

The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Fall/Winter 2020
Vol. 30 No. 2

\$3.00

NEW MUSEUM SCULPTURE

BY ARTIST

Matt Harris





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can•vas•back

(kan'ves bak'), n., pl. -backs, (esp. collectively) — back.

1. a north american wild duck, the male of which has a whitish back and a reddish-brown head and neck.
2. a style of decoy made famous by carvers of the Susquehanna Flats region.
3. a quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

THE MUSEUM WAS INCORPORATED IN 1981 AS A 501(c)(3) TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION TO COLLECT, DOCUMENT, PRESERVE, AND INTERPRET WATERFOWL DECOYS AS A UNIQUE FORM OF FOLK ART.

FUNDED IN PART BY



The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council (msac.org)

ON THE COVER

This outdoor waterfowl sculpture by local artist Matt Harris honors the countless men and women whose dedication, vision and contributions were invaluable in the growth and development of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The photograph to the right features Heidi Harris and the four Harris children striking a pose in front of Matt Harris' creation at the Decoy Museum.

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The Impact of COVID-19

at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

In March 2020, along with the rest of world, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum faced COVID-19. As the virus began to take its toll within the United States, the Museum was forced to close its doors in order to comply with Governor Larry Hogan's mandate. With that compliance, the Museum found itself closed to the public for twelve weeks.

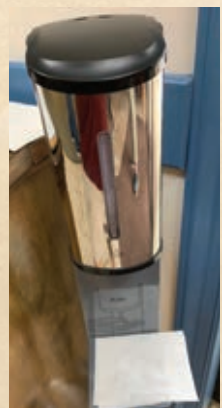
Valuing our dedicated staff members, the Museum Board opted to retain all employees for the entire twelve weeks. Although the employees for the most part stayed at home during this time, our staff did go to the Museum at least one day each week to attend to pressing matters. The Museum applied for and was very fortunate to be awarded a PPP loan which made it easier to keep our commitment to retain all our employees throughout the twelve-week COVID-19 closure.

COVID-19 forced cancellation of all the planned activities at the Museum. This included our educational speaker series, field trips, visitor groups and guest carver days at the R. Madison Mitchell Shop. Perhaps no impact was greater than the forced cancellation of our annual decoy and wildlife art festival that was scheduled for the first weekend in May. This event is a major fundraiser which the Museum depends on to raise the necessary funds for our continued existence.

On June 5, the Museum conducted a soft opening for three weeks running where we were open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. On June 26, the Museum re-opened its doors on a normal seven-day/ week schedule. By all accounts, our staff and our patrons were pleased that we re-opened. Although we are open, many things have changed at the Museum.

In compliance with CDC guidelines, all visitors and staff at the Museum must wear a face covering and practice social distancing. Hand sanitizer has been made readily available to all. The bathrooms are sanitized several times throughout each day. A sneeze guard has been installed at the Museum Store register to protect both our staff and our patrons. Frequently touched surfaces are sanitized on a regular basis.

Since our re-opening in June, we have had no reported instances of COVID-19 from any of our visitors and our staff has remained healthy. Please consider stopping by the Museum to enjoy our ever-changing exhibits; feeling confident that our staff will ensure that your visit will be safe and enjoyable.





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From the President...

As Fall begins, it's time to reflect on what we have experienced thus far in 2020 and what we might expect going forward. The COVID-19 situation has turned everyone's world upside down and continues to shape our every activity. We devoted an editorial to the impact of COVID-19 on the Museum earlier in this edition, therefore, I will not repeat what has already been communicated. Instead, I would like to focus on a few of the many new efforts under way at the Museum.



The Museum tasked local metalsmith artist Matt Harris to create a piece of outdoor waterfowl art that would complement the offerings found inside the walls of the Museum. It can safely be concluded that Matt succeeded in his effort. The finished product has drawn many visitors and shutterbugs alike. This artwork honors the many men and women whose dedication, vision and contributions have been invaluable in the growth and development of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The project was made possible through the generosity of the Carolyn Hargis Estate and Harford County Government.

Efforts are under way to improve our visitors' experience in each of the galleries of the Museum. LED lighting improvements are being implemented throughout all galleries, a body booting audio/visual presentation is in the works for the "Gunning the Flats" exhibit and the R. Madison Mitchell Shop presentation will be enhanced by improved LED lighting and an audio/visual discussion by R. Madison Mitchell Jr., Jim Pierce, Bill Collins and Bob Jobes.

The Mitchell Shop is in dire need of being protected from the elements. Efforts are under way to generate ideas to encapsulate the shop with a new building that ultimately will be connected to the main Museum building. A team has been formed comprised of the Museum Executive Committee as well as local subject matter experts to review our options and put forth a cost estimate to achieve this goal. The plan will be presented to the City of Havre de Grace for consideration once it is developed.

In July, the Museum lost our Executive Director, Kerri Kneisley, who accepted a new career opportunity that is much closer to her Lancaster, PA, home. During her tenure as Executive Director, Kerri served the Museum well, and her efforts are evident not only inside the Museum but in the work she performed as ambassador for the Museum while serving in the many local organizations of which she was an active member. The Museum family thanks Kerri for her efforts and hopes that she will visit us in the future.

I would be remiss to not thank our entire staff of employees and volunteers who have stepped up since our re-opening in June. Every member of our team has taken on new responsibilities to ensure that the Museum stays open and is properly sanitized every day throughout this uncertain time. Scott Moody has spent significant time keeping our IT technology current and performing properly. So, Dorene, Heather, Ginny, Mindy, Susan, Patty, Shawn and Scott; a heartfelt 'thank you' for doing what you do each day to make the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum a great experience for our patrons.

