

Havre de Grace

Decoy & Wildlife *Art Festival*

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Winter-Spring 2006
Vol. 15 No. 1-2

The Canvasback

Double Issue
\$8.00



25TH
ANNIVERSARY

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Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



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

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ON THE COVER

An important recent gift of two "Daddy" Holly decoys; see pages 38-39.



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Welcome to this special issue of The Canvasback celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Decoy Festival, the event that raised the first money to underwrite the opening of the Decoy Museum five years later. We are delighted to again pay tribute to our long list of Honorary Chairmen and to also recognize those supporters and volunteers who nurtured the first years of the Festival and gave birth to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

Throughout this special Festival issue are stories about the museum and the carving tradition that this museum salutes. I join many others in thanking all those who came before us and those who continue to work so hard on behalf of this museum.

As we celebrate our past accomplishments, we also look to the future. For some time this museum has planned a permanent exhibit telling the story of the tradition and art of creating decoys. The Chesapeake Gateways Foundation, a Federal agency under the National Park Service, has provided initial support of \$85,000 toward the project cost of \$300,000. Leading gifts from the Museum's Board and other friends total \$120,000. However, to receive some of this significant financial assistance, we have been challenged to match the contribution dollar-for-dollar by year's end. Therefore, your timely gift could effectively bring us double its amount!

To succeed, this campaign will challenge us all to expand our giving horizons. Your support today is as important as was that of others 25 years ago.

Richard W. Flint
Executive Director

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The Canvasback is a quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. All rights are reserved. No material may be reprinted without prior written permission of the publisher. Send letters to the editor, inquiries for display advertising, and requests for membership to:

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From the President



Dear Museum Member,

Greetings! Our special "25th" Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival is here and I hope to see each of you at the show. If you see me, please come over and say hello—I'm the old guy with no hair. At the Festival you will see many of your old friends, exhibitors and some new ones.

George Williams of Dover, Delaware, is this year's Honorary Chairman. George will have several decoys in our Saturday auction so please join us in the High School Auditorium and bid on some birds. You can meet George in his booth at the Middle School near the stage.

At the museum there is a new exhibit featuring a bequest to us from Mrs. "Pat" Michael. A pair of important "Daddy" Holly Canvasbacks, a pair of early R. Madison Mitchell Swans, and a punt gun make up the exhibit. Past President and Festival Chairman Pat Vincenti said this pair of "Daddy" Holly Canvasbacks is the finest pair he has ever seen.

While at the museum, look at the plans for our new gallery. There will be many exciting changes to our exhibits creating a totally new look. The new gallery is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

In order to build the new gallery we have to raise \$300,000. At the time this letter is written, the Board of Directors have pledges of \$120,000. The Chesapeake Gateways has pledged \$85,000 for a total of \$205,000. We (the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum) need your support for this project

Sincerely,

Ed Watts

Funded in Part By:

Maryland State Arts Council • City of Havre De Grace • Harford County

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.

FESTIVAL 2006 PROGRAM

May 5-6-7

Locations

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, Giles Street (DM)
Havre de Grace Middle School, Lewis Lane (MS)
Havre de Grace High School, Congress Avenue (HS)

2006 Honorary Chairman — George Williams

Admission: \$6.00 per day. \$10.00 for weekend pass.
Children under 12 are admitted free with an adult.

Friday, May 5

6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Show open

Saturday, May 6

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Show open

10:30 a.m. Atlantic Flyway Classic Carving
Competition Judging

HS Auxiliary Gym

Decorative Life Size Floating Division
Decorative Life Size Non-Floating Division
Decorative Miniature Division
Whitey Frank Decorative Slick Division
Decorative Life Size Fish Division
Youth Gunning Division—
Sponsored by Foredom Electric Co.

Cocktail Division

Shorebird Division

Carving Competitions sponsored by
Mercantile County Bank & Trust

11:00 a.m. Carving Competition Judging

DM Grounds

River Gunning Division

Sponsored by Mercantile County Bank &
Trust

11:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m. Goose & Duck Calling
Demonstrations

MS

For adults who have some experience
with calling.

12:00 & 3:00 p.m. Battery Gun Demonstration
DM Waterfront

12:00 & 3:00 p.m. Silent Auctions
HS Lobby

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. Past Honorary Chairmen
Autograph Signing Session

MS Cafeteria

1:00 p.m. Old Decoy Contest

MS stage

1:00 p.m. Live Auction Preview

HS Auditorium

1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Children's Decoy Painting
with "Mother Goose"

HS Gym

Learn to paint a mallard drake. Space is
limited to 15.

1:00, 2:00 & 3:00 p.m. Retriever Demonstrations

MS Grounds

Oakdale Retrievers with Vicky Trainor
& friends

4:00 p.m. Live Auction Bidder Registration

HS Auditorium

5:30 p.m. Live Decoy Auction

HS Auditorium

Howie Travers auctioneer

Sunday, May 7

6:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Exhibitor Breakfast

American Legion Post #47

501 St. John Street, Havre de Grace

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Show open

10:30 a.m. Carving Competition Judging

HS Auxiliary Gym

Gunning Decoy Division

10:30 a.m. Gunning Rig Division

DM Grounds

11:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m. Goose & Duck Calling
for Adults

MS Grounds

For adults who have some experience
with calling.

12:00 p.m. Cocktail Division

HS Auxiliary Gym

Carving Competitions sponsored by
Mercantile County Bank & Trust

12:00 & 2:00 p.m. Children's Duck Calling
Demonstrations

HS Lobby

12:00 & 3:00 p.m. Silent Auctions

HS Lobby

1:00 & 2:00 p.m. Retriever Demonstrations

MS Grounds

Oakdale Retrievers with Vicky Trainor
& friends

3:30 p.m. Festival Raffle Drawing

MS Lobby

4:00 p.m. Festival Closes

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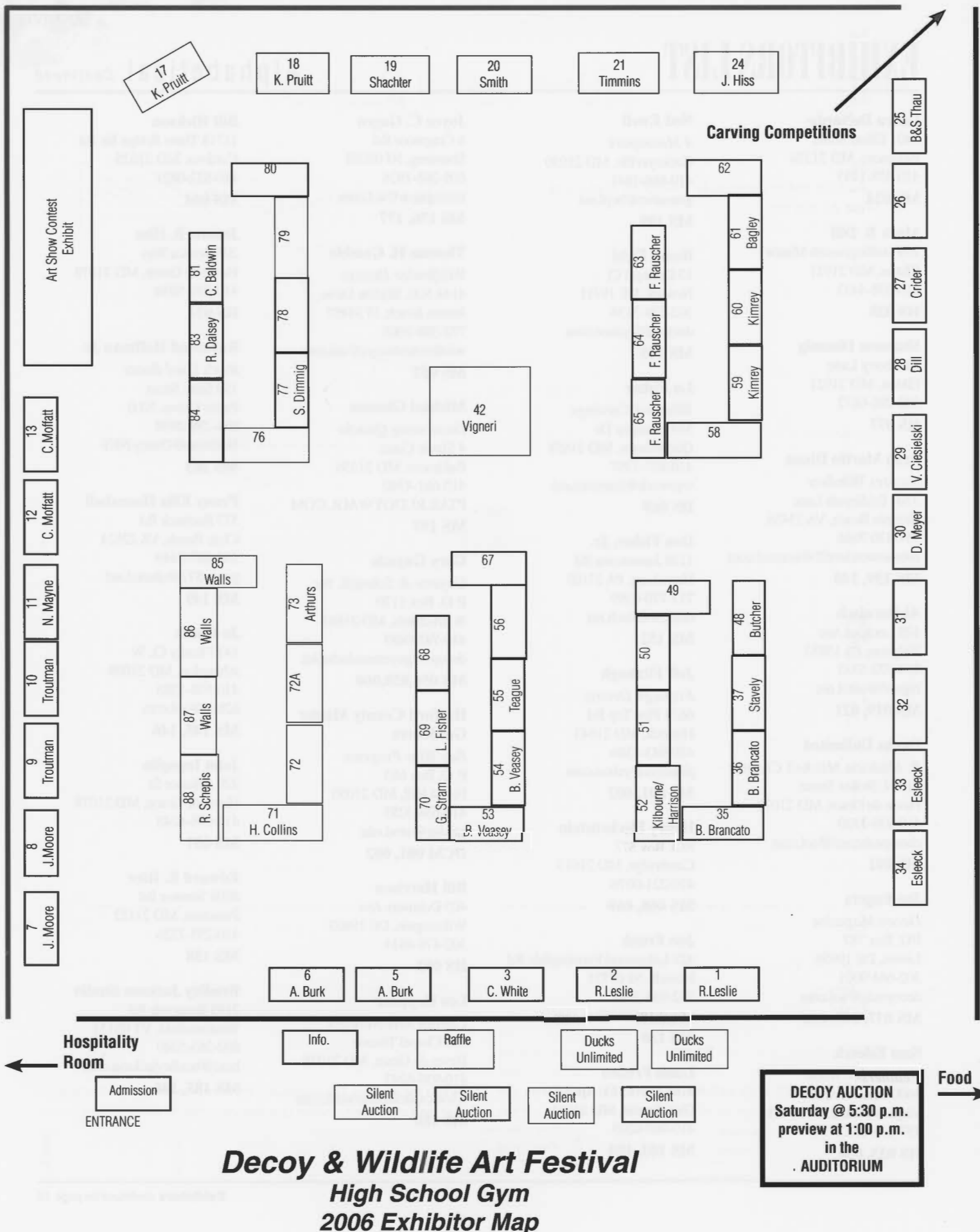
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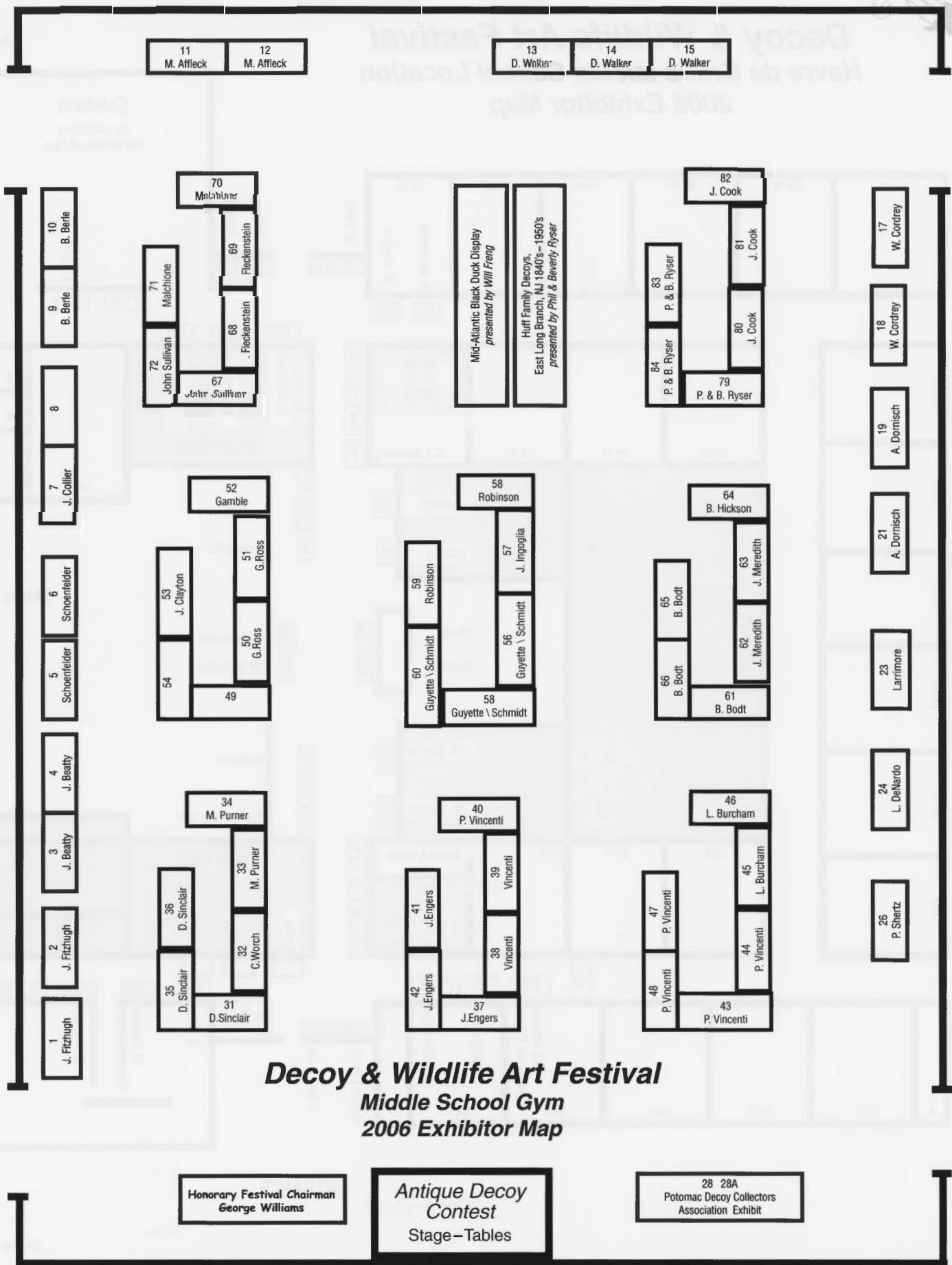
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Exhibitors continued on page 15





Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

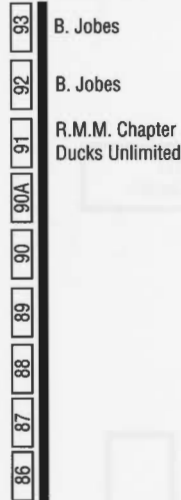
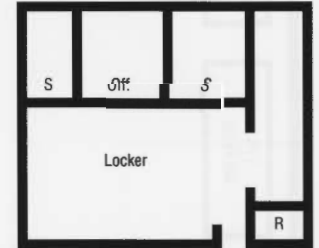
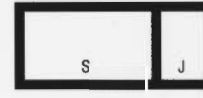
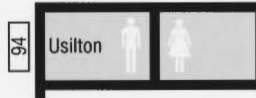
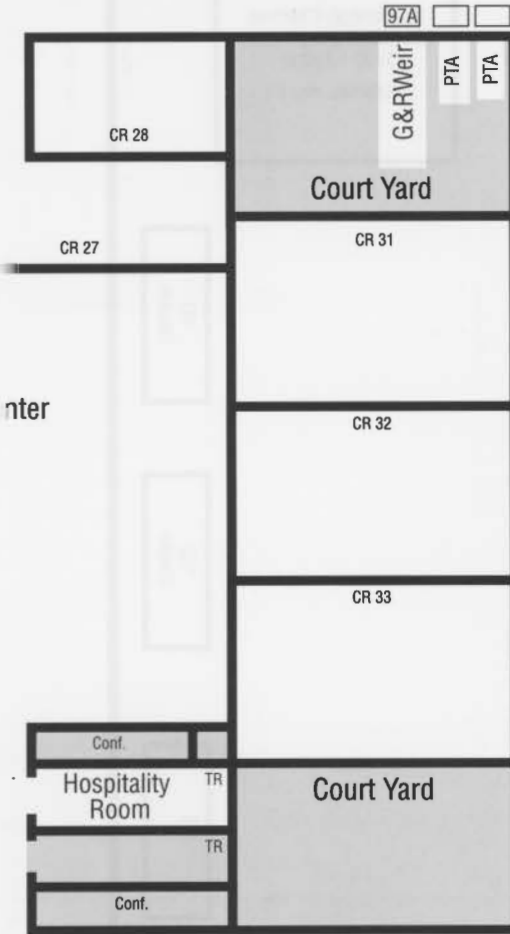
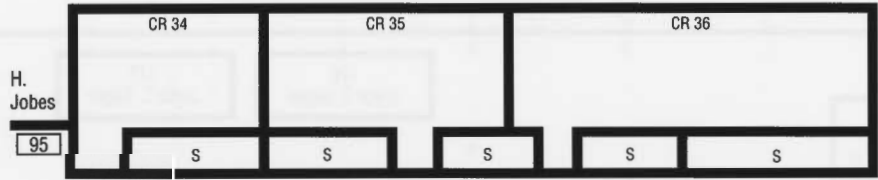
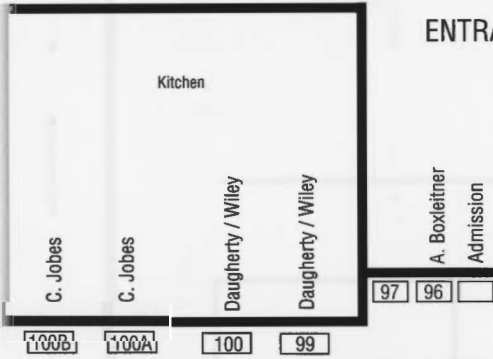
Havre de Grace Middle School Location

