone being arrested then. It wasn't until years later that they started arresting people. They'd arrest you for taking 'em then, and they'd arrest you if you were over the limit."

Mert also remembers some locals using illegal live callers

from time to time even into the 1930s. Others remember that Ace and Hen may also have raised and sold live callers in the early days.

Big Guns and Night Gunnin'

Bill, Moke and a handful of other locals remember that a few "big guns" were still occasionally used well into the 1920s and 1930s. "Right out on the Flats," Moke remembers, "I know they used 'em out there." "It was mostly the people out of Charlestown," Bill adds. "But I never heard of anybody gettin' caught," Moke muses. Some locals believe that tradition alone kept the big guns roaring. Others claim that it was the strong and innate sense of entitlement by an unenlightened few. "I can't say what the thinking was," Bill wonders. "Must have been they figured, 'the Lord put the ducks there, and we're gonna get 'em,' or something. I don't remember there bein' any big arrests or that kind of stuff." "But they did it at night," Moke adds, "that's when they did it. They'd use lights, they'd put 'em at the front the boats."

Bill vividly recalls that it wasn't only the Charlestown boys who engaged in a little night gunning. "One time, around 1941, there was a rick of canvasbacks that would, every evening, come in and feed at the other side of the island. A thousand of 'em. And Abbie and I got the idea that we was gonna' get a mess of those ducks. So we went down the river, we went down and around, and they were right there. You could see the ducks on the water. We didn't have any gunnin' lights, but you could see 'em silhouetted up against the lights on shore. Well, it was about 10:00 or 11:00 o'clock at night, and we started to scull in on those ducks - and they never moved. We shot! Both of us shot three or four times and, in my mind, every light in Havre de Grace and Perryville come on," he says, laughing. "That was night gunnin', and I don't think we even stayed there long enough to pick a duck up. We just took off! I don't think we ever brought a duck home that night. We shot, the ducks took off, and it just seemed like every light in the state come on. Everything just lit up!"

Sporting Arms

"Ace and Hen and almost everyone that hunted in those days either had a Browning Automatic or a Winchester Model 12, both 12-gauge," Bill remembers. "A lot of 'em had 10 gauges too, but most of 'em used 12." "And in the sinkbox, most of 'em would use double barrels," adds Moke. "For bushwhacking, most of 'em used automatics, pump guns. You always used a pump gun." With the advent of auto-loading and pump guns, most men that could afford to began leaving their older guns hanging on the wall. "It would hold five or six shells," Bill explains, "but you had to have a plug put in 'em. You were only allowed three shells. If you were caught without the plug, it was a violation."

"I think the gun that was used depended mostly on a man's economics," thinks Bill. "If he could afford a pump gun, or a 10 gauge, or a Browning, he had it. Like a lot of guys in Perryville, when I started, all I had was a double. Moke, all he had was a single. Because they were gunnin' the DuPonts, Ace and Hen probably had the top of the line. The Duponts probably furnished the guns and the shells." Judge Cole's father used a 12-gauge 1897 and then went to a Browning Automatic 12 gauge. "The 1897 was a dangerous gun," he remembers ruefully, "if you dropped

'em, it went off. Many people lost their arms that way in those days." Everyone on the river shore in the 1930s learned this firsthand on the fateful day that Eddie McMullen, a popular local gunner, lost an arm after his gun hit the bottom of a bush-whack boat.

A Proud Legacy

The great irony in historical research is that, without fail, for every fact uncovered, for every detail confirmed, and for every story corroborated, two new questions arise. The temptation to uncover one more fact, track down one more contact, or follow up one more lead is powerful indeed. Much remains unknown about the Perryville men - their decoys and their waterfowling exploits. And while research continues and further discoveries will undoubtedly be made, it is important to commit to paper what we know now, so that it is not lost to the relentless tide of time. For only by weaving together the myriad loose facts and finding connections between seemingly disparate details of information from scattered sources, can a more complete picture be drawn.

Perryville may not have produced as many notable decoy carvers as Havre de Grace - and the waterfowling pursuits of its residents and visitors may not be as storied or celebrated as its neighbor across the water. But for those students of history, for those willing to look deeper, it reveals a wealth of memorable tales, classic exploits, colorful waterfowling and talented decoy makers. Perryville itself provides a vital backdrop to the great traditions of the Upper Bay. The town and the men of its river shore will forever hold a place of honor in the annals of Chesapeake Bay waterfowling and decoy making history. And they will live on in the hearts of those who hold them and their contributions so dear.