Mike Tarquini
Board President

MUSEUM EXPLORATIONS

Tour, Learn, Grow

Take a **MUSEUM SCAVENGER HUNT** and learn the history of duck hunting on the Susquehanna Flats. Ducks were as popular as crabs are today!

SEEK AND FIND picture hunt is delightful for our younger learners.

CARVERS GALLERY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE will entice you to learn about the men and women behind the decoys.

Learn about the history of Havre de Grace and the habitat of the Susquehanna Flats with our **PROMENADE EXPEDITION**.

So much to enjoy here at the Museum and in Havre de Grace — complete one activity today and come back again to try a different activity.

Book your tours early. Call Heather at **410.939.3739** or email the Museum at **education@decoymuseum.com**



Got time to spare... time to share?

Get involved with the Decoy Museum.

We are grateful for the generous support of our volunteers.

What do you like to do?

Can you lead tours, explain decoy making and the history of the Flats, present programs for school children, greet visitors at the information desk, assist in the museum store, help our curator on special projects, provide carving demonstrations, plan events, maintain IT systems, do exhibit signage and creative work, assist with fundraising and membership, organize chaos?



Contact the Decoy Museum Today to Join the Flock

410.939.3739

THE CLAY SHOOT CLASSIC

By: Mike Tarquini

Once again, the Annual Clay Shoot Classic was held at Schraders Outdoors in Henderson, MD. This year's competition took place on Sunday, September 13. Event chairman Bob Haase once again did an outstanding job organizing this year's shoot. Despite having fewer shooters than expected, the weather was great, and a good time was had by all. All participants shot in the main event, which consisted of 50 targets. Prizes were awarded in two categories: Museum member and Non-member.



Ben Spurry is the Big Winner at the Clay Shoot



Steve Spurry is the Winner for the Non-Member Class



Clay Shoot Prize Table

Main Event

Museum member:	1st Place:	Chris Cox (total score: 49)
Non-member:	1st Place:	Steven Spurry (total score: 45)

HOA Pump Shotgun Competition

1st Place: **Randy Tyler** (total score: 22)

Side by Side HOA Competition

1st Place: **Eric Fahrman** (total score: 28)

Junior Competition

1st Place: **Ben Spurry** (total score: 27)

Shell Game Competition

1st Place: **Ben Spurry**

Cash Lewis Event

Class 1	1st Place:	Chris Cox (total score: 49)
	2nd Place:	Mark Helmick (total score: 49)
	3rd Place:	Steven Spurry (total score: 45)
Class 2	1st Place:	Randy Tyler (total score: 42)
	2nd Place:	George Manahan (total score: 42)
	3rd Place:	Bob Haase (total score: 42)
Class 3	1st Place:	Michael Haddaway (total score: 38)
	2nd Place:	Benjamin Weldon (total score: 38)
	3rd Place:	Rick Holloway (total score: 37)

This year's clay shoot took extra precautions to social distance all participants. The traditional luncheon and awards ceremony were not held this year to keep all participants properly distanced from each other. Prizes were made available to all winners after the event, and all cash prizes were mailed.

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum sponsored most of the door prizes for the participants. Door prizes were won as the competitors placed their ticket stubs into special containers that accompanied each prize. Winners were drawn at random by Junior competitor Ben Spurry.

The prizes for the competition were handsomely displayed on a table inside of Schraders Outdoors. Participants had the opportunity to review them during the registration process. All prizes were donated by local carvers and collectors.

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum showcased a display consisting of classic editions of past Canvasback magazines which were offered free of charge to all clay shoot competitors. Museum information was also available at the Museum display. Announcements for the up coming 39th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Festival (May 1 & 2, 2021) were in plain sight throughout Schraders Outdoors.

All proceeds for the Classic Clay Shoot benefited the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. A special thanks to Bob Haase for organizing this year's event. The Decoy Museum would also like to thank Bob & Patricia Haase and Guyette & Deter for their generous sponsorships for this year's clay shoot.