2006 Exhibitor Map



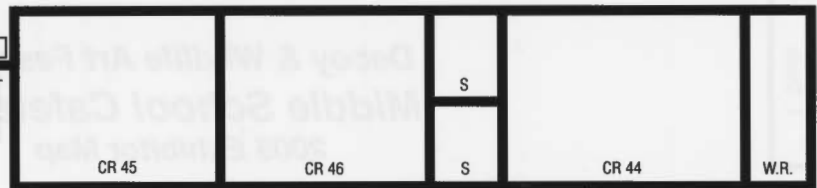
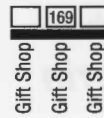
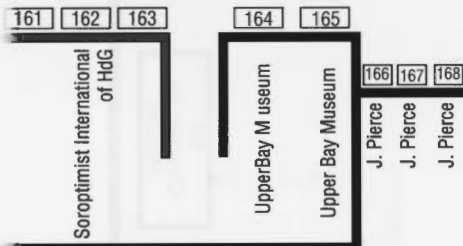
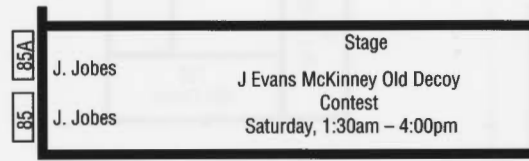
Parking

ENTRANCE

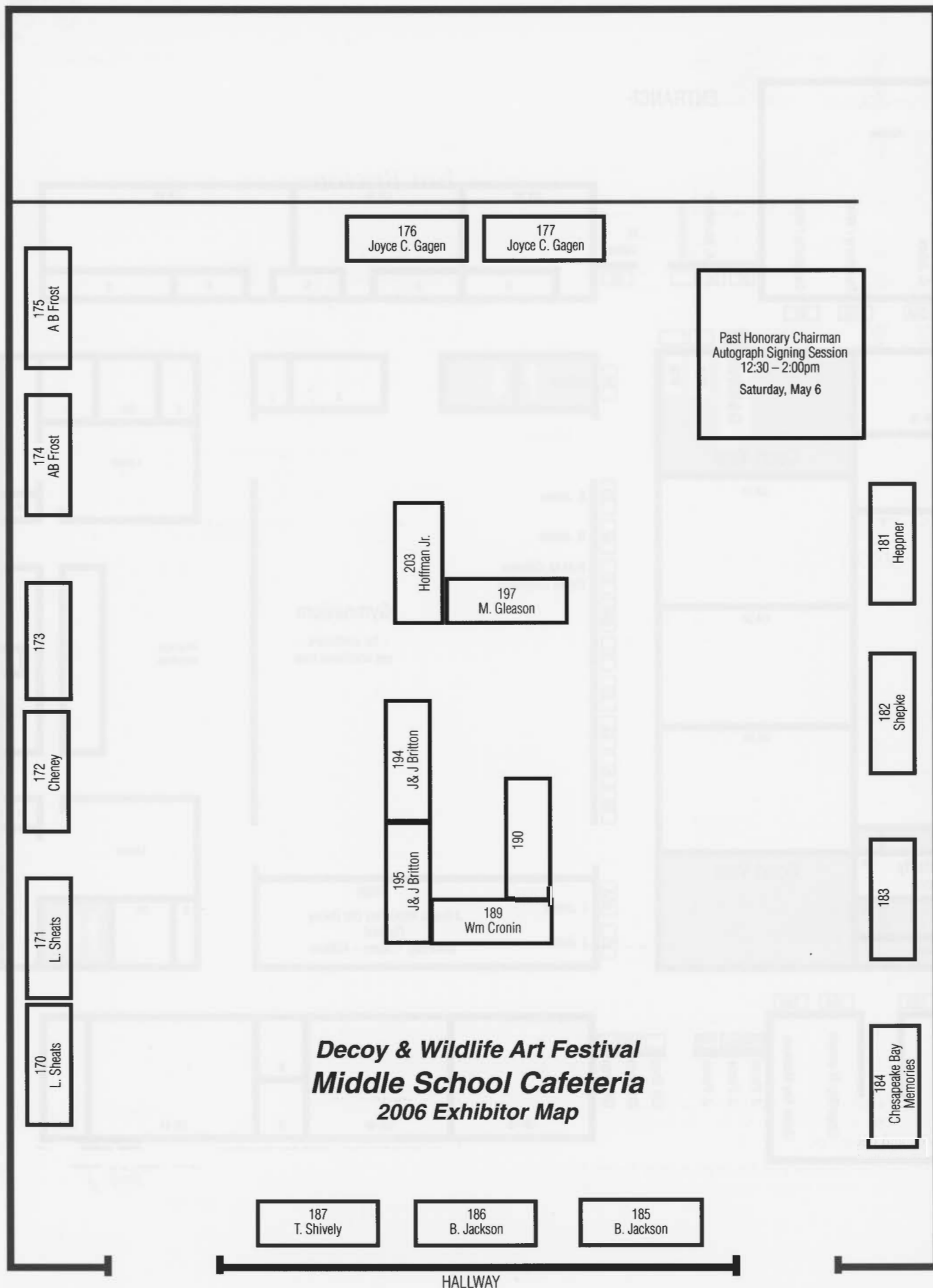


Gymnasium
for exhibitors
see additional map

Physical
Activities



Transportation



EXHIBITORS LIST

Alphabetical *Continued*

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Chris Worch

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301-481-0423
rcworch@verizon.net
MS 032

FESTIVAL 2006
AUTOGRAPHS

1982 R. Madison Mitchell
deceased

R. Madison Mitchell

1983 Paul Gibson
deceased

Paul Gibson

1984 Charles Bryan

1985 No Chairman

1986 Robert Litzenberg
deceased

Robert H. Litzenberg

1987 Charles Joiner

1988 Captain Harry Jobes

1989 Captain Bill Collins

1990 Captain Roger Urie

1991 James Pierce

1992 James Currier
deceased

James A. Currier

1993 William "Bill" Schaubert
and
Allan Schaubert

1994 Robert McGaw
deceased

Robert F. McGaw Jr.

1995 J. Evans McKinney
deceased

1996 Harry V. Shourds II

FESTIVAL 2006 AUTOGRAPHS

1997	Ronald Rue
1998	Lem and Steve Ward deceased
1999	Oliver Lawson
2000	John "Daddy" Holly, James Holly, William "Bill", and John Holly Jr. deceased
2001	Charles Nelson Barnard deceased
2002	Patrick Vincenti
2003	Ned Mayne
2004	Grayson Chesser
2005	Jim Britton
2006	George Williams

Charles Nelson Barnard



FROM TOP LEFT: Pat Vincenti, Bill Collins, Harry Shrouds,
Allan & Bill Schaubert
FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Harry Jobes, Charlie Bryan, Charlie
Joiner & Jim Pierce - photo by Leo Heppner

Founding the Festival, Making a Museum

by Richard W. Flint

It began with a comment made around Christmas time in 1981. Donald Asher suggested to businessman Allen Fair and Mitch Shank, grandson of R. Madison Mitchell, that it might be a good idea to set up a museum to promote the tradition and heritage of carving and hunting on the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay. Excited, the trio then called local carver Jimmy Pierce, since he had been affiliated with the decoy show and museum in the nearby town of North East for many years, and he agreed to help.

The group quickly identified a prime site for the future Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoy Museum on which sat the derelict and vine-covered former heating plant and swimming pool of the old Bayou Hotel. To raise money, they decided to organize a decoy show and approached the Chamber of Commerce for help with the first show on May 14-16, 1982. Held at the Havre de Grace High School with a \$2 admission fee, it was an immediate success. R. Madison Mitchell, the 81-year-old dean of Upper Bay decoy carvers, served as the Honorary Chairman. Mitchell's grandson Mitch Shank and Jimmy Pierce were the co-chairmen. An 80-page souvenir booklet, now out-of-print, was issued and contained informative text and photos of Mitchell, decoy making, and local history. A Friday evening cocktail party was held during the opening; Saturday featured Madison Mitchell on the school stage demonstrating decoy painting; films were shown in the school's auditorium about body booting, various wildlife, and decoy making; and Sunday inaugurated the benefit auction. Among the featured items sold was a set of 30 full-bodied Mitchell decoys representing his complete work that went to a local man when the auctioneer's hammer finally declared them "sold!" after spirited bidding.



With the show's success, the City agreed to lease the property for a dollar a year to the museum organizers. The Chamber of Commerce membership undertook the task of initiating work on the old building. The Susquehanna Hose Company volunteered countless hours to wash away years of accumulated dust and dirt from when coal was stored in the building and a local company donated dumpsters to assist in the clean up operation. With the aid of many local businesses, old piping was ripped out, a retaining wall was built, new sewer and water lines laid, and a water catch basin was constructed with funds raised by the first festival. By winter, plans were underway by the Chamber and museum volunteers for a second festival.

Local carver Paul Gibson, 81 years old, was chosen as the 1983 Honorary Chairman and 85 exhibitors appeared for the second festival, now moved to the Middle School. For the 1984 show, 100 exhibitors were booked and the annual auction contained 70 lots, including a set of 31 Charlie Bryan decoys mounted on a backboard for \$3100 that went to a local collector and a set of 30 Mitchell half-size decoys that fetched \$3000.

The popular movement to build a museum to open in May 1984 was growing but funds were dwindling. With the building's renovation estimated at \$200,000, project leaders discussed the idea of state support with State Delegate Eileen Rehrmann and soon gained the additional support of Delegate Bill Cox and State Senator Catherine Riley. The strongest lobbyist, however, was stalwart supporter R. Madison Mitchell who testified before the State Appropriations Committee in the House of Delegates and again before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. On Monday, April 8, 1985, the Maryland General Assembly approved \$200,000 for the completion of the museum.

In 1985, the City Council and Mayor, clearly proud of their Festival, future museum and the attention it was bringing to the community, formally proclaimed Havre de Grace the "Decoy Capital of the World" and directed the newly formed Tourism Council to adopt the slogan.

Finally, on Sunday, November 2, 1986, Madison Mitchell cut the ribbon to open the newly named Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, then consisting of a single gallery and many borrowed decoys. Approximately \$300,000 had been invest-



ed but as Jimmy Pierce explained, "That's not countin' the free labor that's gone into it!" For visitors at the opening and even today, one of the favorite displays is a life-size diorama of Mitchell painting decoys at his workbench and talking to visitors about decoys. As Mitchell continues his narration, lights dim and then rise again to reveal four life-size figures gathered around a stove in a setting based exactly on a well-known photograph taken in 1942 by famed Baltimore *Sun* photographer A. Audrey Bodine.

One of the museum's most significant artifacts was acquired in 1989 when Mitchell shop successor Bill Collins sold the master's original building and tools to the museum. The two-story combination shop and garage was carefully moved to a site on the museum's grounds with plans to eventually enclose the structure as part of a larger building plan.

Money remained short but the State of Maryland was impressed and felt the museum had earned an additional award of assistance. In March of 1987, the State granted the museum \$150,000 allowing for a new gift shop addition as well as a second floor to open, both by 1991. Later, in 1996, the museum's most recent addition of an elevator for handicap accessibility was completed. However, in 1997 major building settlement problems began to be identified that were associated with the gift shop causing the museum to close for two weeks. Quick efforts were made to raise most of the necessary monies but

the burden of repair costs haunted the museum for several years.

The museum, once open only Sunday afternoons, inaugurated an ambitious seven-day operation for the public in 1990 and also soon hired its first director, Mitchell grandson Mitch Shank, one of the museum's original founders and an early Festival co-chair. Additional exhibits were created including an ongoing series of cases "Honoring the Masters" starting in February 1994 that included realistic mannequins made from life castings and generally clothed with the subjects own garments. The figures, made by former Disney employee Ray Daub of Delaware, continue to fascinate and fool visitors.

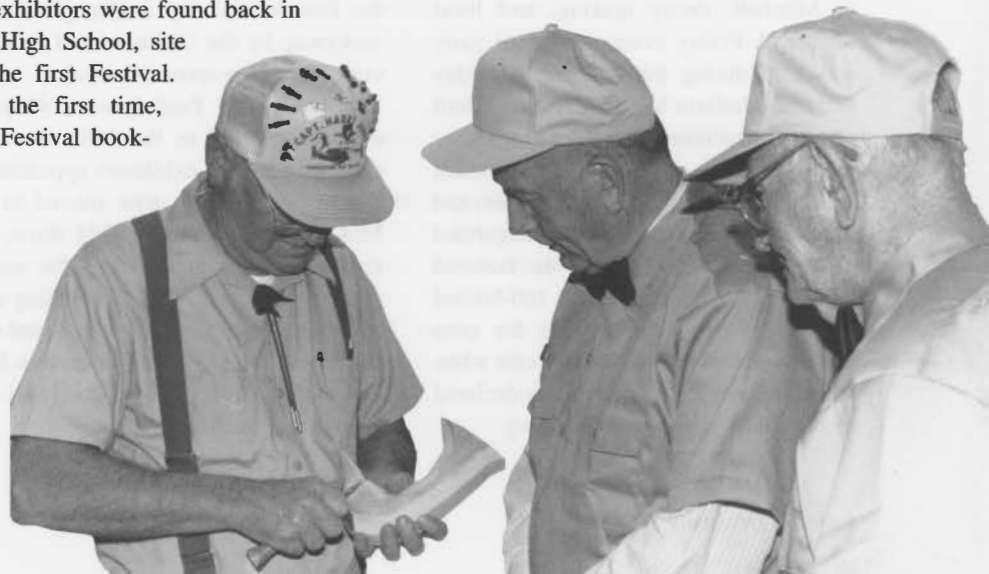
The Canvasback, a newsletter for members, began to be published in 1991 but under the editorship of a new director, Richard Bonn, took the shape of a glossy 20-page magazine that debuted in the Spring of 1992. Soon, it would also replace the Festival booklet, the last of which was issued in 1993. Bonn, who had a public relations background, was shortly succeeded as director by Karen Marshall, the museum's first formally trained museum professional. She, in turn, was succeeded by Mary Jo Moses who served as director from November 1993 to April 1999.