The author wishes to thank the gracious people of Perryville for sharing their stories and recollections that made this article possible, in particular: Mr. Bill Weaver, Mr. Moke Boyd, Mrs. Bea Owens, Mr. Oscar Evans, Mr. Mert Owens, and Judge and Mrs. Donaldson Cole. Thanks also to Debra Pence, Jim Pierce, Pat Vincenti, and Jim Trimble for research assistance.



Decoys from Bill Weaver's Rig

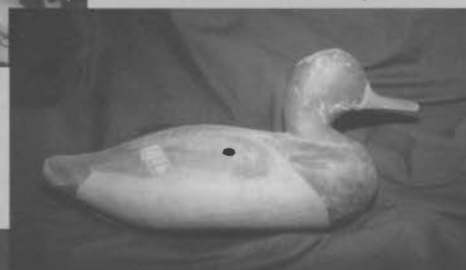


Bill Weaver with 2003 Canvasback



Bill Weaver with "hand chopped" decoy bodies

BELOW: Bill Weaver Red Head, circa 1946



Bill Weaver Canvasbacks, circa 1946



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Consignments Wanted
for the
**23rd Annual Decoy & Wildlife
Art Festival
Decoy Auction**

Saturday, May 8, 2004 at 5:30pm

**Havre de Grace High School Auditorium
700 Congress Avenue Havre de Grace, MD**

The Festival Committee is accepting consignments of quality decoys to fill 100 lots. The commission rate will be 10% from the buyer and 10% from the seller. All proceeds will benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Consignments will be received until March 29, 2004.

**23rd Annual Decoy &
Wildlife Art Festival
May 7, 8 & 9, 2004
Honorary Chairman:
Grayson Chesser**



Wildlife Artists, carvers, collectors, carving suppliers, retriever demonstrations, antique decoy contest, carving competitions, live and silent auctions, childrens activities and more! Special Mother's Day drawings. The whole family will enjoy the Festival!

J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest

The 2nd annual Old Decoy Contest to be held in conjunction with the 2004 Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival will be held Saturday, May 8th at the Middle School Gym. Entries will be accepted at the stage area from 10:00 a.m. until judging at noon. Joe Engers, Editor & Publisher of *Decoy Magazine* will head up a three-member judge's panel. Participants must make a best faith effort to assure that all decoy entries were made prior to 1950. Each decoy will be limited to one category competition only. Matched pairs entered in other than the Matched Pair category will be considered as one entry. There is a competition ban, regardless of category, on last year's winning birds. Competition decoys will be kept in a highly visible roped-off secure area and will not be handled by the public. A blue ribbon will be awarded for each of the following ten category winners. The three-judge panel will also select a best in show winner. Winners will be requested to display their decoys and ribbons at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum for a three month period.

- * **Best Upper Bay Diving Duck (non-canvasback)**
- * **Best William Haverin-any species**
- * **Best Madison Mitchell Puddle Duck**
- * **Best Mid-Bay Canvasback (non-Ward)**
- * **Best New Jersey Merganser**

- * **Best Upper Bay Pintail**
- * **Best Severin Hall Paint**
- * **Best Ward Bros. Duck any species**
- * **Best Virginia Black Duck**
- * **Best Folkier Unknown**

There will be no restrictions as to those who can participate or number of categories entered. However, participants are restricted to no more than three birds per category. Any questions, please contact contest chairman, Jim Trimble @ 703-768-7264 or email potomacduck@cox.net

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 1, 2003 - DECEMBER 31, 2003

MISSION

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum exists to collect, document, preserve, and interpret waterfowl decoys as this art form applies to the heritage of the Chesapeake Bay. Within this context, the Museum will strive to study styles of decoys, seeking to understand the decoys' artistic and social values and to pass on this heritage to our future generations. The Museum will also educate, present, and document the influence that the surrounding environment, the Susquehanna Flats and the Chesapeake Bay, has had on decoy history.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

VISITATION: 16,782

GENERAL VISITATION: 10,305

Adults: 31%	Children 0-18: 4%	Members: 8%	Group Tours: 14%
Children 9-18: 4%	Seniors: 11%	Gift Shop Only: 18%	Other: 10%

SPECIAL EVENTS VISITATION/PARTICIPATION: 6,477

Student Art Show:	69	Wine & Chocolate Tasting:	70
Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival:	5,270	Duck Fair:	650 (estimated)
Carvers and Volunteers Appreciation Reception:	54	Anniversary Dinner:	84
Sporting Clays Shoot:	162	Candlelight Tour & Carvers Celebration:	118

MEMBERSHIP: 1091

Member Residence: 725 Maryland 224 Other Mid-Atlantic States 142 Other U.S. States & Foreign Nations