Advertise in *The Canvasback*

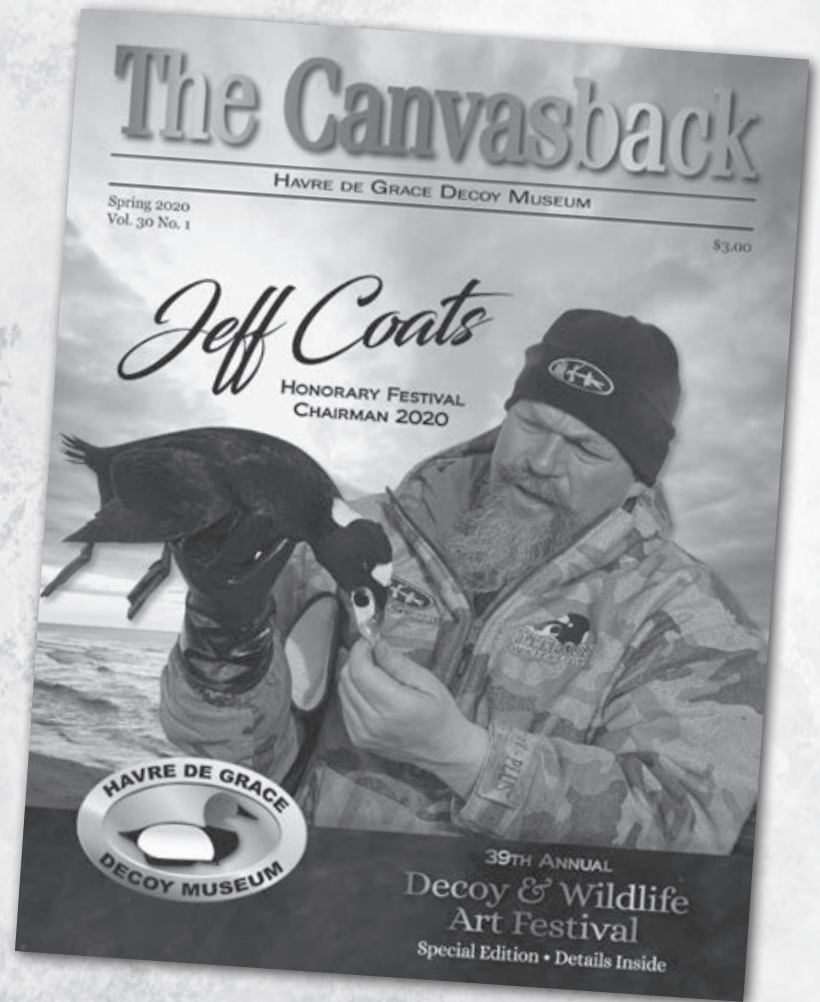
Help Harford County Tourism



Promote Your Business & Support the Decoy Museum

The Decoy Museum's annual Business Members receive:

- Advertising space in **The Canvasback** (four quarterly issues)
- A subscription to **The Canvasback**
- Special discounts for facility rentals (business or pleasure) in the Carvers' Gallery
- Updates on events & attractions at the Decoy Museum
- Complimentary admission tickets to the Decoy Museum for your employees and business associates. Each ticket provides for a 10% discount in the Museum Shop.

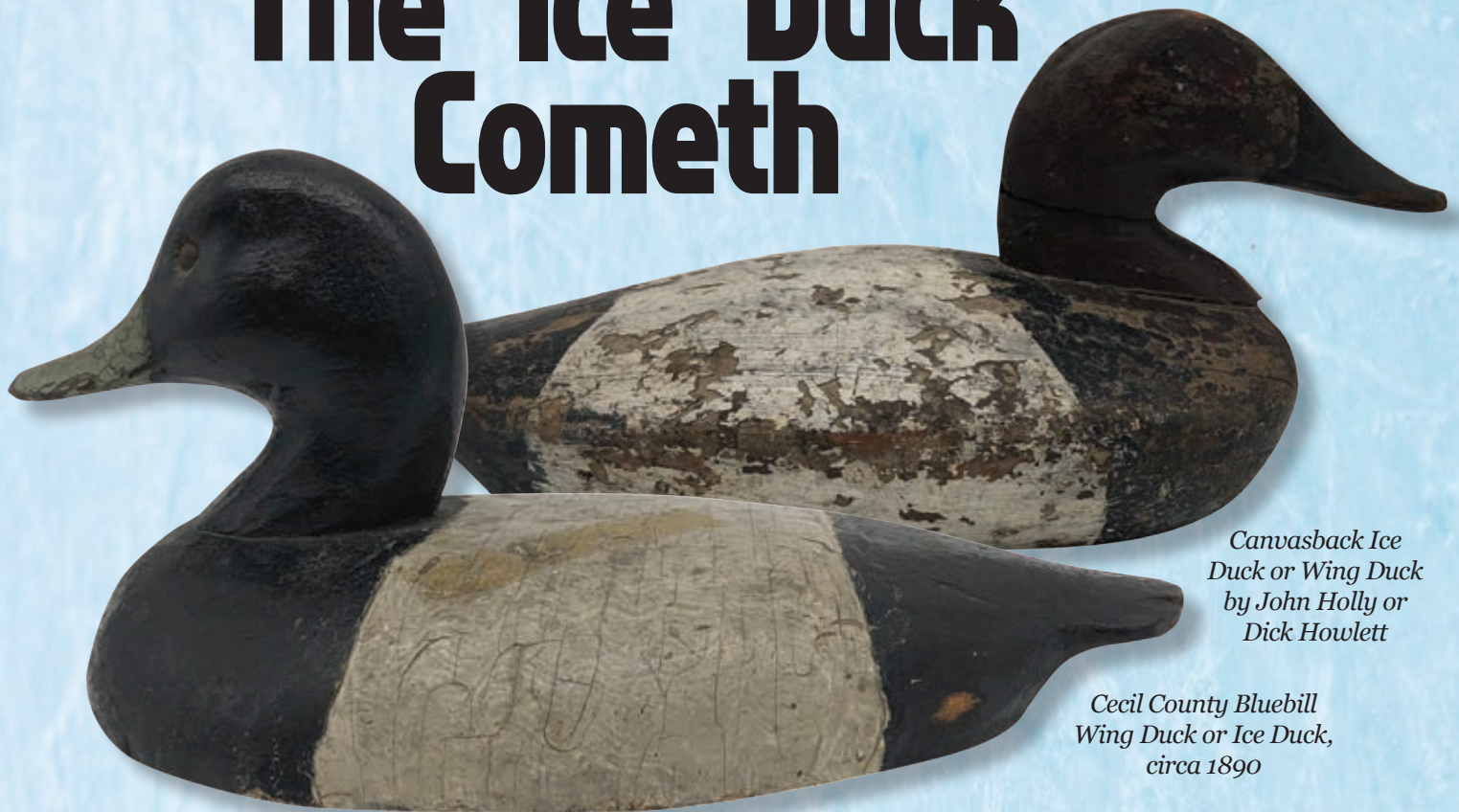


Business Membership rates (4 quarterly issues) are:

Supporter	\$175.....	Business card ad plus 5 admission tickets
Donor	\$325	Quarter-page ad plus 10 admission tickets
Patron	\$625	Half-page ad plus 20 admission tickets
Benefactor	\$1,200	Full-page ad plus 40 admission tickets

These rates are for grayscale ads. A surcharge applies for color ads (space available). Graphic design services are available for an additional charge.