Meanwhile, the Decoy Festival continued to be the museum's major fundraiser. In addition to the Honorary Chairman, always a traditional decoy carver, for many years the Festival also designated a featured artist and a featured duck. Carving contests and other competitive events added to the annual festivities. With 1988, the Festival expanded its locations and while the main venue continued to be the Middle School with 111 booths that year, 39 exhibitors were found back in the High School, site of the first Festival. For the first time, the Festival book-

let boasted a color cover and a \$6 price tag. By the year of the tenth anniversary Festival, 1991, there were 197 carvers, artists, and artisans participating as well as eight collectors displaying specialized decoys from their collections. Special postal cancellations were available during the Festival as was the new autograph session that has continued to the present.

The arrival of full-time professional staff in the early 1990s resulted in a number of advancements complementing the physical construction efforts of the museum founders. Planning for a major exhibit interpreting the history of "Gunning the Flats" began in 1992 resulting in a grand opening on September 8, 1995. A collections assessment grant from the American Association of Museums in 1995 enabled the museum to obtain an evaluation and survey report on the care, display, and storage of its collections. By 1996, a formal collections policy was in place and other management documents were being drafted. The goal of these several initiatives, announced in the Winter 1998 *Canvasback*, was to attain accreditation from the American Association of Museums. The lengthy review process included a visitation team that arrived in March of 1999 for a two-day visit and a June 2000 consultant's presentation to the board on organizational planning and management. The Decoy Museum achieved the accreditation honor for a five-year period after which it must start the re-accreditation process that is now under way.

Numerous state politicians visited the museum in its early years, and Madison Mitchell enjoyed a special friendship with Governor William Donald Schaeffer (*both shown below*), but the high point



was reached on Earth Day, April 21, 1995. With the backdrop of the Chesapeake Bay, Federal security forces were in plenty of evidence as both President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore joined Maryland Governor Parris Glendening to walk through the Decoy Museum.

Besides the spring Decoy Festival, other museum events include the annual fall Duck Fair inaugurated in September 1987 and the Sporting Clays Classic, first held in 1997 when 70 participants weathered high winds. Carving classes have been frequently offered in the museum's specially planned shop facility. Tours, lectures, and other programs add to fulfilling the non-profit's educational mission. Exhibits change as individuals and clubs such as the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association work with the museum. The Decoy Museum began an online presence with its own website in the summer of 1998.

Collections grow annually with each honorary chairman contributing a full set of their work. Historical material has a more random pattern: a historically important Sam Barnes decoy that won second prize at one of the earliest decoy contests organized by pioneer collector Joel Barber in the 1920s or the more recent bequest of the finest "Daddy" Holly birds known to exist [see story, pages 38-39]. Serious decoy collectors have also recognized the importance of donating to the museum. A major benefactor and supporter has been Dr. Mort Kramer of Baltimore. With his late wife, he donated most of the museum's collection of Ward brothers' decoys as well as their unique workbench and tools. More recently, he has made significant additions to the museum's collection of factory decoys. The museum's reference library, also, benefited from a gift from Melvin L. Conrad received in June 1998 of over 200 titles including a fine copy of the rare *Book of Duck Decoys* by Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey (London, 1886).

In addition to original research appearing in *The Canvasback* by such respected decoy scholars as C. John Sullivan, Jim Trimble, and Chad Tragakis, the museum has published a book about R. Madison Mitchell and now contemplates another historical book. In addition, Sullivan and curator Karla Mattsson, who served the museum from 1993 through 1996, co-authored a booklet illustrating many museum decoys and published by the museum in 1996.

In the early 1990s, the museum identified several permanent exhibition themes, most of which have been implemented to a large degree including Gunning the Flats and Honoring the Masters. In addition, an orientation exhibit for the main first floor gallery explaining What Is a Decoy was begun in February 1996 with the installation of its first and last parts. While efforts were made to continue the exhibit, limited resources and other priorities detracted from its completion. In order to advance the exhibit project, the staff sought and obtained significant support from the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, a Federal agency under the National Park Service, for project planning and, in a second grant, implementation. Fund raising is now in process to meet the 1:1 match required by the Federal grant and to raise the additional funds needed to complete the project.

Over the years, several thousand individuals and businesses have supported the museum through gifts, volunteering, or membership. Over 60 individuals have served on the Board of Directors. Five individuals have served as board presidents:

Jimmy Pierce, Allen Fair, Dr. John Carriere, Pat Vincenti, and Ed Watts. This huge community of supporters has created a lasting memorial and interpretive center, located overlooking the historic Susquehanna Flats, for the public's greater understanding of the art and tradition of floating sculpture.



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Proceeds benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

2006 Havre de Grace Decoy Museum
Honorary Chairman

George Williams

Cork Decoys from a retired "Ne're Do Well"

by Danny Imwold



George Williams has been "making decoys" for more than 31 years, mostly from his home just outside of Dover, Delaware. Starting because he loved to hunt, George, like many other decoy makers, figured he could make his own decoys cheaper than the cost of buying them from someone else. And so he does, turning the work of making birds that look natural, at least to other birds, into a "hobby with a kick." As this year's Honorary Chairman for the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, he is happy that his hobby has gotten some recognition.

Married to a former teacher who occasionally goes to shows with him, George has exhibited his decoys from the "Atlantic out to the Midwest." From his many visits to the Havre de Grace Decoy

Museum, to Long Island, to Ohio and back to Virginia Beach, George Williams' cork decoys seem to get around. He has even sold decoys that are now hunted-over in Alaska. And that's where the kick comes into his hobby, the selling of his birds to other hunters. "My birds go for about seventy dollars a piece (for a mallard), eight hundred and forty for the dozen." A nice supplement to his retirement and a good feeling for the former art teacher, knowing that his work is not only appreciated, but has real value.

I spoke with George on Super Bowl Sunday, about his life, his likes and how he makes his decoys. And, yes, we discussed who we each thought should win the big game. Suffice it to say that we were both happy with the outcome.

George says that he "got into making decoys because of the hunting" but found it to be a great creative outlet as well. He makes most of his decoys from cork because it "carves faster, sits better in the

water, and when it gets shot, it's easier to repair." Although he has a Masters Degree in the arts, his birds aren't made for display, they're made to be hunted over. "My decoys are made to look real to other birds from a distance, not close-up," George told me. His birds aren't made for the mantelpiece or the coffee table, they're made for the water. "I've been told," George goes on, "that (real) ducks will alight next to my decoys even when there's a flock of real ducks not far away." Those are good decoys.

Like many decoy makers, George works from shop space in his home and garage. He doesn't *carve* decoys, he says, "I *make* decoys." And he makes a lot of them. He estimates that he's made more than 5,000 birds over the years, more than a hundred and fifty a year. "Back in the '70's I stopped in at Roger Urie's shop and showed him one of my first attempts at making a decoy," George remembers.



"Mr. Urie took that cork mallard and looked it over, then turned to me and said, 'Boy, you try to do that for a living, you're gonna starve to death,' then went back to his work. But he was only kidding... I think." Although he's admired work from some of the more notable carvers from the past, such as Madison Mitchell, Roger Urie, and the Ward Brothers, he says that he learned to make decoys "mostly on my own."

Working in his basement, George starts with a pattern, cutting the bodies from cork, "tan cork, not shit cork," and the heads and tails from cedar. "I make pretty much everything in the Atlantic flyway, teal, widgeon, brant, mallard, scaup, merganser. I like teal because you can get so many from a block of cork." He looks at the making of decoys not just as a hobby, but from a business perspective as well. He does several ducks at a time, assembly line style, first cutting the heads, tails and bodies on a bandsaw, inserting the eyes, then taking the pieces to the garage for gluing. A lefty, he uses a Fordham tool for most of the detail work, shunning knives because he and they "just don't get along." Once the parts have been assembled and glued, they're sanded, then returned to the basement for painting.

The cork comes from Portugal, and even though it's a pretty good product, "it's not like Wiley cork," he says, referring to a company that is no longer in business. "The cork I use now has to have three coats of sealant on it before I can paint it; Wiley cork was better." Cedar for the heads and tails comes from a source in Vermont. Once sealed, George starts with a base coat of black paint, then adds color. Using Golden Matte acrylics, he matches

the paints to the colors of live birds. "A lot of times," he says, "I'll take a bird from the freezer (from a hunting trip) and dab some of the paint onto the bird's feathers to see if it matches. If I can't see where the paint and the feather meet, then the paint's good." He starts at the tail and works forward, using the head as a handhold while he paints, a trick he learned from Madison Mitchell. He'll do as many as a dozen at a time so that when he finishes one color on the last bird, the first bird is dry enough to begin the next color. Feathers on the decoys are painted in, not etched because again, they're made to look real to real birds, not to an interior decorator. George says that the birds don't really come to life for him until the last step, when he scrapes the paint off the eyes. "That's when, all of a sudden," he adds, "they look real."

Finally, the keel is glued on to the bottom of the decoy using contact cement, and an anchor is added as necessary giving the decoys a naturally appearing pitch in the water; applying the keel ahead of center on puddle ducks, and aft of center on diving ducks. The finished birds are allowed to air dry, then stored in the garage until needed.

Most of the decoys George makes are made to hunt over, to float naturally in the water, inviting birds on the wing to drop in and say hello. "Sometimes they land next to my decoys, laugh, then fly away. But mostly they stay." One of his favorite pieces to create is the "sleeper", a duck with its head tucked into its wing. Making that look natural is an art, something he takes great pride in.

"When you hunt, you get to know what looks natural," he told me. George hunts with a steady group of friends, up and down the east coast, and as far away as Argentina. It turns out that a friend of his has a place there, and he and his "run-a-muck" brothers try to visit once each summer. "The only problem there," he says, "is that I can't bring the whole bird back with me because of the possibility of bringing something (i.e. avian flu) back into the states. So I have to work from photos if I want to create them. That's not like having the real bird next to you. It's hard to do, but I'm working on it."

Hunting locally, George likes to use retrievers, labs to be exact. One of his

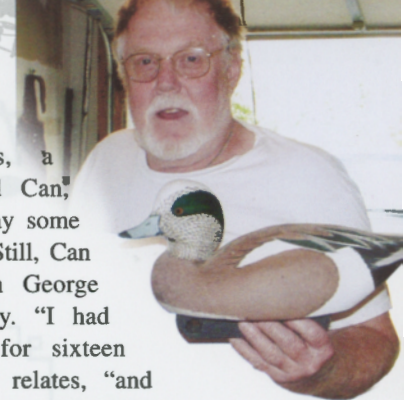
first dogs, a lab named Can, passed away some time ago. Still, Can hunts with George occasionally. "I had that dog for sixteen years," he relates, "and when he died I had him cremated." Can's ashes are in the hollow body of one of his decoys, shown here held by Williams. "Can still brings 'em in," he says, "but now I have a moose of a dog named Bill, and he's a pretty good replacement." Enjoying water-fowling pretty much twelve months of the year, George relies on his hunting buddies, the "run-a-muck guys," to critique his work, the same guys that labeled him a "Ne're Do Well." They'll let him know if something doesn't look right, give him ideas and encourage him when things are good. And of course, he brings the decoys!

Over the years, George Williams' decoys have placed many a bird on the dinner table. And he likes that. He encourages younger carvers to carry on the tradition, preferring to "mentor rather than teach," he says. If someone asks, he'll provide a pattern and suggestions as to how to make a certain kind of duck. Then he'll wait to see if the new carver comes back. If he does, George is more than happy to offer advice on the detail and quality of the work, suggest changes, and encourage the new carver to continue the pursuit of making decoys.

"One of the great things about making decoys is the functional aspect of it, putting food on the table," he says. And he's been doing that for many years. He looks at pride in workmanship as both a comment and a question. If it's a question, then he's got work to do. But if it's a comment, well, then, he's done.

When I called George, he had just come up from working in the basement. At the end of our conversation, he told me that he was "gonna go put another coat of sealer on some ducks I have going," and I imagine that's just what he did.

As this year's Honorary Chairman for the Festival, George Williams hopes that you'll stop by to visit during the show and he invites you to visit he and the brothers from Runamuck Decoys at www.runamuckdecoys.com.





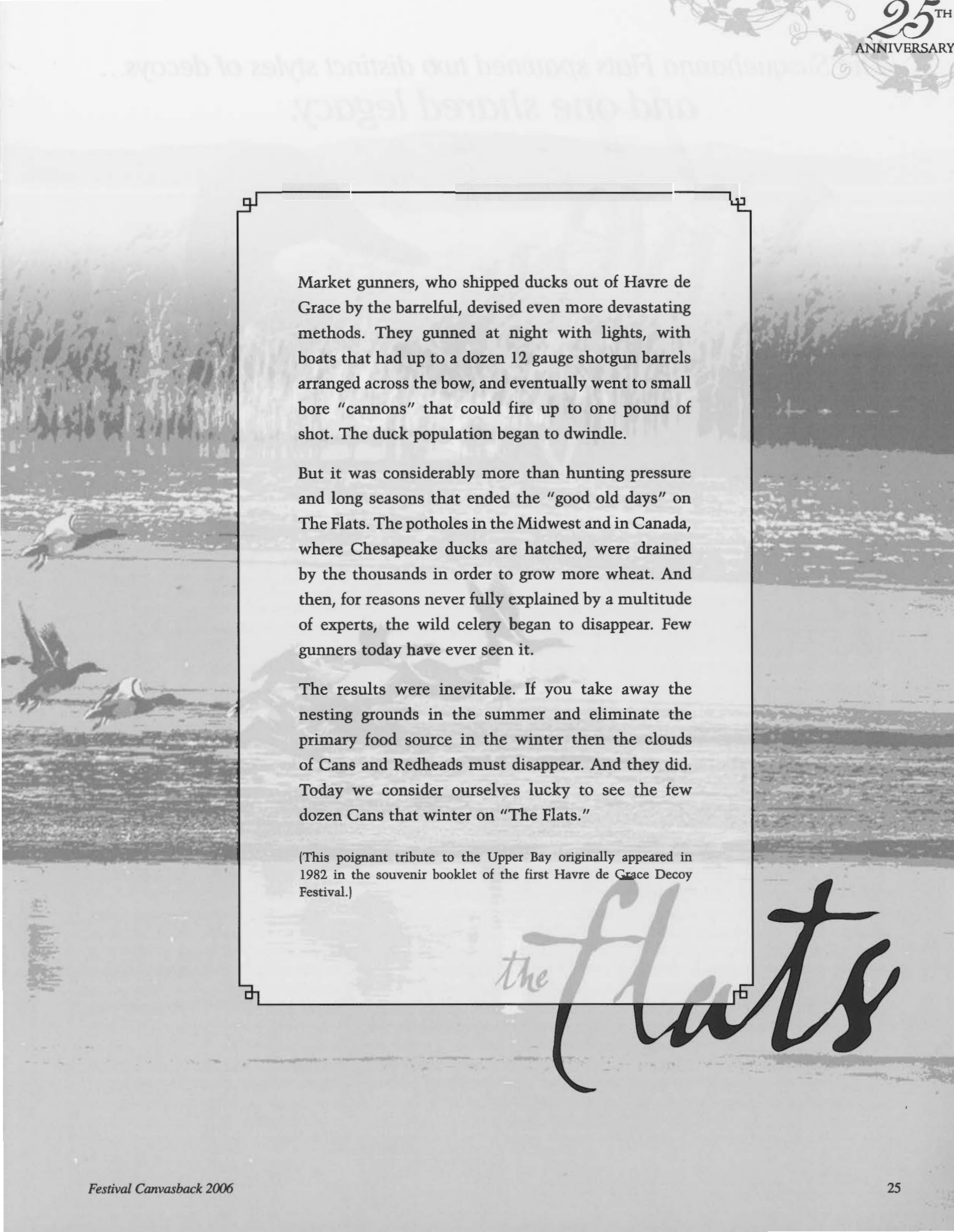
the Flats

by Charles L. Robbins

TO DUCK HUNTERS, young and old alike, the name has an almost mystical quality—a yardstick for measuring gunning not only in Maryland, but up and down the entire East Coast. Old timers can remember, faintly, the clouds of ducks that swarmed over this body of water, and youngsters can only hope, with no chance of realization, that those days will return. What then, was so unique about “The Flats?”