VOLUNTEERS: 4949 hours of donated service

- 1044 Hours — Front Desk & Gift Shop
- 338 Hours — Volunteer carvers (weekends and school tours)
- 1010 Hours — Board Members
- 2557 Hours — Decoy Festival Volunteers

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACCREDITATION

In November, 2000, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum received the highest honor a museum can receive — accreditation by the American Association of Museums. Accreditation certifies that a museum operates according to standards set forth by the museum profession, manages its collections responsibly, and provides quality service to the public. Of the 8,000 museums nationwide, only some 750 are accredited. By earning accreditation, the Decoy Museum becomes one of only 11 museums in Maryland to achieve this standard of excellence. The Decoy Museum will initiate its re-accreditation process in 2004.

COLLECTIONS ACQUISITIONS

- Paul Gibson Collection, 10 Decoys (Donated by Karol Lynn Hitchens)
- Two Photographs (Donated by Kathy Waterfield)
- Green wing Teal Pair (Donated by Robert & Emily Rich III)
- RMM Black Duck (Donated by R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Fund)
- Bob McGaw Canvasback Drake (Donated by R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Fund)
- Artifacts from Estate of Roger Urie (Donated by Linda & Wilson Harvey)
- Capt. Otis Bridges Root Head Canada Goose (Donated by John Bridges)
- Two Broad Bills (Donated by Allen Fair)
- Collins Pintail Drake (Donated by Allen Fair)
- Mounted newspaper cutting "Duck Shooting" (Donated by Bob Haase)
- 10 pair miniature Urie decoys (Donated by Richard Patton)
- Red-breasted Merganser Pair (Donated by Charlie Joiner)
- Thirteen Gibson Decoys (Donated by Mary Gibson)
- 2002 & 2003 Federal Duck Stamps (Donated by A. Harry Oleynick MD)
- Black Head Museum Decoy Prototype (Donated by Havre de Grace Carvers and Capt. Harry Jobes)

EXHIBITS

- Celebrated the opening of the permanent exhibits celebrating carvers Harry Jobes and Charlie Joiner
- Installed 3 additional Stained Glass Windows depicting decoys by bay carvers
- Canvasback Decoys of the Chesapeake Bay, from the collection of Mark Holeckek
- Antique Hunting Equipment and Firearms, from the collection of Patrick Vincenti
- Chincoteague Decoys Revisited, on loan from the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
- New Jersey Black Duck Decoys, from the collection of Dr. Robert Mallin
- Harford County Student Wildlife Art Competition and Show
- Ned Mayne 2003 Honorary Festival Chairman Exhibit
- Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest Winners Display
- Annual Junior Duck Stamp Competition Traveling Exhibit
- John Ingoglia 2003 Honorary Duck Fair Chairman Exhibit
- Antique Chrisfield Decoys from the collection of Dr. Mort Kramer

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

- Care and Feeding of Decoys by Curator Diane Rees
- Retriever and Duck Call Demonstrations
- Weekend Carving Demonstrations Year Round by Volunteer Carvers
- Harford County Student Art Competition Decoy Museum and Harford County Board of Education
- Scales and Tails Program by Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Nature Journaling and Habitat Needs for Nests by Educator Kay Morrison
- Decoy Painting for Students by Volunteer Carver Noble Menzer
- Tips for Native Species Gardening by the Harford County Master Gardens
- Maryland Wildlife Rescue and Rehab Presentation
- Building Species Specific Bird Boxes by the Susquehanna River Fowlers
- Outdoor Safety Program by the Natural Resources Police

Carving Classes

- 15 individuals participated in weekly adult carving classes that provided an opportunity for carvers to hone their skills under the guidance of award-winning carver Jeff Moore

Docent-Led Programs

- 751 adults and seniors participated in group tours
- 870 school children participated free-of-charge in programs consisting of group tours, carving demonstrations, craft projects, and video presentations

SPECIAL EVENTS

- Carvers and Volunteers Appreciation Day
- 22nd Annual Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival — Honorary Chairman: Ned Mayne
- 16th Annual Duck Fair — Honorary Chairman: John Ingoglia
- Sporting Clays Classic
- 17th Annual Anniversary Dinner
- Candlelight Tour, Sale & Carver Celebration

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

TOTAL ASSETS: \$1,103,034.40

Includes cash, investments, inventory, land and leasehold improvements, furniture and equipment, accumulated depreciation, and the value of the museum collection.

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL: \$1,103,034.40

TOTAL LIABILITIES: \$25,806.55 - Includes line of credit, accrued expenses, and sales tax payable.

TOTAL CAPITAL: \$1,077,227.85 - Includes unrestricted net assets, restricted net assets, and net income.