The Ice Duck Cometh



*Canvasback Ice Duck or Wing Duck
by John Holly or
Dick Howlett*

*Cecil County Bluebill
Wing Duck or Ice Duck,
circa 1890*

Frozen Facets of Nature, Gunning & Life on Maryland's Susquehanna Flats

By Chad Tragakis

Reprinted from the September/October 2018 Issue of Decoy Magazine

When the thermometer hits 32 degrees Fahrenheit, 0 degrees Celsius, 273.15 Kelvin, everything changes. Liquid water is cooled, the molecules crystallize, stick together and turn into ice. As this thermodynamic transformation takes place outdoors each winter, it affects nearly every facet of nature and humanity. This impact was even more profound 100 years ago, and still more so in the decades before that. On the Chesapeake Bay's beautiful and historic Susquehanna Flats, this annual shift in the environment meant big changes for the local waterfowl population, for gunning, commerce, industry and countless other dimensions of day-to-day life.

When it came to waterfowling, perhaps J. Kemp Bartlett, Jr., put it best when he noted that, "Ice can sometimes be good for the shooting and then again very bad." The reflections he shared of days gunning the frozen Susquehanna Flats, published in the 1947 anthology, "Duck Shooting Along the

Atlantic Tidewater," make for an informative, engaging and important chronicle of this long-ago era and the impact weather could play:

"A sudden drop in the temperature on a still night will put a skim of ice on the water many yards from shore. On such a morning there will be many ducks in the air—great high strings of Canvasbacks and Redheads, good ducks from the upper bay where, because of the fresh water, the ice has frozen all over the flats and upper rivers. They are hungry and want to decoy. But ducks don't like to fly across ice and on most such occasions will not. We labor to cut long paths through the ice out to the open water and then push the ice fields out to make open water before the blind. Unless the tide helps often, the day is over before the ice is sufficiently cleared away. Sods cut from the marsh and placed on the edge of the ice will really bring the Blackducks, but why this is so is one of the mysteries of duck shooting to me."

While rare today, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, colder temperatures meant that it was not uncommon for the Susquehanna Flats and its surrounding rivers and streams to completely freeze over for days or weeks at a time. This left few options for hungry ducks. “Ice hole shooting,” the practice of hunting ducks near a naturally occurring opening or a man-made hole cut into the ice of the frozen waters of the Upper Chesapeake, was one of the earliest waterfowling methods practiced on the Flats. In fact, it was one of the methods described in a piece in the October 19, 1839, issue of *The Penny Magazine* titled: “Canvas-Back Ducks and the Manner of Shooting Them.” This article was one of the earliest and most complete on Upper Chesapeake Bay duck hunting published up until that time.

“Sometimes the winter is so severe that those parts of the bay the ducks are in the habit of frequenting become closed with ice, and consequently they are prevented from procuring their favourite food. Should the frost continue for some time, the ‘duck hunters’ cut openings in the ice, placing decoy-ducks close by them, and the flock of canvas-backs attracted to these openings, in quest of their favourite food, is sometimes very great, when considerable slaughter is made amongst them.”

Throughout the “golden age” of Susquehanna Flats waterfowling, ice was also used to the hunter’s advantage in several forms of sneakboating. In the dead of winter, when ice floes were a common occurrence on the Flats, chunks of ice were stacked on the sculling boat, and the boats themselves were painted completely white (inside and out) so as to simulate the appearance of a harmless floating iceberg.

*Charles Nelson
Barnard
Wooden Wing
Duck*

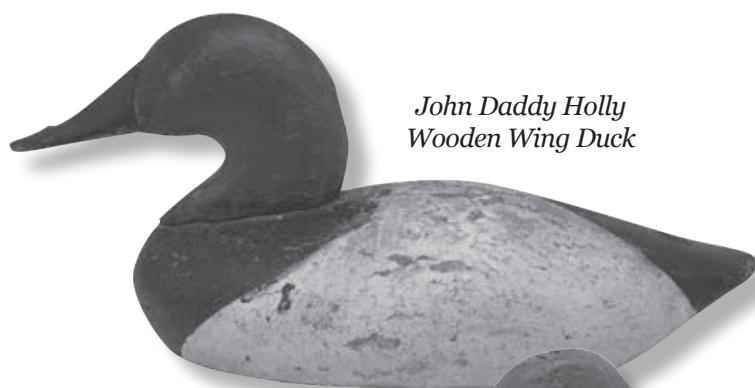


Before the Conowingo Dam was built in 1928, ice gorges (sometimes called ice dams) would occasionally jam the lower Susquehanna River, bringing significant flooding, destruction and disruption to the communities on its banks, including Havre de Grace and Port Deposit. In a 1979 interview with Mea Daum published in the *Havre de Grace Record*, Amos Hughes Spencer (1894-1983) remembered the toll the ice could take, but also the benefits it could bring. Spencer was the son of John Herman Spencer, founder of arguably the most famous of all Havre de Grace fisheries, Silver, Spencer & Company.