The head of the Chesapeake Bay and the delta of the Susquehanna River, actually one and the same, form about twenty square miles of very shallow water. Before the dams were built on the river, this broad expanse of water would be cleansed each spring and the wild celery and the eel grass would grow on thousands of acres of “The Flats.” Each fall this superabundance of food in shallow, clean water attracted ducks by the tens of thousands. And the celery-fed Canvasbacks attracted gunners by the hundreds.

The big city “Sports” came from all over the United States to Havre de Grace for a chance to lie down in a sink box and shoot a couple of hundred Cans and Redheads. Locals who could not afford sink boxes would bushwhack or simply shoot from shore blinds. The ducks were there and the shooting was easy.



Market gunners, who shipped ducks out of Havre de Grace by the barrelful, devised even more devastating methods. They gunned at night with lights, with boats that had up to a dozen 12 gauge shotgun barrels arranged across the bow, and eventually went to small bore "cannons" that could fire up to one pound of shot. The duck population began to dwindle.

But it was considerably more than hunting pressure and long seasons that ended the "good old days" on The Flats. The potholes in the Midwest and in Canada, where Chesapeake ducks are hatched, were drained by the thousands in order to grow more wheat. And then, for reasons never fully explained by a multitude of experts, the wild celery began to disappear. Few gunners today have ever seen it.

The results were inevitable. If you take away the nesting grounds in the summer and eliminate the primary food source in the winter then the clouds of Cans and Redheads must disappear. And they did. Today we consider ourselves lucky to see the few dozen Cans that winter on "The Flats."

(This poignant tribute to the Upper Bay originally appeared in 1982 in the souvenir booklet of the first Havre de Grace Decoy Festival.)

the flats

The Susquehanna Flats spawned two distinct styles of decoys... and one shared legacy.

Canvasback hen by John "Daddy" Holly of Havre de Grace, ca. 1860s. Holly was a nationally celebrated duck hunter by the early 1850s and is generally credited with establishing the Havre de Grace style decoy. Collection of Frank Fox.

Vive la

Difference!

by Chad Tragakis

—which, together, have left a vital and indelible mark on our American waterfowling heritage.

Upper Bay decoys likely started out in a similar vein. But over time, just as language migrates slowly into local dialects, the carving styles between the two sides of the river diverged. Perhaps not markedly so, but enough to be distinguishable and representative of one side or the other. That said, Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys share many more similarities than they do differences. From material selection (usually white pine, much of which was recovered after floating down the Susquehanna River), to overall shape and size, to major carving and construction techniques, they share a common "DNA." They are solid birds with meaty breasts, exhibiting smooth, rounded-bottoms—the better to ride the short waves of the Flats. The Upper Bay paint patterns that evolved over the years seem to have traveled freely between the two sides of the river. Many aspects of head carving are also common between the two styles, as well as the use primarily of painted eyes (and one method of painting them with the end of a small caliber shell casing). There are no differences in the ballast weights used to keep them upright on the water (originally made of forged iron and later

Canvasback drake by Perryville's Ben Dye, ca. 1860s. Dye made wonderful, slightly under-sized decoys and, along with Charlestown's John Graham, is one of Cecil County's earliest documented makers. Collection of Frank Fox.

In the halcyon days of the Chesapeake Bay, when the skies were black with migratory waterfowl, the numerous and massive sinkbox outfits required thousands upon thousands of duck decoys to conceal them. Talented men from both sides of the mouth of the Susquehanna River stood ready to fill this growing demand. No one knows exactly when the first "Upper Bay" or Susquehanna Flats style decoy was made. Nor do we know on which side of the Susquehanna River the first Upper Bay decoy was fashioned. One of the region's earliest hunting clubs, the Maxwell's Point Gunning Club, was established in Harford County in 1819. And, accounts of waterfowling in the Upper Chesapeake Bay were published as early as 1832 in the second volume of *The Cabinet of Natural History*. These facts suggest that decoys were being made in earnest here by at least the 1840s and that the first decoy could have been made even a decade or two earlier. The insatiable need for decoys spawned a local cottage industry—and two distinct styles

cast or poured lead) or the rigging that helps keep them anchored (lines attached first to leather thongs and later to steel rings and staples). And certainly, since the men were chasing the same quarry, the species made were identical; the vast majority being canvasbacks, especially in the 19th century.

So what are the differences? On the eastern side of the river, Cecil County style decoys feature broad, "paddle" tails that extend straight out from the middle of the body and a carved, raised "shelf" onto which the head and neck are attached. This school of carving is also referred to by some as the North East River style, for the body of water that runs through the heart of Cecil County. Charlestown's John Graham (1822-1912) and Perryville's Ben Dye (1821-1896) are two early progenitors of the Cecil County style, but the *originator* of the Cecil County decoy probably pre-dates both these carvers by at least a generation. On the western side of the river, Havre de Grace style decoys

feature flowing, "upswept" tails and no shelf carving for the heads to rest upon. When taken on the whole, Havre de Grace decoys also appear more streamlined than their Cecil County counterparts, which tend to have wider, fuller bodies. John "Daddy" Holly (1813-1892) is among the earliest documented makers of decoys in Havre de Grace, but like Graham and Dye across the river, he was probably not the first to fashion birds there. Interestingly and perhaps ironically, some early "Daddy" Holly decoys exhibit both Cecil County characteristics. Perhaps, in an attempt at greater efficiency of production, he eliminated the shelf and adopted a smoother, less complicated tail carving.

We know from the generations of talented carvers of yesterday and today that decoy making is very much a family affair. Therefore, it is quite possible that the fathers or perhaps even the grandfathers of "Daddy" Holly and John Graham were, in fact, the originators. And even if Graham and Holly didn't establish the archetypes themselves, they certainly

advanced and entrenched their respective Cecil County and Havre de Grace styles. As to the ultimate refinement of each style, some feel (this writer included) that William Heverin (1863-1951) made the quintessential Cecil County style decoy and that the work of Daddy's middle son, James, (1849-1935) represents the epitome and high point of the Havre de Grace style. Heverin's birds are uniformly sturdy and smooth with solid rolling bodies, while Holly's sleek, streamlined, confident decoys exhibit a refinement and finesse that, to this writer, have yet to be improved upon.

As with almost all axioms in the decoy world, there are exceptions to the stylistic attributions. Some of the most notable include the decoys of Havre de Grace's Joe Dye (1870-1931), which proudly exhibit both Cecil County characteristics (probably due to the influence of his father Ben's Perryville decoys). Charlestown's Scott Jackson (1852-

1929) made wonderful Cecil County birds, but with slightly upswept tails and not always with shelf carving. Charles Nelson Barnard (1876-1958), considered by many to be the finest maker on the Harford County side, displayed precise shelf carving and thick tails that extend straight out or slightly downward on his beautiful birds. And the "Cleveland" canvasbacks, believed to have been gunned over by President Grover Cleveland (1837-1908) and arguably Cecil County's most famous decoys, do not exhibit the school's typical shelf carving.

Why the differences? There are many possibilities and just as many differing opinions. Some have suggested that the Cecil County decoy was easier to deploy and rode the water more cleanly. Others feel the Havre de Grace style came about because it was faster to produce and lent itself best to the high-volume production required by the burgeoning demand for decoys. To gain insight into the evo-

Canvasback drake by Charlestown's William Heverin, ca. 1920s. This example is from the rig of Oden Keen, a well-known Harford County duck hunter and game warden. Many notable Cecil and Harford County hunters purchased decoys from makers on the other side of the river. ▶

Collection of
Chad Tragakis.

▲ **Canvasback drake by Havre de Grace's Charles Nelson Barnard, ca. 1910.** Although he was one of Harford County's finest makers, Barnard displayed precise shelf carving and thick tails that extend straight out or slightly downward on his beautiful birds.

Collection of Pat Vincenti.

▲ **Canvasback drake by Perryville's Ben Dye, ca. 1860s.** Dye was a skilled craftsman, producing a variety of wonderful canvasback styles over the years. His decoys feature sculptural bodies, broad paddle tails and meticulous shelf carving for the heads.

Collection of Frank Fox.

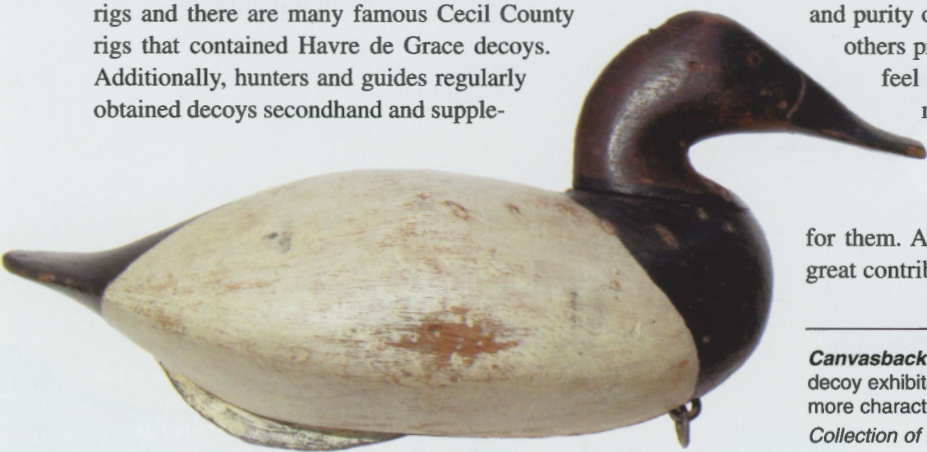
▶ **Canvasback hen by Charlestown's John Graham, ca. 1860s.** Graham is considered by most collectors to be the father of decoy-making on the Cecil County side of the Susquehanna Flats.

Collection of Frank Fox.

lution of the two distinct styles, it is worth consulting a pair of gentlemen who have adopted, celebrated, and advanced the two styles in their own right. On the Havre de Grace side, Jim Pierce (b. 1934) is an obvious choice. Pierce, a goodwill ambassador of the decoy world long associated with the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, is a historian, hunter, and the decoy-making protégé of Madison Mitchell (1901-1993), with firsthand knowledge of many other Upper Bay Makers. On the Cecil County side, Allen Purner, Sr. (b. 1921) is an equally impressive pick to discuss the matter. Purner is also a longtime hunter, a pioneer in the preservation of Maryland's waterfowling history, a former curator of Cecil County's Upper Bay Museum, and a decoy-maker inspired by the work of his former neighbor, William Heverin.

Efficiency of production, perceived effectiveness, and ease of use aside, both Pierce and Purner agree that the evolution was mainly the result of those makers on the two sides of the river being inspired by what they experienced in their hometowns — by simply appreciating and emulating the best, most functional designs that they witnessed springing to life around them. In Havre de Grace, this was the style of “Daddy” Holly. In Cecil County, it was the Graham decoy. And the distinct styles persisted, Pierce and Purner say, due more to traditions being passed down from generation to generation than because of any regional pride or cross-river rivalry. This is not to say, however, that the proponents of each style were or are without pride. While most makers are too polite to admit it, those crafting birds in their local style are probably quietly confident that their approach to creating the likeness of a duck in wood looks and works better than those being made across the river. Regardless of why the differences evolved, the fact is that they did — and for generations, hunters, collectors, the makers themselves, and other students of the decoy have benefited from this wonderful variety, regional preference, and local tradition.

The stylistic preferences and local traditions manifest in *making* decoys did not often extend to *using* them however. Tradition gave way to cold, hard practicality out on the Flats, where Cecil County and Havre de Grace decoys mixed and mingled side by side, bobbing together on the icy waters around the Upper Bay's sinkboxes. Building and maintaining large rigs of between 300 and 700 birds often necessitated purchasing decoys from more than one maker, sometimes on different sides of the river. In fact, notable gunners from Havre de Grace eagerly purchased Cecil County birds for their rigs and there are many famous Cecil County rigs that contained Havre de Grace decoys. Additionally, hunters and guides regularly obtained decoys secondhand and supple-



Canvasback drake by an unknown Cecil County maker, ca. 1870s. The “Cleveland Canvasbacks” are among the county's most celebrated decoys, but interestingly, they do not feature shelf carving for the heads common to the vast majority of birds made there.
Collection of Chad Tragakis.

mented their rigs with the occasional derelict birds they would come across. In these cases, little if any consideration was given to a decoy's origins.

Interestingly, some Upper Bay birds feature bodies from one side of the river and original heads from the other. Many makers sold spare heads to others who needed them to fill an order. For example, heads made by Sam Barnes (1857-1926) of Havre de Grace are often found on bodies by Perryville's Taylor Boyd (1856-1944). Then, of course, there are the countless birds that were re-headed after suffering injuries in service. It is sometimes easy to forget that the birds we prize so highly today were mere tools that were roughly handled by their original owners. Necks were easily broken and when they couldn't be repaired, required replacement. In many cases, these replacement heads were purchased from (and often refitted by) one of the region's prominent makers. In some instances, they were whittled and affixed by the hunters or guides themselves. These “marriages” with heads from one school and bodies from the other resulted in some truly wonderful combinations for today's collector.

Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys aren't the only American originals to benefit from a coexisting duality or the tension of subtle competition. Consider the great American pastime, bringing together the finesse of the National League and the power of the American League. Some enthusiasts praise the lasting traditions and purity of the game embodied by the National League, while others prefer the big bats and more active management some feel is required by American League rules. While there may always be disagreement over which league best captures the essence of the game, the differences foster discussion, greater appreciation, and deeper interest in the sport and baseball is all the better for them. And in the world of music — one of America's *other* great contributions to art and culture — Jazz and Blues traditions

Canvasback drake by Charlestown's Scott Jackson, ca. 1910. This decoy exhibits wonderful Cecil County form but with a slightly upswept tail more characteristic of the other side of the river.
Collection of Frank Fox.



Canvasback drake by Madison Mitchell, ca. 1940s. Long the dean of the Havre de Grace school, Mitchell picked up the stylistic mantle from John "Daddy" Holly and passed it on to a number of esteemed makers still living and working in Harford County.
Collection of Pat Vincenti.

emerged concurrently from the shared roots of spirituals, hymns, work songs, and folk tunes. For decades, beginning around the turn of the last century, the two styles would inform, influence, challenge and in some respects, compete with one another. But the proverbial stage and the ears of music fans everywhere have been big enough for the richness of both. In the same way, the regional differences between Havre de Grace and Cecil County birds only add to the flavor and charm of the Upper Chesapeake Bay, to our waterfowling lore, and to the historical significance of the region's decoys.