2003 REVENUES : \$327,588.20

General Admissions	19,473.00	Decoy Festival	52,490.62
Memberships	16,302.00	Other Events	37,866.60
Educational Programs	9,145.00	Raffles	8,386.00

The Canvasback	3,067.25	Gift Shop Sales	42,468.28
Grants	49,851.00	Capital Donations	43,350.00
Private Donations	32,880.37	Other Income	383.08
Corporate Sponsors	11,925.00		

2003 EXPENSES: \$313,808.07

Administration	\$111,115.13	Other Events	17,344.07
Gift Shop	31,097.70	Educational Programming	29,422.54
Maintenance	37,499.40	Exhibits	9,770.93
Decoy Festival	25,598.72	Building Repairs	6,542.87
Publications	14,946.97		
Collections	30,469.74		

This statement is not audited.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF & BOARD

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Ed Watts, Vice President	Allen Fair	Kevin Peel
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Norm Smith, Secretary	Bob Haase	J. Freeman Wright
Madelyn Shank, Member-at-Large	John Ingoglia	
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Kay Morrison, Visitor Services/Education	Ramon Carmona, Gift Shop Associate
Margaret Jones, Special Events	Noel Noel, Gift Shop Associate

CONTRIBUTORS

The Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museums extends its sincere appreciation to the following individuals and businesses for their generous financial support in 2003:

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Carvers!

Sharpen your knives and ready your brushes. It's time for the

23rd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival's Carving Competition, May 7, 8, & 9, 2004.

If you have works that you would like to enter in the competitions, call the museum at 410-939-3739 and we will send you a copy of the rules and divisions.



**Havre de Grace
 Decoy Museum's**

Sporting Clay Classic

Sunday, July 11th

75 Targets, 4 Lewis Classes
 Concurrents available

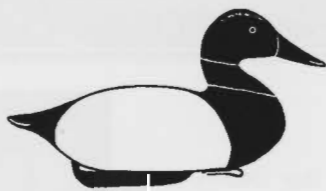
Over \$3,000 in prizes

Located at:
 J&P Hunting Lodge, Inc.
 Sudlersville, Maryland



for more information call: 410-939-3739

*Announcing the
11th Annual
R. Madison Mitchell
Endowment Dinner*



*Friday, March 12, 2004 at the
Bayou Restaurant
Route 40 Havre de Grace, Maryland*

As part of our program we will be offering by lottery drawing, the option to purchase twenty-five Mitchell Style pigeons painted by Pat Vincenti and Bill Collins. Bodies and heads for these birds were recovered from the Mitchell Shop. Also, there will be a similar lottery drawing for twelve, 1951 signed Red Head Drakes by Charlie "Speed" Joiner. Other very special items will be sold at live auction. Your attendance will show support for the Endowment Trust, which exists solely, to benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum through the purchase of artifacts, decoys representing all levels of decoy makers and other appropriate projects.

Dinner Tickets are \$30.00 each and are available at the Decoy Museum, from Endowment members, at the Vincenti Decoy Shop, or by calling Madelyn M. Shank at (410) 939-3947.

**EAST COAST DECOY
COLLECTORS**



**Buy, Sell & Swap
April 2 & 3, 2004
In rooms - rain or shine
St. Michaels Motor Inn
(Best Western)
St. Michael's, MD
410-745-3333 (Mention Event)**

**Saturday - late
afternoon/evening
Meeting & cookout**

**For more information contact
John Clayton 410-745-2955
John@njdecoys.com**

or

**Jim Trimble 703-768-7264
Potomacduck@cox.net**

**PUBLIC WELCOME
Free Decoy Appraisals**

MUSEUM NEWS



350,000th Visitor

Photo by Kay Morrison, Story by Margaret Jones

The Decoy Museum reached a milestone on December 15, 2003. The 350,000th visitor came through the doors. The unsuspecting visitor was Honglian Zhai of Ellicott City. Mrs. Zhai and her husband came to visit the museum on a whim.

Mrs. Zhai received a one year family membership to the museum, a limited edition print, an "Art of Decoy" afghan, a copy of

"Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and Their Makers", and a certificate commemorating the visit.

The 350,000th visitor was initially expected sometime during the Candlelight Tour. Snow, sleet and freezing rain kept visitation to only 130 visitors. We wish to congratulate the Zhai family for becoming our milestone visitors.



Mrs. Honglian Zhai, from Ellicott City, MD our 350,000th visitor.

December 15, 2003.