“There were ice gorges in 1904, 1907 and 1910,” he recalled, but noted that, “Since they built the dams up the river there haven’t been any more.” Spencer recalled that the gorge of 1904 actually picked up one of his family’s huge fishing floats, which had been anchored near the Tidewater Canal’s lockhouse, and carried it all the way into town, depositing it on a rock pile where the corner of Stokes and Superior Streets are today. The ice gorge of 1910 completely flattened the family’s Havre de Grace warehouse. In Port Deposit, several homes and businesses were leveled, and most of the town’s municipal records were destroyed. “I’d like to know how much money we lost in the ice gorges,” Spencer wondered. “After they were over we would have to go down the Bay to look for our scows and other equipment the ice had carried away. We’d generally find some of it.”

But in a manner similar to how fires can spur new forest growth, there was an upside to all that icy devastation – a cycle of renewal. “Those ice gorges were good for the Flats,” Spencer stated confidently. “They brought the mud up and let the sand settle to the bottom. Now the bottom of the Flats is all sand, and the celery can’t grow on it. That’s one reason why the canvasback ducks don’t come back to the Flats anymore.”

The ice gorges were also a boon to decoy makers on both sides of the river. As the floes pushed everything down the Susquehanna, high quality wood in the form of logs, lumber and boards from damaged homes, barns, bridges and other structures floated down to the Flats like a gift from on high. Wood from Pennsylvania’s great stands of eastern white pine—the dense primeval forests that were Penn’s Woods—was seemingly tailor-made for Upper Chesapeake Bay decoy making. It was straight-grained, would not warp and was easy for carvers to work with. It yielded decoys that were incredibly strong and durable yet lightweight, resistant to rot, and wonderfully buoyant. Garrett Island, between Harford and



*John Daddy Holly
Wooden Wing Duck*



*Jim Holly Redhead
Wooden Wing Duck*

Cecil Counties, was perfectly located to catch this floating wood and debris, and for months following one of the big floods, area decoy makers would flock to the shores to scavenge for material. A Perryville man reportedly built his entire house by salvaging wooden doors, windows and framing timbers he retrieved on the island throughout the spring after one of the gorges.

While canvasback ducks and fish like shad and herring were the take of choice for the market gunners and watermen of the Upper Chesapeake, their availability was seasonal. When the winter months transformed the Flats into a frozen tundra and put a chill on those more traditional pursuits, the men turned their attention to harvesting the ice itself. For decades from the mid-1800s up through the early years of the 20th century, ice harvesting on the Susquehanna Flats, its adjacent coves and tributary rivers was a huge and bustling operation. Nearly every community in the region had an ice house, but the Upper Chesapeake boasted several massive warehouses.

The American Ice Company maintained huge processing and storage facilities in Havre de Grace, Perryville and Frenchtown. After being harvested, ice was assembled, stored and carefully packed in these facilities and then shipped to Baltimore, Washington, New York and other cities by rail, barge or wagon and later by truck. The Pennsylvania Railroad track was immediately adjacent to the ice house in Perryville. Not only was ice transported by train, but it was also used in several types of refrigerated railcars, forever transforming a variety of industries (*see sidebar: Frozen Harvest*).

While much of the ice harvested on the Flats was destined for major mid-Atlantic markets and surrounding communities,

the immediate area's bustling commercial fish and duck distributors were significant consumers as well for refrigeration and cold storage. In fact, local ice and its ability to preserve and transport fish, ducks and other game was directly related to the success of the region's market gunning, fisheries and agriculture.

Throughout waterfowling's golden age, several notable gunners and decoy makers from the Susquehanna Flats were actively involved in local ice harvesting as yet another means of supplementing their annual income. In Havre de Grace, Lum Fletcher and members of the Holly family were among those cutting and hauling ice when the season came. Across the river, William Heverin, George "Wash" Barnes and other members of the extended Barnes family, all from Charlestown, were also active in the annual pursuit. Wash and his half-brother, Perry K. Barnes, assumed the family's farm, fishery and other businesses upon the death of their father, and this included a vast ice harvesting operation off the family's Carpenter's Point estate each winter.

The ice business was so successful, in fact, that around 1890, Perry Barnes built a brand-new state-of-the-art ice house right on the shoreline, at the corner of Water and Market Streets. In addition to ice, it was here that the Barnes family would store the herring, shad, and white perch and the ducks the family harvested before they were shipped out to East Coast markets by rail. This was also where fishing nets, decoys and other equipment were stored. Most notably for decoy collectors, the old ice house is where some of the rare Jim Holly teal decoys from P.K. Barnes' rig were found in 2013 (*see Decoy Magazine March/April, 2015*).

Another interesting connection between Barnes decoys and ice harvesting comes in the fact that, in addition to the impressed hot brands family members are known to have used on their



*Cecil County Canvasback
Wooden Wing Duck*

Playing in the Mud

Among the most vivid recollections shared by gunner, historian and decoy collector Norris Pratt in his section of Bobby Richardson's *Chesapeake Bay Decoys: The Men Who Made and Used Them*, was his memory of hunting from a "mudbox." Like the "icebox," this device was similar to the sinkbox, but had no wings. In shallow water, mud or on a sandy point, the box was fitted into a hole which had been dug out in the mud or sand near the shoreline. This method of gunning was practiced in the Upper Chesapeake, but was perhaps more common in the middle Bay region. Pratt, from Oxford, Pennsylvania, recalled using this contraption on the Susquehanna Flats in the 1920s:

"We had a mudbox, similar to a sink box except that it has no wing. It has one 12 inch board surrounding the area where the hunter lies. A hole was dug, out on the point of an island, to set the box in, then mud was piled on the sides to set it in deeper. By night, after getting in and out of the box several times during the day, we were mud all over. The wooden and live decoys were placed nearby, but when the tide rose quickly, we had to get out and move the box farther up the island. We didn't mind the mud, as we had plenty of shooting. The limit was 25 birds a day, but we never got our limit although we sometimes got a goose or two."