Some decoy collectors have claimed that "all Chesapeake Bay birds look the same." Well, if "Daddy" Holly and John Graham were alive today, I'm sure they'd beg to differ. The heritage of the Chesapeake Bay decoy is richer because of the Flats' two contrasting styles. There is strength in this diversity, depth in this difference. Today, the Cecil County and Havre de Grace traditions live on. And while there is much more stylistic interplay exhibited in the works of contemporary makers, collectors enjoy the unique regional differences still apparent in modern decoys and appreciate that so many Upper Bay carvers still pay their respect to tradition and

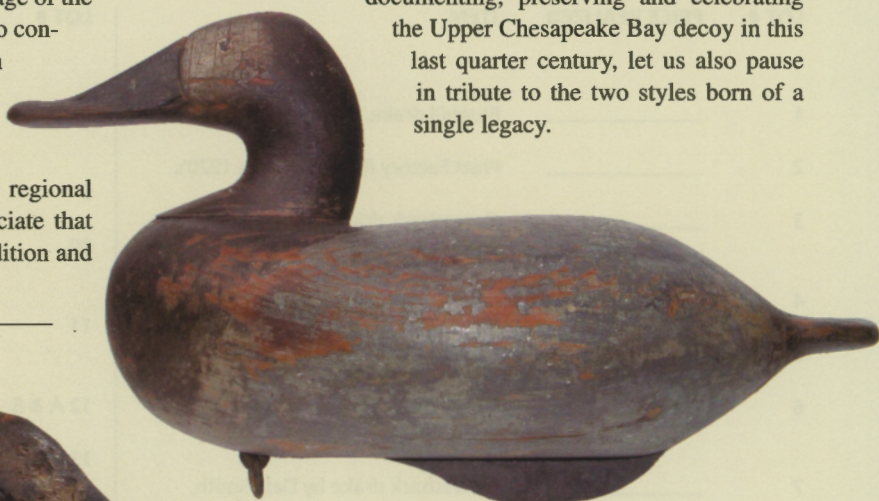


Canvasback drake by James Holly of Havre de Grace, ca. 1890s. With their sleek form and confident look, many collectors feel that Jim Holly's birds represent the epitome and high point of the Havre de Grace style.
Collection of Chad Tragakis.

to their forbearers in this way. While some collectors of antique decoys prefer to focus on one school or the other, many more do not. Most revel in the variety of style, form and line of both Cecil County and Havre de Grace birds. Vive la difference! Just as they mingled together on the Bay's icy waves, so too do they mingle today on the shelves in collectors' dens.

Although our Decoy Museum is located in Havre de Grace, it too pays homage to the birds of both schools and tribute to *all* of the talented men who made them. Indeed, this is the very reason *for* the Museum and for the festival that has been held without fail here every year for the past 25 years. So, as we pause

to reflect on all that has been accomplished in documenting, preserving and celebrating the Upper Chesapeake Bay decoy in this last quarter century, let us also pause in tribute to the two styles born of a single legacy.



▲ **Canvasback drake by Perryville's Ben Dye, ca. 1860s.**

Dye was a skilled craftsman, producing a variety of wonderful canvasback styles over the years. His decoys feature sculptural bodies, broad paddle tails and meticulous shelf carving for the heads.

Collection of Frank Fox.



Canvasback hen by John "Daddy" Holly of Havre de Grace, ca. 1860s. Holly produced some of the finest decoys ever to float on the Susquehanna Flats. Although he pioneered the Havre de Grace style, some of Holly's early birds exhibit Cecil County characteristics.
Collection of Frank Fox.



Havre de Grace Decoy Museum 25th Annual Decoy Festival Auction

Saturday, May 6, 2006
Havre de Grace High School Auditorium

Both Buyer's and Seller's premiums go to benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

Preview begins at 1:00 PM

**Bidder Registration begins at 4:00 PM;
personal identification required.**

Auction begins at 5:30 PM.

Settlement of all sales transactions will begin at close of auction.

TERMS OF SALE: Cash, Personal Check, Visa or MasterCard. A 10% Seller's Premium will be applied to all consigned items. A 10% Buyer's Premium and 5% sales tax will be applied to all items purchased.

(Consignors will be charged 20% of the auctioned price for all buy backs)

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM	LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
1	_____	Bluebill drake, unknown	8	_____	Canvasback drake by Butch Parker, branded
2	_____	Pratt Factory Redhead, circa 1920's	9	_____	Canvasback drake by Will Hevern
3	_____	Canvasback drake by James Burton, 1946	10	_____	Canvasback drake by R M Mitchell dated 1948
4	_____	Black Duck by Bryon Bodt	11	_____	Canvasback drake by Charlie Joiner circa 1940's
5	_____	Canada Goose by R M Mitchell	12 A & B	_____	Sink Box Decoy pair by R M Mitchell
6	_____	Pintail drake by Bob Coleman, signed & dated 1972	13	_____	Canada Goose by Gilmore Wagoner, painted by Charlie Joiner, signed & dated 1985
7	_____	Canvasback drake by Dale Smith, stamped metal plate			



LOT #1



LOT #2



LOT #3



LOT #4



LOT #5



LOT #6



LOT #7



LOT #8



LOT #9



LOT #10



LOT #11



LOT #12 A & B



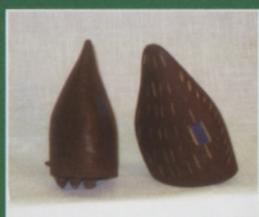
LOT #13



LOT #14



LOT #15



LOT #16



LOT #17 A & B



LOT #18

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM	LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
14	_____	Canada Goose by R M Mitchell, signed & dated 1975	21 A & B	_____	Mallard pair by Harry Jobes, signed circa 1970's
15	_____	Blue Bill drake by R M Mitchell, repaint by Charles Bryan, circa 1950's BRD "W"	22 A & B	_____	Widgeon pair by Gilmore Wagoner, signed and dated 1993
16	_____	Black Duck diving butts, pair by Plitt, signed	23 A & B	_____	Canvasback sinkbox pair by Charles Joiner, signed (RMM pattern sinkbox)
17 A & B	_____	Pair of paper mache Canada Geese by Ariduk, one swimmer, one feeder	24	_____	Blue Bill drake by R M Mitchell, repaint by Charles Bryan, circa 1950's BRD "W"
18	_____	Cork Canada Goose, unknown, branded GTGC	25 A & B	_____	Goldeneye pair by Gilmore Wagoner, signed & dated 1993
19	_____	Hooded Merganser hen by Miles Hancock, signed	26	_____	Black Duck by Miles Hancock (?) repaint by Charles Bryan, branded "W" for Darrell Wenig
20	_____	Canada Goose by Bryon Bodt, signed & dated 1993			



LOT #19



LOT #20



LOT #21 A & B



LOT #22 A & B



LOT #23 A & B



LOT #24



LOT #25 A & B



LOT #26



LOT #27



LOT #28



LOT #29



LOT #30 A & B



LOT #31



LOT #32 A & B



LOT #33



LOT #34



LOT #35 A & B



LOT #36

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
27	_____	Blue Bill Hen by R M Mitchell, original paint, circa 1950's branded "W" for Wenig
28	_____	Cork Canada Goose by Frank Muller, signed and dated
29	_____	Canvas Swan by Frank Muller, signed and dated
30 A & B	_____	Red Breasted Merganser pair by Bill Schaubert, signed dated 1996
31	_____	Canvasback drake highhead by Patrick Vincenti, signed and dated 1991
32 A & B	_____	Redhead pair by Paul Gibson, signed and dated 1980
33	_____	Redhead drake by R M Mitchell, signed and dated 1974

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
34	_____	Redhead drake by R M Mitchell, Ward Style
35 A & B	_____	Canvasback Sinkbox pair by Bob Litzenberg, signed
36	_____	Blue Snow Goose by Dave Walker
37	_____	Miniature Mallard Hen by Steiner Pierce, dated 1978
38	_____	Miniature Pintail Hen by Steiner Pierce, signed
39	_____	Miniature Pintail Hen by Steiner Pierce, signed
40	_____	Canvasback drake by Jim Currier, 1957 repaint by RMM 1973
41	_____	Canvasback drake by R M Mitchell dated 1958, repainted by RMM 1973



LOT #37



LOT #38



LOT #39



LOT #40



LOT #41



LOT #42



LOT #43



LOT #44



LOT #45



LOT #46



LOT #47



LOT #48



LOT #49 A & B



LOT #50 A & B



LOT #51



LOT #52



LOT #53 A & B



LOT #54 A & B

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
42	_____	Black Duck sleeper by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
43	_____	Black Duck by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
44	_____	Merganser drake by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
45	_____	Merganser hen by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
46	_____	Coot by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
47	_____	Coot by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
48	_____	Greenwing Teal hen by Jim Pierce, signed and dated
49 A & B	_____	Greenwing Teal pair by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed and dated 1974

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
50 A & B	_____	Bluewing Teal pair by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed and dated 1974
51	_____	Canvasback drake signed by Butch & Carol Larrimore
52	_____	Standing Baldpate drake by Kevin Hammell
53 A & B	_____	Mallard pair by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed
54 A & B	_____	Pintail pair with sleeper hen by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed
55 A & B	_____	Redhead pair by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed
56 A & B	_____	Bluebill pair by Capt. Harry Jobs, signed



LOT #55 A & B



LOT #56 A & B



LOT #57 A & B



LOT #58 A & B



LOT #59



LOT #60



LOT #61



LOT #62 A & B



LOT #63



LOT #64



LOT #65



LOT #66



LOT #67



LOT #68 A & B



LOT #69 A & B



LOT #70 A & B



LOT #71



LOT #72 A & B

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
57 A & B		Bufflehead pair by Capt. Harry Jobes, signed
58 A & B		Baldpate pair by Capt. Harry Jobes, signed
59		Antiqued Canvasback drake by Capt. Harry Jobes, signed
60		Canada Goose by Capt. Harry Jobes, signed
61		Canada Goose by Gilmore Wagoner
62 A & B		Canvasback pair by Ralph Pyle of Chesapeake City, MD, signed
63		Canvasback drake by Bob Litzenberg, signed
64		Clear finish decoy by Horace Graham, Charlestown, MD, signed

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
65		Clear finish decoy by Horace Graham, Charlestown, MD, signed
66		Clear finish decoy, maker unknown
67		Cork Canada Goose by R. Madison Mitchell, signed and dated 1958
68 A & B		Merganser pair by Capt. Harry Jobes
69 A & B		Woodduck pair by Capt Harry Jobes, dated 1988
70 A & B		Cinnamon Teal pair by Capt Harry Jobes
71		Cinnamon Teal by Paul Gibson, dated 1980
72 A & B		Redhead pair by Charlie Joiner dated 1951



LOT #73 A & B



LOT #74



LOT #75 A & B



LOT #76 A & B



LOT #77 A & B



LOT #78



LOT #79



LOT #80



LOT #81



LOT #82



LOT #83



LOT #85 A & B



LOT #86



LOT #87



LOT #88



LOT #89 A & B



LOT #90 A & B

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
73 A & B	_____	Goldeneye pair by R. Madison Mitchell
74	_____	Atlantic Brant by George Williams
75 A & B	_____	Greenwing Teal pair by George Williams
76 A & B	_____	Cinnamon Teal pair by George Williams
77 A & B	_____	Bluewing Teal pair by George Williams
78	_____	Canvasback hen by Al Thomas
79	_____	Canvasback drake by Will Heverin, circa 1920
80	_____	Upper Bay Canvasback drake, maker unknown
81	_____	Redhed hen by Capt. Jess Urie

LOT #	PRICE REALIZED	ITEM
82	_____	Iron Keel Goldeneye, circa 1890, maker unknown
83	_____	Cork & Wood Goose by R M Mitchell, circa 1950
84	_____	Flying Mallards, brass sculpture
85 A & B	_____	Bufflehead pair by Jimmy Bowden
86	_____	Bufflehead drake by Roy Mears
87	_____	Bufflehead drake, New England circa 1900's
88	_____	Dove decoy by Rick Stephens, Newark DE
89 A & B	_____	Greenwing Teal pair by Rick Stephens, Newark DE
90 A & B	_____	Sleeper Buffleheads (first ones made) by John Clark, HdG, signed & dated

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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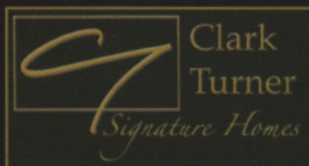
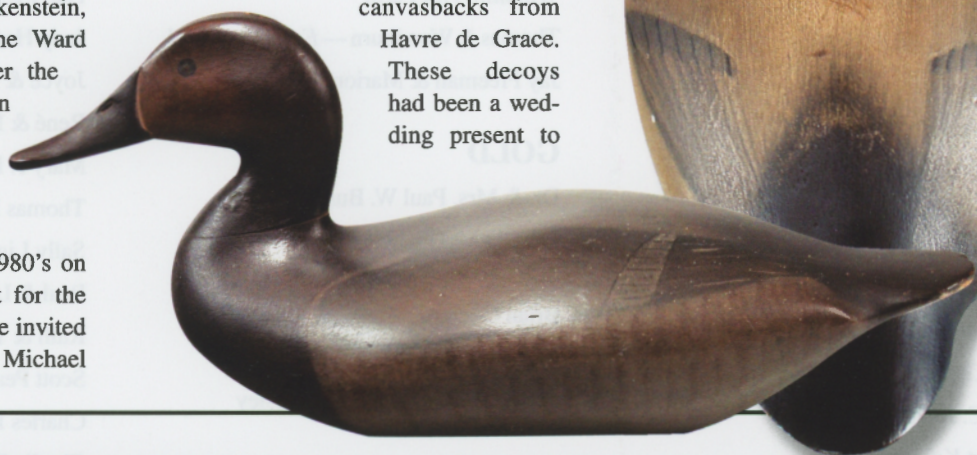
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The Best Decoys

BY C. JOHN SULLIVAN

I have been collecting decoys for the past 40 years. I cannot accurately state how many decoys I have handled over this period of time, but I am confident that it has been many thousands. In addition to my own collection, I have been fortunate to have examined multitudes of decoys for appraisals and auction purposes. In the mid-1990's, I worked alongside my best decoy friend, Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr., in cataloging decoys for the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art. Over the course of these years, I have been extremely conscious to not judge the merits of one carver or one region over another, to evaluate each individual decoy on its own virtues. In the late 1980's on my personal never-ending quest for the wooden fowl, I was honored to be invited into the home of Mrs. J. Smith Michael

of Aberdeen, Maryland. Mrs. Michael inherited some wonderful decoys from her late husband; there were Mitchells, McGaws, and others from the Havre de Grace area. The Michael family had long been associated with waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats. Standing above all the Michaels' decoys was a pair of Holly family decoys, decorative canvasbacks from Havre de Grace. These decoys had been a wedding present to



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Mr. Michael's parents over a hundred years earlier; I looked at that pair of decoys then with great respect and admiration. But out of that respect, I did not handle them except to take them off the shelf and look at them carefully; I did not want to be too obvious in my coveting of them. Mrs. Michael was very proud of those decoys and indicated to me at that time that they would never be offered for sale.