Photo by Kay Morrison

Anniversary Dinner

Photos and Story by Margaret Jones

Fun and food sums up the 17th Annual Anniversary Dinner. The Bayou Restaurant and its staff provided the excellent food and wonderful service we have come to expect.

Guest speaker Bob Campbell, NPS Coordinator of the Chesapeake Bay Program, presented an insightful talk on the current "State of the Bay". Immediately following Mr. Campbell's presentation, the auctioning began. In the friendly, yet competitive atmosphere of the auction, a few bidding wars took place for a number of items. The highest selling auction item was a pair of Charlie Joiner pintails bought by Charlie Packard.

This years museum decoys were Black Ducks by Captain Harry Jobes. Staying true to tradition, Al Burdette out bid everyone, to secure the "number one" decoy for yet another year. The remaining twenty-four dinner decoys were sold by lottery. There are still a few decoys available. Come and get one before they are all gone.

Special thanks to each carver and member who gave donations for this years auction. Charlie Joiner, Harry Shourds, Charlie Bryan together contributed over \$5,000 in auction items. The museum also thanks Christy Sowder for donating a basket of luxury Arbonne personal care products (for our lady guests) and Ed Watts for donating a large number of items for the oyster can raffle. The Decoy Museum is always appreciative of everyone's continued support.



Allen Fair, Auctioneer for the night.

Photo by Margaret Jones



Presentation of the "Black-head" museum duck by Ed Watts and Debra Pence.

Photo by Margaret Jones

The continued health and well being of the Decoy Museum is celebrated every year with excellent food, fun and friends. If you have not attended the Anniversary Dinner in the past, mark your calendar of November 6, 2004 so you can be sure to join in the fun!

MUSEUM NEWS



Candlelight Tour & Carver's Celebration

Story & photos by Margaret Jones

The day of the Candlelight Tour and Carver's Celebration dawned as a snowy, rainy and messy event. Carvers Bill Meyers and Nelson Mengel braved the snow and sleet, spending the event greeting visitors and showing their work, and educating visitors about the art and history of decoy carving.

Although visitation was slow through the day, volunteers Elly Coale, GeorgAnn Papst and board members J. Freeman Wright and Madelyn Shank enthusiastically greeted visitors, and sold tour and raffle tickets through out the day. Members came early to take advantage of their gift shop sale privileges and everyone who braved the weather was treated to warming wassail and cookies.

GeorgAnn, Elly and Kay Morrison treated the carvers, volunteers and staff to a wonderful warming lunch with all the trimmings. Special thanks goes to the volunteers, carvers and board members who braved the weather to keep the museum open and available to members and tour participants through out the long, wet and cold day.

From opening to closing Jay Freeman Wright sold the museum's Fall Raffle tickets. Promptly at 8:00pm Jay, along with

Madelyn M. Shank and Ellen Massie, drew the winners of the Fall Raffle. Dan Neckel of Fairfax Station, Virginia, won the full size Bill Schaubert Pintails and the half size Allan Schaubert Pintails. The Gittings' family from Havre de Grace, won the full size pair of Canvasbacks by Joe Cook. Scott Peach from Chesterfield, Virginia won the Mike Affleck wall hanging of the flying Canvasbacks. The Canada goose, by Bryon Bodt, was won by Donna Dalzell of Darlington, Maryland. All winners were very pleased with their prizes. The museum is grateful to all who participated in this year's raffle. We wish to extend a special thanks to each of the carvers who donated this seasons beautiful raffle prizes to the museum. Without your generosity, our fundraising efforts would not be as successful as they are.

If you missed this year's opportunity to enjoy the Candlelight Tour & Carver Celebration or did not make it to the museum members' gift shop sale, mark your 2004 calendars for Sunday December 12. It is a nice opportunity to support the museum and take advantage of a great sale in a relaxing atmosphere. Be sure to join us for next year's event!



Jay Freeman Wright with his two assistants, Ellen Massie and Madelyn M. Shanks draw the Fall Raffle Winners.

Photo by Debra Pence



Bill Meyers and Nelson Mengel, braved the weather to participate in the Candlelight Tour and Carver Celebration.

Photo by Margaret Jones

MUSEUM NEWS



Education Corner Children's Activities During the Duck Fair

by Kay Morrison

We really had a wonderful time with the children during the Duck Fair! Although we had planned to hold our activities outdoors, the weather forced us upstairs to the library. We still had the advantage of the wonderful views of the water and the bonus view of the retriever demonstrations.

On Saturday, Alex White and Ellen Massie took turns treating children to free prizes from the ever popular "Duck Pond Game". Now, to be sure, there really was no water in the pond, but no one seemed to mind. Ellen continued the game all day on Sunday and she was a great help in keeping the little ones happy.