A side view of the Jim Currier icebox.



John Currier demonstrates how a hunter would lay in an icebox.



decoys (including P.K. BARNES, R.K.B., and the famous flower symbol of the gunning scow "Blooming Lily"), many, but not all, of the decoys in the family's rigs were also marked on the lead ballast weights with a small squarish indentation made with an ice-chisel or pick.

Decoy makers Asa "Ace" Owens and Henry Davis, both of Perryville, also provided ice for both the A. H. Owens and W. H. Cole fish houses, the area's two largest fish and duck wholesalers. Arthur H. Owens maintained a large icehouse in addition to a cold fish house; there was a long conveyor that took ice up from the river directly into the ice house. He shipped ducks and fish to most major East Coast markets by rail, and his employees were regular fixtures at the Perryville station. Locals recalled that the fish and ducks were incredibly fresh, often loaded onto the trains only a few hours after they were caught or gunned. William Hazlett Cole, Arthur Owens' cousin, operated a huge ice house for the cold storage of fish, ducks and other game including reed and rail birds, quail and rabbits. In the age before electricity, this was a vital local industry, allowing Cole, Owens and others to keep a long roster of East Coast clients well supplied with the bounty of the Bay's harvest.

The businesses were good-natured competitors; but as friends and relatives, the establishments were never at odds, and there was always more than enough business to go around. Both prided themselves on offering the freshest fish and choicest ducks and game available, buying in season from the men working the water. Their establishments were the largest buildings in that section of the river, and their vast ice houses always kept the take fresh and ready for sale. If local gunners had an especially good day on the water, Owens and Cole would typically allow them to store ducks in their facilities.

When considering the history and traditions of Susquehanna Flats waterfowling, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is the sinkbox. These were the floating devices in which a hunter—or in the case of a double sinkbox, two hunters—would lie in wait for ducks to alight into the rig of 300 or so decoys that surrounded him. Some early waterfowling chroniclers aptly described them as “floating coffins,” as the interior of the box was similarly shaped. But it was the incoming canvasbacks, not the hunter, that met their fate, and sinkboxes proved to be incredibly effective for the gunners who used them on the Susquehanna Flats.

A lesser known but related form of gunning practiced by some hunters in the Upper Bay region was ice boxing. This form of hunting employed essentially the same principles as sinkbox shooting: it involved a box set into the ice as opposed to “sunk” into the water. To accomplish this, iceboxes were constructed similarly to sinkboxes, but with a few key differences.

The coffin-like portion in which the gunner would lie was identical to those of the sinkbox, but instead of being surrounded by a series of wooden and canvas “wings” to keep them afloat at the proper level, the boxes were attached to a supportive platform consisting of a series of wooden cross-pieces that would rest on the ice, keeping it steady and flush with the surface level. Hunters would cut or chip a hole in the ice in the preferred location that would be long, wide and deep enough to accommodate placement of the box portion.

Another key difference was that iceboxes were painted white (inside and out) instead of the typical gray or blue-green colors that adorned most sinkbox outfits. Gunners would dress completely in white, as well, so as to blend in as closely as possible to the box and surrounding ice. For additional concealment, wooden “wing ducks” would be placed around the outer edges of the icebox. However, since an icebox didn’t need to be further weighted down or “sunk” to the proper level like a traditional floating sinkbox, iron and lead wing ducks were not used. And of course, while a sinkbox experienced some degree of movement on the water, even though it was anchored fore and aft, the icebox was completely stationary.

Most iceboxes featured some type of metal runners, skids or sleds attached to their bottoms, allowing hunters to more easily push or skate the heavy contraptions out to open water and move them into the desired position. As with sinkboxes, there was great variety in their individual construction and configuration and in the specific materials used. This was due

to their limited or individual production, their handcrafted nature, the thrift and resourcefulness of the men who made them and the prevailing spirit of the times.

There are also stories of hunters using the icebox contraption on the surface, at an angle, representing a large ice floe or snow bank, behind which the hunter would crouch and hide, fully concealed within the white camouflage. Decoy maker, hunting guide and market gunner Joe Dye is known to have gunned with great success for black ducks and other waterfowl from an icebox.

Collectors sometimes encounter vintage Susquehanna Flats decoys, usually canvasbacks, with flat or semi-flat bottoms that seem slightly thinner than a standard floating decoy, but with bodies noticeably thicker than those of most wooden wing ducks. In at least some cases, these are believed to be surviving examples of “ice ducks” or “ice decoys” for their supposed use with an icebox. Presumably, these decoys were designed to work better with and look more realistic in the spread on the surface surrounding the icebox.