More than 25 years has passed since that initial viewing, and sadly, Mrs. Pat Michael has moved on to the next world. She was true to her word in that the decoys were never offered for sale to anyone, and the pair is now in the collection of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

I recently had the opportunity to handle this great pair of decoys. I can say without any hesitation, without any reservations, that these decorative Holly canvasbacks are THE BEST DECOYS that I have ever touched. Bar none, they are the Premier Decoys to come from the Chesapeake region. The night after I handled them, I had difficulty sleeping while thinking of how to best describe them. Not to sound trite, but it is truly difficult to put into words the beauty of these great carvings. If a carving of a duck can be sensuous, then these decoys are sensuous; if a decoy can be voluptuous, then these are voluptuous. To say that one could close one's eyes, handle these decoys, and instantly realize that they were holding something spectacular is an understatement. This pair of decoys was intended to be special from the time that their carver selected the best wood he could find. The wood would have to be without a flaw since these were to be decorative

mantle decoys. In addition, they were to be a wedding gift for a prominent Harford County couple and friends as well. These decoys were more likely than not the very first pair of strictly decorative full-size birds ever carved in Havre de Grace. Every detail would be included, and time and effort spent in the carving would not be an issue. Questions arise, though, as to which of the Hollys carved them and exactly what precise date should be assigned to them. If these were created by James T. Holly and not John (Daddy) Holly, why the powerful high shelf to rest the graceful head upon? I am convinced that the Hollys eliminated the shelf from their carvings as the demand increased. But extra time would be devoted to these decoys, so the shelf carving would not be an issue. Both of the decoys have carved mandibles, bill nails, and nostrils. Immediately behind the neck is a minor dip or lowering of the back between the wings. The drake has a raised wing carving that is so subtle that the decoy must be handled to actually feel what the artist intended. The hen bird does not have the raised wing carving, but Holly achieved the near-identical look through the artistry of his painting. When first looking at the superb blending of paint on these decoys' backs, one does not appreciate the subtle comb painting which extends the length of the wings; it is so well done as to suggest feathering.

When Patrick Vincenti appraised these decoys for Mrs. Pat Michael and realized that he could not buy them for himself, he urged Mrs. Michael to not allow the decoys to ever leave Havre de Grace. That vision was fulfilled at the time of Mrs. Michael's death when she willed these priceless decoys to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. These decoys never left Harford County and have traveled no further than 10 miles since the day they were carved. Now they reside on a shelf a mere three blocks from the site where they were created.

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1982–2005

by
John Case

past honorary chairmen

1982

R. Madison Mitchell

1901–1993



The first Honorary Chairman of the Havre de Grace Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival was described as a man who “probably has made more decoys than anyone else on or near the Susquehanna Flats” and is the one Steve Ward, a celebrated carver himself, described as making “the best canvasback decoy on the Chesapeake Bay.”

Born of farm parents at Oakington near Swan Creek in Harford County, Madison Mitchell decided at an early age to become

a funeral director like his two uncles. He attended Havre de Grace elementary and high schools but left school in the 9th grade to go to Baltimore where he lived over his Uncle John’s funeral parlor and attended the Baltimore Business College. After a brief employment in an auto assembly plant in Pontiac, Michigan, he returned to Harford County where he spent the remainder of his life.

It was shortly after he became a licensed embalmer and funeral director in 1922 that his attention turned to decoy carving, an activity for which he had no training and which was soon to occupy as much of his time as that for which he had trained.

He began his carving career under the tutelage of Havre de Grace carver Sam Barnes. Local historian Charles L. Robbins reports that Mitchell “was soon introduced to the hand saw, draw knife, spoke shave, and hatchet [producing] primarily cans, redheads, and blackheads which sold for \$1.25 each.” Shortly thereafter Mitchell built his own sanding machine and thus began the introduction of mechanical aids to the production of his decoys.

Barnes died suddenly two years after their association began and left Mitchell with a year’s worth of orders to fill. To add insult to injury Barnes’ daughter, who painted the decoys, moved away, leaving Mitchell to figure out how to mix and blend paint and apply it to the wooden birds. In 1926 Madison began to turn out his own decoys in the typical “Havre de Grace style,” but with his own touches. Robbins records that Mitchell “refined his decoys by introducing a lead keel [and] also placed a small ring under the decoy’s breast to attach the anchor line.” Limited in the beginning by his inability to paint anything but cans, redheads, and blackheads, by the fifties he had expanded his production to many different species and venues (i.e., decoy lamps) and his painting had developed a “remarkable” and distinctive style. During this time a long list of men and boys worked in Mitchell’s shop on various stages of production. Many of them have gone on to be carvers in their own right, continuing to incorporate various aspects of the Mitchell style.

In 1981 Mitchell sold his shop to carver Bill Collins, but the two men continued to work together for several years. Collins reports that for years Madison Mitchell enjoyed having people bring pieces back to be signed, something he would do in return for a donation to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

1983

Paul Gibson

1902–1985



"Carving decoys here is like the water; it's almost the same as your religion. It's what you were brought up in. It's how you were raised." This is how the second Honorary Chairman of the Festival described the relationship of Havre de Grace residents to decoys.

Gibson was born, married, and lived his life in Havre de Grace, leaving school at the age of 14 to begin work at Klair's grocery store where he would remain until 1940. He enjoyed gunning the Flats and as

he did so he had tremendous opportunity to learn about various species of ducks and the decoys used to attract them into the range of hunters. Thus, it was almost inevitable that, in this atmosphere, at the age of 13 he began to carve decoys—teaching himself by observation in the field and in the workshops of the noted carvers of his day. His wife Mary said that he was self-taught and never worked at decoy making for anybody else. His mentors were veteran decoy carvers Bob McGaw and Sam Barnes who he "hung around with" during his youth.

In 1940 he went to work as a civilian firefighter at Aberdeen Proving Ground where he stayed and eventually became Chief. He continued carving in his spare time and built his own two-story workshop behind his house. He began adding mechanical devices to his production, acquiring an automatic decoy lathe from Madison Mitchell in 1941. He retired in 1965 and that allowed him to spend much more time doing what he loved best—carving and painting decoys in the "Havre de Grace school."

1984

Charles Bryan

1920–



Born in Baltimore, Charlie Bryan studied mechanical drawing and in 1946 became a machinist for the railroad at Bethlehem Steel in Sparrow's Point. He worked there for 35 years and he and his wife lived in Essex near Middle River, not far from his work.

As places to hunt small game began to dry up, he began to take a liking to duck hunting, doing most of his gunning in Back

River near Millers Island. Since he couldn't afford to buy decoys and he did not think his hunting habit should come out of the family's pocket, when he was 36 years old he decided to make his own. He reported that when he first started making decoys he had never seen anybody do it. All of his decoys were machine made and for the most part his machines and tools were made by him.

Because of where he lived, there was no help available so he did not run a lot of decoys. Sometimes those who were going gunning with him would help out but Bryan remarked that "the birds I've sold were always done by me." "I was a loner [because] I just didn't know anyone in the Middle River area who carved decoys."

Then he discovered Havre de Grace and Madison Mitchell's decoys. He soon found that he could get duck bodies turned in Mitchell's shop which he did for about ten years until he bought his own decoy-making machine. Through his association with Mitchell, he eventually made other carving friends in Havre de Grace but he said when he visited them he just watched, feeling somewhat timid about asking a lot of questions of these expert carvers. Bryan says, "Decoy carving has been a truly rewarding experience. I've met a lot of nice people and I've made many friends through it."

1986

Robert "Bob" Litzenberg

1910–1997



As with most carvers, Robert Litzenberg started with a love of hunting. He was raised four miles from the Elk River near Elkton and began hunting just about the time of the Depression. During his lifetime he hunted ducks by bushwhacking, from a sinkbox, and from a duck blind. As with most people at that time, he didn't have much money and so if he was going to hunt he needed to make his own decoys.

As a result of spending a lot of time around the river he eventually met and befriended noted carver Will Heverin. Heverin hand chopped his own bodies and carved his own heads with a knife. Litzenberg followed suit and never did use a machine to make a decoy. He not only carved decoys in his basement workshop but he also made fine furniture.

When he started carving in the early thirties he worked ten hours a day in a grocery store and then later opened a meat business. When World War II broke out he and his brother opened a restaurant serving navy personnel. Litzenberg got drafted and on his return from the service he and his brother closed the restaurant and went into the painting business. However, his first love was always hunting and he would close his store from November to January to hunt. It was not until he retired from painting that he began to make decoys for sale.

1985

No chairman selected.

1987

Charles "Speed" Joiner, Jr.

1921-



The first decoys "Speed" Joiner made, much to the amusement of his fellow hunters, were made out of black-painted Prestone anti-freeze cans with a loop soldered to the bottom where the anchor line would be tied. Born in Betterton, he began hunting at an early age in the area surrounding the town, including on Analot Farms where he primarily hunted from blinds. It is reported that he never has been much of a fan of body booting.

Joiner considers the canvasback his carving specialty and says that he was 21 before he knew there was any other kind of duck.

In 1938 he began work as a lineman for what was to become the Delmarva Power & Light Company and retired from there in 1979. During World War II he went to work at the Aberdeen Proving Ground and rented a room in a boarding house near Madison Mitchell's shop. They became long-time friends and gunned together from time to time. It was from Mitchell that he perfected his superb painting ability. In 1950, he moved back to Betterton where he carved and restored decoys.

In 1965, collector William Mackey published his *American Bird Decoys*, only the second book on the subject since Joel Barber's trail-blazing effort, and in his chapter on decoys of the Upper Chesapeake wrote that "Excellent handmade decoys in the old tradition are still being made by Madison Mitchell and Jim Currier in Havre de Grace and by Charles Joyner [sic] in Betterton, all of the old school."

Joiner continues to use a body pattern given to him by Mitchell and a weight mold from the same source. Among his friends he counted Lem and Steve Ward who encouraged him to carve half-sized decoys and taught him their style of painting which he combined with Mitchell's. In 1959 he retired from hunting but he still continues to make decoys and perfect his craft.

1988

Captain Harry Jobs

1936-

Born in Havre de Grace Harry Jobs spent considerable time in the shops of decoy makers Charles Nelson Barnard and Jim Currier. But when Barnard died, he went to work for Madison Mitchell with whom he stayed for 28 years and by whom he says he has been influenced the most—in painting as well as carving. His carvings are both working and ornamental and are said to be in the "Havre de Grace style."

Like his fellow carvers, making decoys was an avocation. He spent much of his life working on research vessels for the states of Maryland and Virginia and working at Aberdeen Proving Ground



piloting a patrol boat. He also operated his own charter boat. In 1985 he retired and began devoting his full time and energy to decoy carving. He is easily spotted at shows and other events in his signature outfit of Panama hat, suspenders, duck pants, and hand knitted "Captain Jobs" sweaters.

The Jobs decoy business has expanded as his three sons, Bobby, Charles, and Joey have gone into the profession full-time on their own. Until her

death in 2004, his wife Helen managed the administrative tasks of the business which ships decoys all over the world. His plan for the future is to "just make more decoys."

1989

Captain William E. "Bill" Collins

1949-



Born at Perry Point and raised in Perryville, Bill Collins began hunting and repairing decoys at an early age under the encouragement and tutelage of his older brother. Not long after graduating from high school, carver Jimmy Pierce suggested that Collins contact Madison Mitchell for a job in his funeral home. Mitchell hired him and then informed him that they would be working in the decoy shop between funeral duties. He taught

him every step in the initial stages of decoy carving.

Collins' interest in the funeral business increased and soon he became a licensed funeral director. In 1971 he joined the military and was eventually assigned to the National Guard unit in Havre de Grace. That allowed him to keep active in both the funeral business and the making of decoys. In 1981 Collins bought the Mitchell shop in its entirety and opened it as Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys.

He has worked as a hunting guide on the Eastern Shore and as a charter boat captain out of Tilghman Island. In 1987 Collins sold the lathe, machine tools, and fixtures of Madison Mitchell's decoy shop to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum so that the shop could be reconstructed on the Museum property. He has developed a close relationship with carver Pat Vincenti as well as other carvers such as Charlie Joiner. Collins reflects that carvers are willing to share techniques and ideas and "you take what you like from one person's style and include it into your own decoy."

1990

Captain Roger Urie

1933–2002



Rock Hall was where Captain Urie was born and raised and where he learned to make decoys. When he was thirteen he began painting and making decoy bodies and heads for Captain Jon Glen, his next door neighbor. This was where he learned the craft. Eventually his father, Captain Jess Urie, started to make decoys and Roger showed him how to mix colors. They used Glen's patterns until 1947 when they designed their own with a flat bottom.

At first the decoys were made with hatchet and rasp but in 1955 Roger "built a belt and disk sander combination and decoy machine." From then on all the bodies were turned on the lathe.

In 1967 the Uries began production of miniature decoys and from then on demand exceeded supply. Despite this demand the Uries always found time to hunt. The Urie decoys were all signed by Captain Jess Urie until his death in 1978. Following that, Roger made only miniature decoys.

1991

James Pierce

1934–



Being born in and living one's life in the small community of Havre de Grace, it's very nearly certain that you are going to know decoy carvers. Jim Pierce was raised two blocks from Paul Gibson's shop and his grandfather lived next door to Bob McGaw's. With his friend Harry Jobes, he often visited Madison Mitchell's shop and before long Mitchell put them to work doing "a little bit of everything."

Pierce reports that like everyone else, he made his own decoys, the first one at age 14. Like so many others, he carved in "the Havre de Grace style" because of his early and continuing association with Madison Mitchell. Mitchell gave him a carving knife which he still uses, though now it is more of a treasure than a tool.

Pierce worked for Mitchell until he left for the Korean War. When he returned in 1953 he got married, worked for Mitchell some more, and then set up his own shop. Pierce says that "between the storms and the celery leaving," the demand for decoys dwindled. However,

the demand for collectibles began to grow and Pierce has been able to carve full time for the last 30-plus years.

He eventually built a home and a shop outside Havre de Grace where he continues to carve and paint, training younger men as Mitchell trained him. Recently he has designed a different style of carving which he calls the "Flats Connection." He says, "The body and head are patterned after a Holly, and I use McGaw and Heverin painting...I use my own type of weight...it's something special."

In 1980 he agreed to help some friends put together a decoy festival in Havre de Grace with the profits going to start a decoy museum. He agreed and the first Festival was held in 1981. When the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum opened in 1986, he was named president, a post he held for several years.

1992

James A. "Jim" Currier

1886–1971



As a youth Jim Currier worked in his father's livery stable caring for its 36 horses. In 1916 he took a job with the Havre de Grace post office and retired as its head postmaster 43 years later. Well known and respected as both a vegetable and flower gardener, he gained a fine reputation for navigating the flats in his 40-foot boat which was complete with cook, sleeping quarters, and two-man sink box. His goal was to serve the "sports"

who came down from New York and Philadelphia to hunt the canvasback on the Susquehanna Flats and stay at the nearby Bayou Hotel.

Currier needed decoys for his rig (a single sinkbox could require hundreds of decoys) and he carved them himself, working alone chopping out bodies with a hatchet. He finished the bodies with a draw knife and only used a sanding belt to finish off the heads. The heads are said to be very distinctive and easily identifiable as being one of Jim Currier's. Unfortunately, Carl Henderson reports that, "Even though Jim Currier was one of the most renowned carvers of the Susquehanna region, very few of his decoys are left in the area."