Bob and Morgan Jones, husband and daughter of Special Events Coordinator, Margaret Jones, did a wonderful job painting fantastic design on hands, faces, legs and even some faces. Whatever the request, they were able to paint it. Ian Jones helped with carrying supplies and other errands. The painting station was a very popular stop for many families.

On Saturday we had planned to offer feather mask making for a two hour period. However, we had so many children who worked so patiently arranging their feathers just so and gluing them onto paper masks, that we continued the activity for the rest of the afternoon. We also made the masks again on Sunday. I kept thinking, as we cleaned up many feathers from time to time, that it was probably fortunate that we were indoors—what would have happened outside with a breeze!!

Sunday morning we made decoys the way little Native American children might have. Using fresh cattails leaves harvested from Jay Freeman Wright's property, several youngsters created primitive looking decoys. Every one floated!

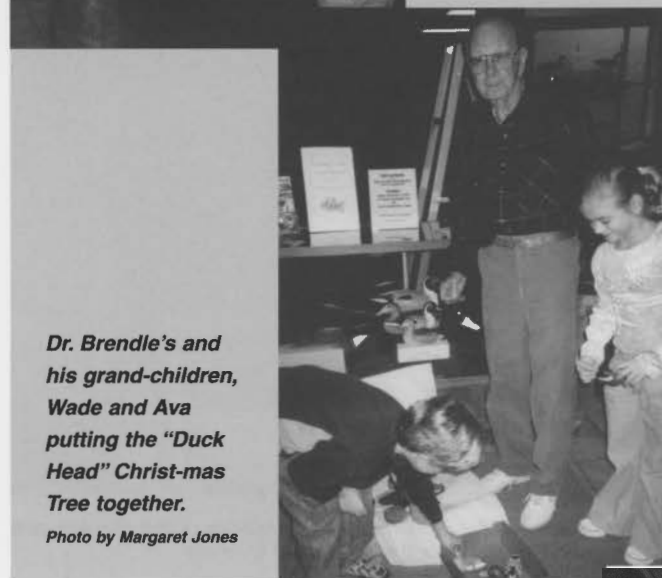
From noon until three, Noble Mentzer offered a decoy painting workshop as he has many times. Eight boys, ages six to

twelve, paid close attention to "Pop's" directions and were able to complete very handsome projects. Several parents watched the boys work and seemed as interested as the children. Many thanks go to Noble for volunteering his time and talent so that we could have this valuable workshop for the children.



*Dr. Brendle's
grand-children,
Wade and Ava
hanging heads
on the Duck Head
Christmas Tree.*

Photo by Margaret Jones



*Dr. Brendle's and
his grand-children,
Wade and Ava
putting the "Duck
Head" Christmas
Tree together.*

Photo by Margaret Jones

The Passing of Friends

In Fond Memory of Arthur Franck and Helen Jobes

We are saddened to announce to our members the passing of two dear and long time friends of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

Arthur "Whitey" Franck

Long time member and museum volunteer

Arthur "Whitey"

Franck (70) died at

home on November

23, 2003 of compli-

cations of pul-

monary fibrosis.

Whitey was a tal-

ented waterfowl

carver, who loved

to carve and paint

contemporary slick

birds. Over the years

he had won numerous

awards, including many

"Best of Show" honors from

competitions around the country. He was

always a willing teacher and was best

noted for his great sense of humor and

genuine love of the art of carving.

In his earliest years of carving Whitey

started with figures and caricatures even-

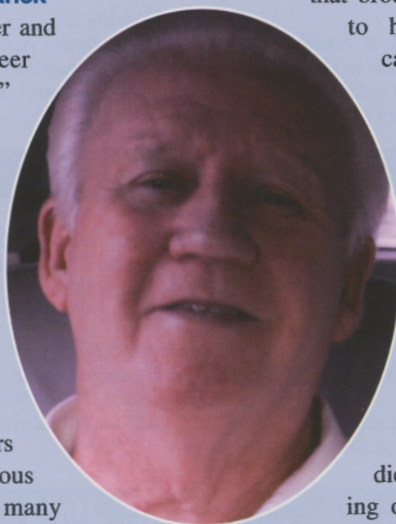
tually moving into working on beautiful

renderings of songbirds within in their

natural habitats. Through his years of

carving Whitey successfully competed on

many levels, winning ribbons and awards



that brought recognition and honor to his style and talent for carving.

The carving world will surely miss his talented art work, humorous jokes and warm friendship.

Our thoughts and prayers are extended from the museum and our carving community to Whiteys family.