For many collectors, the term “ice duck” immediately conjures up images of the standing mallard, pintail and Canada goose decoys by Peoria, Illinois, decoy maker, Charles Schoenheider, Sr. Schoenheider’s carvings, thought to have been painted by Jack Franks, were used in an entirely different way from the Upper Chesapeake Bay “ice ducks.” The hollow, full-bodied decoys, mounted at a slight angle onto a sturdy, single cast iron foot, could be placed on ice or in a field instantly adding incredible realism and visibility to a hunter’s rig. By briefly



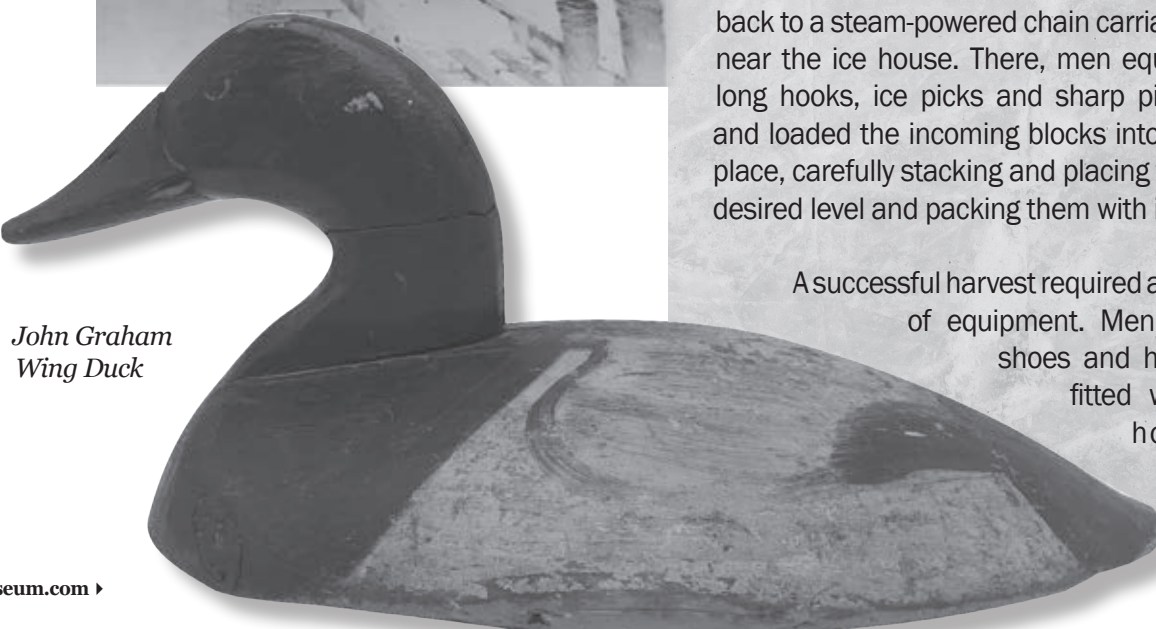
*Jim Holly
Canvasback
Wooden Wing
Duck*

heating up the iron foot before setting it out, the ice around it would melt and then quickly refreeze, holding the bird firmly in place.

Among Chesapeake Bay collectors, some believe that certain wooden wing ducks or other flat-bottomed decoys with thin bodies (but perhaps not quite as flat as a wing duck), especially those exhibiting carved chine lines angled and downward sloping to the middle of the bodies, were specifically made and used as ice ducks and are often labeled as such. However, many longtime collectors believe it is difficult if not impossible to tell if a certain decoy is truly an ice duck. Others firmly believe that few makers would go to the trouble of producing specialized decoys for use with an icebox when standard wooden wing ducks could be used effectively in both applications. After all, these were practical, thrifty and efficient men.

While some of these decoys may in fact have been used for that purpose, it's doubtful that any commercial makers produced them expressly for this application or marketed them as such. Therefore, the authenticity of a true "ice duck" probably comes down to the intent of the hunter. The icy provenance of one known example comes largely from the stories of its use over the years passed down from hunter to collector. In this case, a decoy made by John Graham used on both a sinkbox and an icebox by Captain Joseph Heisler was identified as such as it passed from Nelson "Heis" McCall to Somers G. Headley and on again within the community of collectors.

*The Havre
de Grace Ice
Harvest*



*John Graham
Wing Duck*

Frozen Harvest

The ice trade revolutionized U.S. commerce and forever changed the way Americans ate. Before the 19th century, food preservation relied on techniques like salting, curing or smoking. Industrialization, urbanization and rising living standards in the 1880s only spurred the demand for ice. Harvesting ice was a profitable enterprise for communities on the Upper Chesapeake Bay – almost as important as gunning, fishing, the railroad, agriculture, foundries and canning. Many local men relied on such jobs to make ends meet during the coldest weeks of winter.

One of the best and most complete descriptions of the Havre de Grace ice harvest comes from an account in the February 15, 1912 edition of *The Telephone News* published by the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania. The article outlines the process from start to finish and noted that the river yielded a particularly good crop that year, "twelve inches thick and solid as marble." The process usually started about halfway out on the river's surface where teams of men aided by horse-drawn plows would cut into the frozen Flats.

The first step was to cut out a channel of free-flowing water, roughly a quarter of a mile long, in which large blocks of ice could be floated back toward shore. The surface was then marked out to facilitate the cutting of uniform blocks or "cakes" of ice, each about 22 inches square and weighing some 200 pounds, which were guided back to a steam-powered chain carriage elevator near the ice house. There, men equipped with long hooks, ice picks and sharp pikes guided and loaded the incoming blocks into the proper place, carefully stacking and placing them at the desired level and packing them with insulation.