1993

Bill and Allan Schaubert

1938 –; 1957–

The Schauberts are father and son, but contrary to what one might presume, they do not make decoys together. Father Bill focuses on full-size decoys while son Allan produces miniatures and half-sizes. Though they have similar painting styles, the one thing they do claim in common is being strongly influenced by their teacher and mentor Charlie Joiner, a fellow Upper Eastern Shore carver. As does Joiner, these two men span the movement from working decoys of years ago to the more "slick" decoys so prized today. Their decoys



are primarily destined for display, not hunting.

Bill Schaubert credits Joiner's refusal to sell him a decoy marking the beginning of his carving avocation. Joiner refused because he felt Schaubert couldn't afford the decoy. He did give him a block of wood, loaned him a knife and told him to carve one of his own. Shortly thereafter Bill tried to buy some decoys from Joiner who again refused because he didn't have any to sell, but he took him into his shop and showed him how

to make a simple flat-bottomed decoy. Schaubert reports that he still has the paint patterns.

Allan grew up hunting with his father and watching him make decoys. He made his first one at age 14. Learning from his father was somewhat complicated by the fact that he was left-handed and his father was right-handed. Allan continues to regard his father as his mentor, advisor, teacher, friend, counselor, and critic and they see each other almost every day.

1994

Robert F. McGaw, Jr.

1879–1958

Born on Spesutie Island in 1919, Bob McGaw and his wife moved to Havre de Grace and set up two decoy shops behind their house. In 1929 he bought a duplicating lathe and became, according to C. John Sullivan, the first carver of the Susquehanna Flats to use such a machine in the production of decoys. That lathe was later sold to Madison Mitchell and then to Captain Bill Collins who sold it to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. McGaw's paint jobs reflected the influences of Sam Barnes and the Holly family. Sullivan records that "his decoys were among the most realistic to ever float on the Susquehanna Flats."

McGaw produced decoys that were not mere models of waterfowl, but mounted and painted in such a way as to appeal to those who wanted to collect them. His miniatures were particularly prized. Sullivan says that McGaw was the "first maker from the upper Chesapeake Bay known to have mounted his full size birds on hardwood bases for decorative purposes." A tremendous mail order business developed which drew buyers from throughout the United States.

When McGaw died in 1958, R. Madison Mitchell assumed the position as dean of the Havre de Grace school of carvers.

1995

J. Evans McKinney

1913–2000

Identified as a gunner, decoy maker, author, politician, and conservationist, McKinney was born, and lived his entire life in Elkton. In 1927 he began both gunning and decoy collecting. In



1987 he published his signature book *Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats and Their Makers*. He and his father did a lot of gunning together and as long as it was legal, they used the sinkbox. Sinkbox hunting, said McKinney, required a lot of preparation but produced a very good hunt. When the sinkbox became illegal, he switched to bushwhacking which he continued until he retired from gunning in the early sixties.

McKinney met and made friends with master decoy maker Will Heverin. He spent a lot of time watching Heverin hand-chop decoys but in 1944 when Heverin raised his prices McKinney decided to try his own hand at it. The hours he spent observing his mentor came in very handy when he turned to producing his own. He continued to hand chop his decoys until the early fifties when he began trading Madison Mitchell blocks of wood for turned bodies. It wasn't long, however, that with the subtle influence of Jim Currier, he returned to hand chopping.

In addition to carving, McKinney put together a collection of over 500 decoys, all but three of them by Upper Bay carvers.

1996

Harry V. Shourds, II

1929–



The first to be chosen Honorary Festival Chairman from outside Maryland, Shourds hails from the southern New Jersey coast. A third generation decoy carver, Shourds is also the first New Jerseyite to receive the National Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The recognition he received for his carving extends outside the United States. A Japanese film crew spent a week following him as he went

about his craft, from the choosing of the cedar right through to the final coat of paint.

Prior to carving full time he served in the U.S. Navy and then sold vacuum cleaners door to door. However, he had begun carving decoys at age 14 or 15, spending a lot of time in his father's decoy shop observing how it was done by a man who was considered by many the finest decoy maker in the New Jersey. Like his father's and grandfather's, Shourds' ducks are in the hollow "Barnegat Bay" tradition. The bodies are hand chopped from western cedar and the heads are carved from sugar pine.

In addition to carving water fowl he carves several species of shorebirds, some miniatures, songbirds, and his famous Santa Claus

carvings. Among his miniatures, it should be noted, he has also built at least one miniature gunning skiff complete with decoys.

1997

Ronald Rue

1931–2005



Cambridge, Maryland, was the lifelong home of Ron Rue. He started hunting when he was in high school and made his first decoys around 1948 to supplement his rig which was largely made up of decoys that he had found. His hunting was interrupted by service in the U.S. Navy from 1949 to 1953.

Upon his return from the Navy, Rue was unable to locate his old decoys and so fell to making new ones for his rig. His carving

included about all species of shorebird and waterfowl, all hatcheted out, for he never used a lathe.

In 1953 or 1954 he made his first decorative decoy and was so proud of it he took it to Lem and Steve Ward for their approval. They welcomed him and invited him to come back. From then on he made a trip to Crisfield to see them about once a month. This association led to a large Ward influence on his carving and painting.

Rue was an exhibitor at the first Easton Waterfowl Show in 1971 and was an exhibitor there ever ever year until his recent death. His carvings are much in demand throughout the United States.

1998

Lem and Steve Ward

1896–1984; 1895–1976



Born in Crisfield, it is said the two Ward brothers, barbers by occupation, produced more than 25,000 decoys and decorative birds and eventually were recognized by many as the founders of a folk art. At first it was just spare-time handiwork carving decoys, but when local hunters offered to buy a few, word got out, and business began to grow. They

never advertised but as close as they got was when they erected a sign outside their shop saying "L.T. Ward & Bro. — Wildlife Counterfeiters in Wood." Steve, who was content to be the "Bro," did the carving. Lem, who was the artist, did the painting and was the first to put "life" into the carvings by turning heads, preening

feathers, and stretching out wings. He pioneered the idea of putting birds on feet with legs.

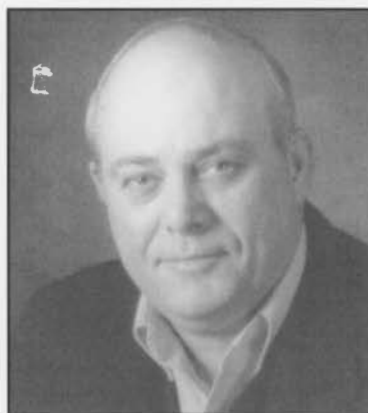
In 1980 Lem received a Certificate of Distinguished Citizenship from the Governor of Maryland and a duck hunting stamp designed in his honor was released. In 1983 Lem Ward was presented with the National Heritage Fellowship Award by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Ward Foundation in Salisbury, formed in their honor to exhibit their work, opened its Museum in 1977. The then Museum director, Kenneth Basile, described Lem as a "humble man." Further he said, "Lem and Steve Ward were two of the most important men in American art history. Lem was the founder, the originator, the person who brought decorative bird carving to a place of prominence, and thanks to him, wildfowl carving is of national importance."

1999

Oliver "Tutsy" Lawson

1938–



While others his age were going to work at the local knife company in his hometown of Crisfield, at seventeen Oliver Lawson was earning more money than they were by carving and painting full size and miniature decoys. He had actually begun going down this road when he was ten or twelve, spending spare time watching his neighbors Lem and Steve Ward carve and paint decoys. He never had

a formal lesson and his beginning tool was a hatchet. He has no helpers or assistants.

In 1965 the Kent County Ornithological Society invited Lawson to participate in their carving exhibition. It was there that he realized how big the demand for his work could be. He exhibited in several other shows, including one in London, England. He was also showcased on NBC's "The Today Show."

Lawson works from nature, reference books, and bird skins. His tools include a hatchet, chisels, and knives, but what sets him apart from most of his colleagues is his ability to paint. He carves waterfowl, shorebirds, upland game, and songbirds and, on occasion, such subjects as a leopard, crab, chipmunk and small deer. It is said that he is doing the only work he has ever known and that he has ever wanted to do.

2000

The Holly Family

1813–1935

"If Havre de Grace, Maryland, is indeed the 'Decoy Capital of the World,'" writes Chad Tragakis, "then its 'First Family' would have to be the Hollies." John "Daddy" Holly and later his three sons, Jim, William, and John Jr., were ready and able to provide the decoys in the tens of thousands that were being called for. The four worked

closely together and produced so many decoys that many Upper Chesapeake decoys reflect a Holly style.

Daddy was making decoys by the early 1850s. Madison Mitchell claimed his own birds were mostly inspired by Daddy Holly. Daddy was born in 1813 and died in 1892 and spent his entire life in Havre de Grace.

His son William lived from 1847–1923, James from 1849–1935, and John, Jr. from 1851–1927. William and John lived together and were in the wall papering and painting business. Neither ever married.

Jim was a market gunner and made decoys for his use and for sale to local gunners. He refined his father's style to such a degree that he gained a national reputation that placed him in the forefront of all Upper Chesapeake makers. However, his principal source of income and fame was from boat building. He made his last boat in the 1920s. His many pursuits included fishing commercially for herring each spring. In addition to making finely crafted decoys, he expressed his artistic ability through painting. He was an avid ice skater who drew crowds to watch him and he played drums in a cornet band.

The four Holly men produced decoys from before the Civil War on into the early 20th century. For two generations Holly birds were the decoys to have. They were the benchmark for all others; the innovators of the "Havre de Grace style."

2001

Charles Nelson Barnard

1876–1958



Born in Havre de Grace to a sea captain's family, Charles Nelson Barnard was taken out of school in the fifth grade to work on his father's scow. At 21 Barnard moved to Baltimore City to work but soon returned to Elkton. In 1915 he went to work for the railroad as a signal man and moved to Havre de Grace where he lived the rest of his life. He retired from the railroad in 1950.

There is no record of when he began carving but his

production probably consisted of only a few thousand pieces. He most enjoyed making miniature birds, some only an inch and a half long. With few characteristics of the Havre de Grace style, his best known works are his high neck canvasbacks. John Sullivan opines that "Barnard birds achieved (better than any) the true look of a canvasback duck."

He produced several other birds with varying neck heights as well as several hollow birds. According to Sullivan "He produced four very distinctive styles of canvasbacks...but only one style of redheads and bluebills...and black ducks..." It is believed that he worked alone on most of his decoys.

His work is in demand among collectors and examples have been displayed at the Ward Museum of Wildlife Art as well as the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

2002

Patrick Vincenti

1954–



Born in New Jersey, his family moved to Havre de Grace when he was one-year old. While attending Havre de Grace High School Pat Vincenti worked as a baker in his uncle's Bel Air bakery. By 1972 he was baking full-time. In 1975 he went to work part-time in Madison Mitchell's decoy shop where, following the Havre de Grace carver tradition, all the secrets, hints and skills of the craft were willingly shared with the upcoming generation.

In 1976 Vincenti set up his own shop behind his house in Churchville, Maryland. Unlike many others who had sat at the feet of the master, he made minor adjustments that established his own style of painting and carving. The bodies were still carved on the Mitchell lathe but eventually he bought his own duplicating machine and incorporated some of his own refinements in the turning of the bodies.

He began carving full-time in 1986 and in 1987 was joined by Captain Bill Collins, a person who he credits with being as big an influence on him as anyone but Madison Mitchell. In turn, Collins has described Vincenti as "the best painter of production decoys in the Upper Bay region." With the assistance of Captain Collins, his wife, Jeannie, and their two daughters, he turns out approximately 1200 decoys a year—mostly for collectors. One request was for a 7-foot 650 pound black duck for the great room of the Twin Cape Ferry that travels between Cape May, New Jersey, and Lewes, Delaware.

He has also become an avid collector of "historic wooden fowl" and has long been a member of the Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, serving as its President for the past two years. Vincenti says, "I owe my success to five guys. They are Madison Mitchell, Jimmy Pierce, Paul Gibson, Ed Sampson, and 'Titbird' Bauer."

2003

Ned Mayne

1954–

Referred to by many as a renaissance man, Ned Mayne is known for his decorative working decoys, 75% of which are cork. Mayne also has a reputation as a painter, his painting of a pair of black ducks having been chosen for the first Delaware duck stamp. In addition he has a clientele interested in purchasing the carving knives he makes and he has recently expressed an interest in making skiffs or gunning boats. He has a degree in Art from the University of Delaware.

He began hunting with his father at about age six using a Red Ryder BB gun, graduating to a shotgun a few years later. Like many carvers, Mayne was motivated to get into carving by his need for



decoys and his inability to pay for them. Also, like many carvers, he never had a lesson. Becoming dissatisfied with the quality of knives available, he decided to make those, too, selling them through word of mouth.

In 1988 he was asked by Delaware Ducks Unlimited to donate a painting to be used as an incentive to lure sponsors. Having a very deep interest in protecting the environment, he agreed. His interest in environmental issues

causes him to spend a lot of time in Dover, Delaware's state capital, pursuing environmental issues. Mayne has stopped hunting waterfowl because of steel shot regulations claiming, "It is a crippler of ducks and geese and it is a sin to shoot them without killing cleanly."

2004

Grayson Chesser

1947–



Grayson Chesser can be described as a carver, collector, former guide, decoy dealer, and environmentalist. He has resided his whole life on Virginia's Eastern Shore near Jenkins Bridge, acquiring his interest in decoys at about age 12. Among those who inspired, taught, and encouraged him were Miles Hancock, a carver and market gunner, and collectors Bill Mackey, Roy Bull, and Bill Purnell.

He graduated from Old

Dominion in Business Management and then returned to the family farm where he worked as a part-time game warden, guide, and decoy carver. Chesser began carving seriously in 1976 with about one-fifth of his carving earmarked for gunning rigs, and then in 1984 he began carving full-time. Shortly thereafter he began buying and selling.

The Holden Creek Gun Club, located on the family's 1500 acre farm, is operated by his wife, Dawn. The Lodge is in a converted barn, has a full kitchen, central air and heat, three bedrooms, a sitting room, and library. Guests are provided with a chef, a guide, boats, and decoy rigs.

Self taught for the most part, he carves hollow decoys designed to be hunted over even though most of his decoys will never be on the water. As a matter of fact Chesser likes to make decoys look old and hunted over. He uses machinery to cut out the bodies, but uses hand tools for the actual carving.

Chesser has appeared on PBS, has had two major decoy exhibitions at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and has co-authored a book titled Making Decoys the Century-Old Way. He has also judged for the Federal Duck Stamp competitions.

2005

Jim Britton

1934–



His carvings are designed to look like working decoys, but they are shaped and painted with the detail required for display. Britton carves in the modern tradition, as opposed to the style of Cigar Daisy or Umbrella Watson. Knowing that his birds will most likely never go in the water, he gives more attention to detail and paint since he does not have to spend time on flotation or the placement of weights.

Britton carves "a hundred or so birds" per year in a workshop separate from his house—located just outside of Reedville, Virginia. The shop contains two band saws, a drill press, a drum sander, and various hand tools. His flat bottomed birds are made in two pieces—the head and the body—and the feathering is done with a paint brush, not with a wood burner. Though he prefers diving ducks, Britton also carves "tippers," herons, egrets, pelicans, and some songbirds.

He graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in mechanical engineering and made a career as a systems engineering consultant for the U.S. Navy. He retired from that in 1990. In the late '80s he revived his boyhood interest in wildfowl carving. Soon he was participating in decoy shows such as the Easton Waterfowl Festival, the Rappahannock River Waterfowl Show, the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, and the Barnegat Bay Decoy Show. Britton has been a participant in the Havre de Grace Decoy and Wildlife Festival for the past 19 years.

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Margaret Todd Family Honors Mother, Contributes Gift Bench

Longtime Decoy Museum supporter Margaret Todd, who, with her late husband Claude, were also exhibitors for nearly 20 years at the Decoy Festival, discovered her four children decided to celebrate her recent birthday with a gift to the museum. Her four children honored their mother by contributing for the museum grounds a needed outdoor bench overlooking the Susquehanna Flats. Mrs. Todd, whose warm smile is reflected in the faces of her four admiring children, recalled with delight that "we made many good friends over the years" at the Festival. "I still paint a little, keep up, and donate to the wonderful museum in the great 'City by the Bay.'"

(Left-Right) Margaret Todd and children Amy Matis, Karen Henderson, and Steve Todd. (not shown is Paul Todd).



Mitchell Endowment Adds Significant Support

The 13th annual R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust Dinner held March 10 celebrated the 105th birthday of the late illustrious carver and father figure of today's Decoy Museum in grand style. A sold-out crowd of approximately 250 supporters at the Bayou Restaurant in Havre de Grace helped boost the Endowment's fund through active buying of raffle tickets and spirited bidding on a wide variety of donated decoys and other duck and hunting related objects and artwork. The evening event was capped by the presentation of the first check of a three-year commitment of \$50,000 by the Endowment towards the Museum's new main-floor introductory exhibit.

City Merchants, Organizations Renew Festival Involvement

Numerous downtown Havre de Grace merchants have responded to the joint promotion of the Decoy Museum and the Chamber of Commerce encouraging them to decorate their storefronts in celebration of the upcoming Decoy Festival. The Havre de Grace Chamber of Commerce underwrote the start of the first Decoy Festival twenty-five years ago and was delighted to once again work with the museum in promoting one of the City's signature events. Some, such as the City's own Visitor's Center, partnered with a youth group. Among the many participating businesses are Amanda's Florist, Bayside Antiques, Crazy Eights Hair Salon, Java By The Bay coffee shop, Re/Max Elite Realty, and The Record newspaper.

First Fridays in Havre de Grace, from 4-8 p.m., are monthly celebrations in downtown Havre de Grace with a street fair atmosphere, live music, family entertainment, and merchant specials. The 2006 season begins on May 5, the day the Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival opens, and the sponsoring organization, the Havre de Grace Main Street Corporation, has themed their May 5 event "Cinco Duck Mayo" to celebrate not only Mexican Independence Day but the start of the museum's festival in the city known as the Decoy Capital of the World. The local Main Street association was established in Havre de Grace last year and is a countrywide program administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help communities that are interested in revitalizing and rehabilitating historic commercial business districts.

The Havre de Grace Business Consultants Group, a new local network of business people, has also stepped forward and recruit-



Shannon Timms (Left) and Christina Cooper (Right), students in the local high school's advanced studio and painting classes, decorate the glass front of the City's Visitor's Center.

ed members to help rejuvenate the Festival's corps of volunteers. Museum Director Richard Flint expressed great appreciation to the many business people in the community who have shown new interest in aiding the Decoy Museum: "We are truly grateful to all those who step forward to support the museum and for their recognition of what the Decoy Museum adds to the meaning, history, and quality of life in this community."

A New Permanent Exhibition for Visitors to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

Purpose

To introduce the entire museum to visitors by explaining

- ▶ What decoys are
- ▶ Why they are used
- ▶ How they are made
- ▶ How carvers in different regions and different times made different styles
- ▶ Why they are treasured today

Need

The first exhibit gallery (of three) seen by visitors has not been redesigned since the Museum opened in 1986. It now consists of a series of uniform wall cases with shelves displaying decoys, a large map drawn by a local artist, and a narrated diorama of carvers gathered around a wood stove.

This new exhibit will tell the story of an American folk art tradition, recount how talented men carved “floating sculpture,” and why the public has come to appreciate what made Havre de Grace the “Decoy Capital of the World.”

Visual Interpretation

- ▶ For the visitor, this new exhibit will be far more engaging due to a much more lively design and the variety of objects displayed.
- ▶ Exhibited objects will include numerous historic and contemporary decoys along with small carving tools but also large historic machinery once used by veteran area carvers, live-size dioramas, a boat with a full “rig” of over 100 decoys, colorful maps, original narration by deceased carvers, and a variety of visual imagery including historic black-and-white photographs, striking color images of contemporary carvers at work, and video demonstrations of the carving process.

Project Management

- ▶ Funded in part by a competitive grant from the Chesapeake Gateways, a Federal Agency within the National Park Service, that requires the Decoy Museum to match their contribution on a dollar-for-dollar basis.
- ▶ The Project Team of four includes two experienced exhibit curators and a museum educator familiar with the subject material as well as a museum exhibit designer experienced with projects related to the Chesapeake Bay. Collectively, they represent more than 90 years of experience. The project leader is the only museum professional who has twice been associated with exhibit projects that have won the American Association of Museums national award for the outstanding exhibit of the year (as project leader in 1991 and as museum administrator in 1993).



ABOVE: Section of proposed exhibit.
LEFT: Current view of gallery.

A Walk Through the Exhibit

The exhibit will consist of five sections, each featuring key artifacts, dynamic graphics, and lively interpretive labels.

- ▶ A dramatic introductory center “island” with a main label introducing the exhibition theme to the visitor alongside key objects and images symbolizing the story of how and why decoys are made.
- ▶ A colorful timeline explaining the evolution of the wooden decoy from its earliest use as a functional hunting tool until today.
- ▶ A large and dramatic map section illustrating the migratory patterns of birds, the locations along the Atlantic coast where extensive hunting took place, and the variations in and reasons for different styles of decoy carving.
- ▶ Approximately one-third of the entire gallery space will be devoted to explaining how decoys are made, both hand-chopped and lathe-turned by local artisans as well as factory-made.
- ▶ A concluding display section will show how wood carved decoys are no longer used as hunting tools but have evolved to become elaborate decorative artwork.

A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request by contacting the museum. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State for the cost of copying and postage.

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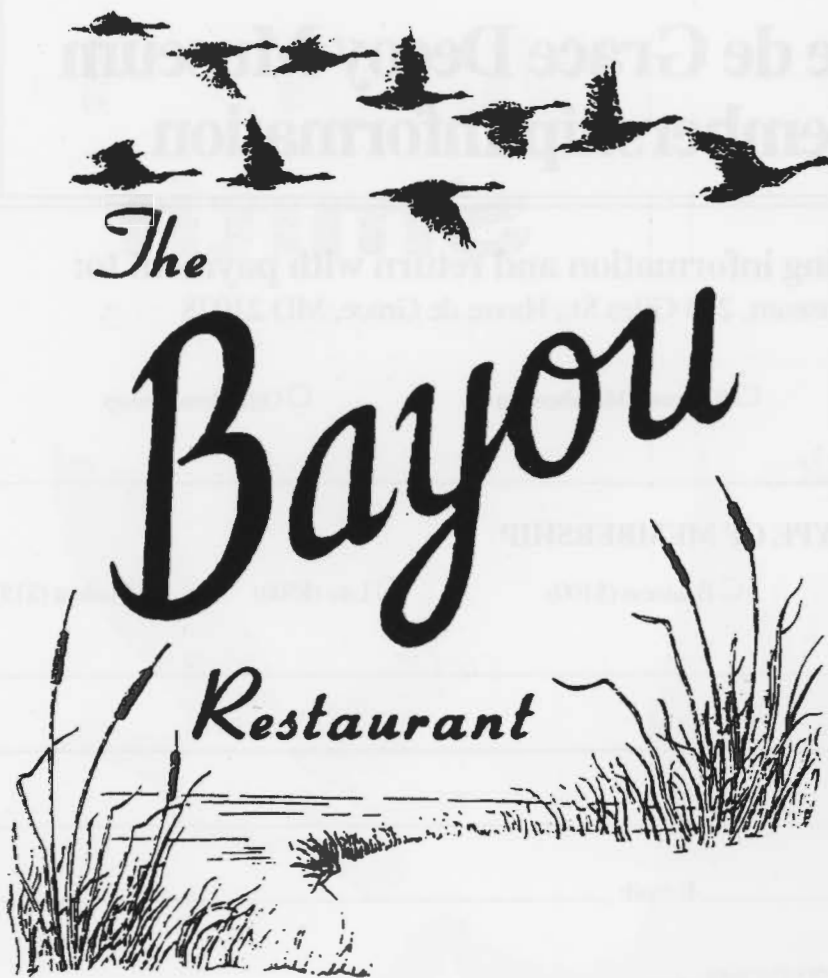
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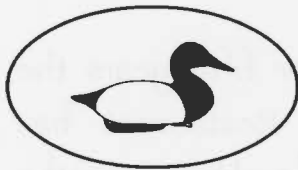
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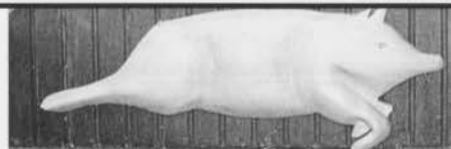
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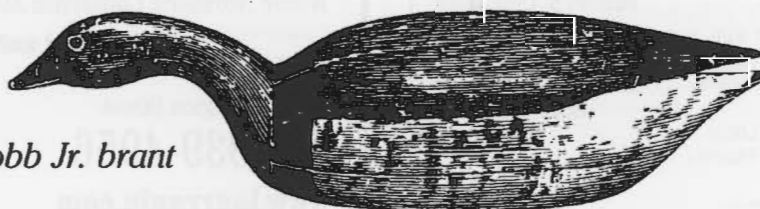
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Special Exhibits at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

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The Decoy Makers of Charlestown, Cecil County, Maryland, From the collection of Gerard William Wittstadt, Jr., Esquire, through Summer 2006

The Magnificent Michael Bequest, An Extraordinary Pair of "Daddy" Holley Canvasbacks through Fall 2006

On the Wings of History: Wing Duck Decoys (in cooperation with the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association) through Fall 2006

Tour Reservations

Book your spring tours early. Talk to your children's or grandchildren's teacher now about signing up for educational programs and tours of the Decoy Museum. Harford County school system classes are free and we have several different tours to offer for different age or grade levels. Programs for scout programs and groups of home schooled children are also available.

MAY 5-7	JUNE 24
25th Annual Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival. 140 exhibitors displaying antique and contemporary gunning decoys, decorative carvings, photography, flat art, and sculptures. Carving competitions will take place Saturday and Sunday. A live auction will be held on Saturday evening beginning at 5:30pm. Auction preview will begin at 1pm and bidder registration at 4pm. Admission is \$6/day, \$10/weekend. Hours are: Friday 6-9pm, Saturday 9-5pm, Sunday 10-4pm. Call 410-939-3739 for more information.	Summertime Blues Festival at the Steppingstone Museum, 2-8pm. Live blues music, beer & wine, food, period artisans. Outdoor event, rain or shine, no refunds. Advanced tickets sold. Call 410-939-2299 or 888-419-1762 or www.steppingstonemuseum.org for more information.
MAY 6-7	JUNE 28-JULY 2
Re-enactment of the attack on Havre de Grace—War of 1812. Lock House grounds; Saturday 10-5pm, Sunday 10-3pm. Call 410-939-5780 or www.lockhousemuseum.org for more information.	Havre de Grace Independence Celebration, Tydings Park. Rides and games for all ages. Open June 28-29 from 6-10:30pm, June 30-July 1 from 6-11pm, July 2 from 4pm-11:30pm. Call 410-939-4362 for more information.
MAY 10	JULY 2
Ellsworth Sank Historical Lecture Series, 7pm Havre de Grace City Hall. Lectures focus on the history and culture of Havre de Grace and surrounding region. Call 410-939-5780 or 410-939-7778 or www.lockhousemuseum.org for more information.	Havre de Grace Fourth of July Parade. Parade starts at 2pm with parade route follows Union Ave from St. John Street to Commerce Street. Call 410-939-4362 for more information.
MAY 20	Havre de Grace Fireworks. Fireworks start at approximately 9:30pm. Call 410-939-4362 for more information.
Back to the Future—Living History at the Lock House. Living History demonstrations will take place between 1-5pm. Call 410-939-5780 or www.lockhousemuseum.org for more information. Admission is free.	JULY 12-13
Civil War Living History Days—Steppingstone Museum. Saturday 9-5pm, Sunday 10-3pm. Call 410-939-5780 for more information. Admission.	UMBC presents a Shakespeare on Wheels production of "As You Like It" on the Market & Lafayette Street grounds of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, curtain at 7:30pm. Both performances are free to the public. Call 410-939-3739 or 939-3303 for more information.
JUNE 3-4	JULY 14-16
Mari*Fest. Havre de Grace Maritime Museum. All Day. The Maritime Heritage Festival will feature boat displays, nautical demonstrations, kids activities, Bay food, and the Upper Bay Soup Challenge. Call 410-939-4800 or www.hdgmaritimemuseum.org for more information. Admission.	38th Annual Decoys & Wildlife Art Show, Recreation Park Arena, Clayton, NY. Friday and Saturday 9-6pm and Sunday 10-4pm. Silent auction, raffle, contests. Call 315-686-5794 or www.timuseum.org for more information.
JUNE 5-11	JULY 29-30
McDonald's LPGA Championship, presented by Coca-Cola. Located at Bulle Rock Golf Course, 320 Blenheim Lane, Havre de Grace, MD. One of four "majors" on the LPGA tour. Proceeds benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Opens approximately 7-6am. Call 888-321-1681 or www.mcdslpgachampionship.com for more information. Admission.	Guyette & Schmidt Decoy Auction at the Boston Seaport Hotel in Boston's restored Seaport District. Indoor buy, sell, swap July 28th & 30th. Approximately 850 quality decoys & related items. For more information, contact www.guyetteandschmidt.com .
JUNE 11	
Havre de Grace Decoy Museum's 10th Annual Sporting Clays Classic. Registration and shoot begins at 9am, last shooter out at 12 noon. 75 targets, 4 Lewis Classes, 4 deep. Cash participation prizes, collector quality decoys carved by Delaware carvers. Senior, Ladies and Junior Classes. Main event \$75 with concurrents. For more information call the museum at 410-939-3739 or J&P Hunting Lodge at 410-438-3882. All proceeds to benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.	

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MAY

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Sunday, May 7 Decoy Festival—Capt. Bill Collins
& John Mitchell
Saturday, May 13 Noble Mentzer
Sunday, May 14 Joe Cook
Saturday, May 20 Patrick Vincenti
Sunday, May 21 open
Saturday, May 27 Jeanne Hiss
Sunday, May 29 open

JUNE

Saturday, June 3 Bob Hess
Saturday, June 10 Frank Mueller

Saturday, June 17 Jeanne Hiss
Saturday, June 24 George Stram

JULY

Saturday, July 1 open
Saturday, July 8 Frank Mueller
Saturday, July 15 Jeanne Hiss
Saturday, July 22 Dave Walker
Saturday, July 29 Capt. Bob Jobes

AUGUST

Saturday, August 5 George Stram
Saturday, August 12 Jeanne Hiss



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