Helen Jobes

Mrs. Helen Jobes

died in the early morn-

ing of Saturday January

10, 2004 after battling cancer

for over five years. Helen was

a Charter Member of the Havre

de Grace Decoy Museum and a

wonderful and respected friend to

all in the carving community.

Helen was the wife and partner of

Captain Harry Jobes also a Charter

Member and well known carver of

Harford County.

Helen is fondly remembered as she

attended shows with Harry and helped to

"man" the many tables and booths Harry filled with his carvings. Friends and fami-

ly members reminisce about Helens won-

derful hospitality and particularly her skill

in the kitchen. Always a lady, business

like, but friendly, Helen will be missed

both on the Carvers Show circuit and in

the communities surrounding the upper

bay. We extend our sincerest sympathies

to Captain Harry, Jeff Williams, Bobby,

Charlie and Joey Jobes their

wives and their chil-

dren and Barbara

England and

her family.

The family

graciously

asked that

in lieu of

flowers,

donations

be sent to

the Havre

de Grace

Decoy

Museums

Endowment

Fund.



CALENDAR

Every Monday At The Museum

Every Monday morning 7:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, classes are conducted by award winning carver, Jeff Moore. All skill levels are invited. Contact the museum on Monday mornings for more detailed information. (410) 939-3739

The Ward Foundation Education Series

Call the Ward Foundation for a complete listing of this year's seminars, classes and workshops programs and exhibits. Call Salisbury University Education Department at (410) 742-4988 ext. 110

Spring Tour Reservations

Talk to your children's and grandchildren's teachers now about signing up for Decoy Museum tours this spring. Harford County students are free and we have several different tours to offer for different age/grade levels.

February 2004

Friday 5 - Sunday 7

Decoy Show sponsored by the Minnesota Decoy Collectors Association to be held at the Thunderbird Hotel, Bloomington, MN. Contact: The Minnesota Decoy Collectors Association, PO Box 144, Zumbrota, MN 55992 or call Dick Tyrell (763) 522-5413 or Larry Thomforde (507) 732-7074.

Sunday 8 - 19th

Annual Antique Fishing & Hunting Show. Known as the "Carlisle Show". Held at the Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, 1700 Harrisburg Pike (Rt. 11) Carlisle, PA 1-800-692-7315 room reservations. Contact: Bart (717) -845-4422 days & (717) 243-3355 eves.

Friday 13 - Sunday 15

31st Annual California Open 2004 Wildlife Art Festival. Tentative location: Balboa Park Club, 2150 Pan American Road West, San Diego, CA 92101. Contact: Mike Dowell (760) 945-8442 or mdowell957@earthlink.net

Saturday 14

Sporting Collectibles Show held at the Galaxy in Wadsworth, OH. Room to room trading starts Fri. pm. Contact: Alan Easterday (330) 336-3128 or aeasterday@neo.rr.com

Show reservations start Sept. 1 Holiday Inn (330) 334-7666

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15

20th Annual Ocean County Wildfowl Art & Decoy Show to be held at the Brick High School in Brick, NJ. Contact: Janet Sellitto at (732)341-9622, ext. 2214 or email jsellitto@ocyma.org.

Saturday 21

Carver and Volunteer Appreciation Reception. A special reception honoring all of our carvers and volunteers.

Sunday 29

9:00am - 4:00pm 33rd Annual Decoy, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Collectibles Show. Sponsored by the Long Island Decoy Collectors Association, the show will be held at The Wyndham Windwatch Hotel, 1717 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, NY. Contact: Tim Sieger (631) 537-0153 or Jeff LaFountain (631)725-2034. Website: LIDECOYCOLLECTORS.ORG

March 2004

Saturday 6 & Sunday 7

31st Annual Lancaster County Wood Carving & Wildlife Art Festival and Competition, Millersville University Student Union Building, Millersville, PA. The event includes competitions, awards, demonstrations and food. Hours are Saturday 10-5 and Sunday 10-4. Admission fees for 15 years and up \$4.00 per person. For more information or table space please call Terry Keemer at 717-464-0759 or Jack Kochan at 610-926-3692 or e-mail at pinefeathers@juno.com

Sunday 7

35th Annual Wisconsin Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show to be held at the Pioneer Inn in Oshkosh, WI. Room to room

trading on Thursday and Friday. Contact: Roger Ludwig, 3972 Leonard Point Road, Oshkosh, WI 54904 (920) 233-0349.

Friday 12

11th Annual R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Dinner to be held at The Bayou Restaurant, Havre de Grace, MD. See announcement in this issue.

Saturday 27

New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association Show & Sale Parkerstown Firehouse, easy access from Garden State Parkway or Rte. 9. Hours: 9-4 \$3 admission, children free Contact: Brian Hartman (609) 652-7111.

Friday 19 - Sunday 21

27th Annual O.D.C.C.A. Decoy Show, Westlake Holiday Inn, Westlake, OH For more information please contact: O.D.C.C.A. 9016 Munich Dr. Parma, OH 44130 (440) 885-0311.

Sunday 28

Frank & Frank Sporting Collectibles Decoy Auction. Held at the Taylor Pavilion in Belmar, NJ. Preview on Sat., auction on Sun. Consignments are being accepted for this auction until full. Contact: Janet Frank (732)938-2988 (ph/fax.) www.frankandfrankdecoys.com

April 2004

Friday 2 & Saturday 3

East Coast Decoy Collectors Buy, Sell & Swap. St. Michaels Best Western. For more information, see our add on page 29, call 410-743-2955 or 703-768-7264 or email to potomacduck@cox.net

Thursday 22 & Friday 23

Guyette & Schmidt Annual Spring Decoy Auction featuring the collection of John Delph Contact Gary:(207)778-6256, Fax(207)778-6501 or Frank:(207)625-8055, Fax(207)625-4742 decoys@guyetteandschmidt.com www.guyetteandschmidt.com

May 2004

Friday 7 - Sunday 9

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum 23rd Annual Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival Three days of buying, trading and showing decoys and wildlife art work. 175 artists, nationally recognized carving competitions, demonstrations, food and entertainment. Live and silent auctions. Call the museum for more information and admission prices. (410) 939-3739

Monday 10 - Friday 14

A week long workshop with carver Glenn McMurdo is being organized by the Bel Air Carvers and hosted at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. For registration or other information contact the museum at 410-939-3739 see Glenn's web site at www.mcmurdocarvings.com

Weekend Carving Demonstrations

at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

"Saturday January 31, 2004"	Barb Watcher	"Saturday March 6, 2004"	Joe Cook	"Saturday April 10, 2004"	Barb Watcher
"Sunday February 1, 2004"	OPEN	"Sunday March 7, 2004"	John Ingoglia	"Sunday April 11, 2004"	Closed Easter
"Saturday February 7, 2004"	Joe Cook	"Saturday March 13, 2004"	OPEN	"Saturday April 17, 2004"	Jeannie Hiss
"Sunday February 8, 2004"	OPEN	"Sunday March 14, 2004"	Dave Walker	"Sunday April 18, 2004"	George Stram
"Saturday February 14, 2004"	Leonard Burcham	"Saturday March 20, 2004"	Jeannie Hiss	"Saturday April 24, 2004"	Bob Hess
"Sunday February 15, 2004"	Pat Vincenti	"Sunday March 21, 2004"	George Stram	"Sunday April 25, 2004"	OPEN
"Saturday February 21, 2004"	Jeannie Hiss	"Saturday March 27, 2004"	Frank Muller		
"Sunday February 22, 2004"	Mike Gleason	"Sunday March 28, 2004"	Mike Gleason		
"Saturday February 28, 2004"	Nobel Mentzer	"Saturday April 3, 2004"	Leonard Burcham		
"Sunday February 29, 2004"	Frank Muller	"Sunday April 4, 2004"	John Nickle		

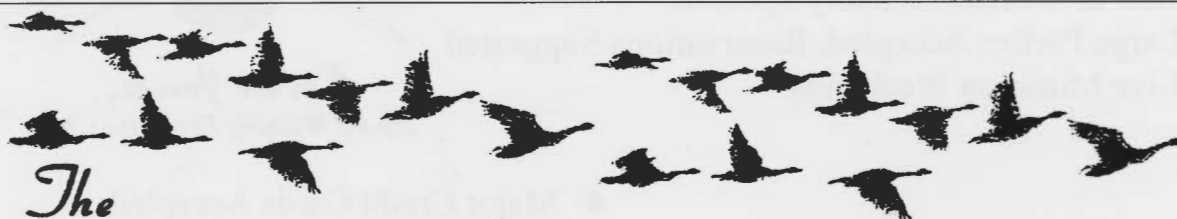
Special Thanks is extended to Loren Kelly for her work on scheduling the 2003 and 2004 Weekend Carver Demonstrations. If you are interested in becoming a weekend carver or can carve on any of the "OPEN" weekends please contact Loren or Patrick Vincenti at 410-734-6238. Thanks!

Special Notice

Please note that the museum is not using it's AOL e-mail address. E-mails to the staff should be directed to decoymuseum@yahoo.com and e-mails to the Executive Director should be addressed as decoydirector@yahoo.com.

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