A successful harvest required a wide range of equipment. Men wore cork shoes and horses were fitted with spiked horseshoes allowing

them to move safely on the ice. Initially, only basic tools such as pickaxes and chisels were used but, later, specialized saws, tongs, hooks and pry bars designed and marketed by several national firms allowed for large scale, commercial harvesting. Flats gunners adopted many of these same tools for their late winter waterfowling pursuits.

Most icehouses had double walls with a thick layer of insulation between them, often cork. Incidentally, some of this same cork insulation would later find its way into the production of decoys. The ice blocks themselves were packed in natural insulation of sawdust and hay made from local river grass. Well-insulated ice could last through at least the next November. Harvested ice was shipped all over the U.S., but in the years just before the Civil War, ice was also the nation's second largest export, behind only cotton, shipped to at least 43 countries. The natural ice industry thrived for decades but dwindled as modern refrigeration became more widely adopted. Competition also came from new factories that produced higher quality and a more consistent supply of manufactured artificial or "plant" ice. The American Ice Company established ice manufacturing plants up and down the east coast, including a huge state-of-the-art facility in Baltimore.

A few years before the start of World War I, the American Ice Company facility in Perryville, which was located right on the water, burned to the ground. Smoke rising from the building could be seen for miles. The disaster had a substantial and adverse impact on the town's economy and on the broader local community for some time given the loss of direct and indirect revenue. One benefit to local gunners, however, was that since the property was largely unused for many years, the shoreline was the perfect place from which to launch their boats for sinkbox shooting and later, for bushwhacking.

If the ice covering the Flats was thin enough, hunters could boat out and carefully break it up, clearing enough area to launch and use a standard sinkbox. In a 1989 interview with David and Joan Hagan, duck hunter, decoy maker and historian Evans McKinney recalled that: "On one particular hunt we had cut a hole in the ice for the sinkbox. We gunned for three days and killed a total of 220 canvasbacks. This was back in the late 1920s. We sold them for \$6.00 to \$7.00 a pair. The ducks were shipped to restaurants in Philadelphia and New York in boxes marked as fresh fish."

Compared to sinkboxes, iceboxes were far less common than were their closely related cousins, "mudboxes" (see sidebar). Surviving examples of any of these hunting devices are extremely rare today, which makes the story of one especially notable icebox all the more remarkable. Sometime around World War I, Havre de Grace decoy maker, gunner and guide Jim Currier, built an icebox for winter duck shooting. He already had a sinkbox but this new device, he realized, would help him extend the gunning season and increase his take of ducks.

Made of sturdy white pine, it measured approximately six and a half feet long down the "coffin" section, with a tapered width measuring 22 inches at the head end, down to 12 and a half inches at the foot end. Two wooden "ribs" were affixed to the outer wall of each side of the main box for added strength. A frame consisting of two 78 inch long planks measuring approximately 8 inches by 1 inch were attached to the main box with two 34 inch long cross pieces, which in turn, were secured to the ends of the box, each with two large bolts.

The main box measured 16 inches deep, but it had a false bottom about two inches above the actual bottom, which allowed any water that accumulated inside the main box to flow down and drain out.



*Lum Fletcher
Wing Duck*

Attached to the bottom were two carefully mounted metal runners or skids allowing the heavy box to be easily pushed across the ice. The entire box was lined with heavy marine canvas, painted completely white, which was unrolled and spread out over top of the entire device when deployed.

Years later, Currier met a young Jim Pierce when the latter was working in R. Madison Mitchell's shop, and he took an immediate liking to the hard working and talented youngster. From that first meeting until Currier passed away, Pierce enjoyed a special relationship with the elder decoy maker. "He got me a job working for the Post Office when I was 14," Pierce recalls. "By the time I was 16, I could drive the mail truck making routes. Around the holidays and during the busier months I was working Saturdays too, so six days a week. I started helping him around the decoy shop some too," he remembers. According to Pierce, Mitchell was happy he was getting such steady work, but clearly disappointed to be losing one of his best and most capable assistants.

It was during one of those afternoons helping out in Currier's workshop that Pierce first spied the derelict icebox and the dilapidated sinkbox that had served the old waterman so well decades earlier. Jim loved to hear Currier share tales of the days of old, when he was putting those gunning boxes to good use. "Mr. Currier said he used the icebox from about 1916 right up through 1934, when the sinkbox was outlawed," Pierce recalls. "I said to him, Mr. Currier, what are you going to do with those old boxes? And he said, 'well, I'm not going to be doing much with them anymore,' and so he gave them to me." That was in 1952. The icebox spent most of the past 65 years resting quietly behind Pierce's Havre de Grace home and workshop.

Pierce explained that icebox shooting worked best when large sections of the Flats froze over, leaving only a few open holes in the ice for ducks to gather and access food. Typically, the

icebox would be set about 20 feet away from the hole where the ducks would flock and alight. About 20 or 30 decoys were used in conjunction with an icebox – gunners would usually toss a dozen or so standard floating decoys into the hole in the ice, and another 15 or 20 wooden wing ducks were used on or near the box itself.

Shooting from an icebox really came down to dollars and cents, and for the men shooting for the market, as Currier was at the time, it could be incredibly lucrative. "It was uncomfortable and it could be dangerous too, but the money was good," Pierce explained. "Remember, good ducks like cans would normally bring between 2 and 3 dollars a pair, but when the ice came and the Flats froze up, availability went way down. But the rich man has still got to have his canvasbacks, right? So, he's going to pay whatever the market bears. During this time, cans could bring between 5 and 7 dollars a pair."

Fast forward to the 2017 Vintage Hunting and Fishing Collectibles show held at the Level Volunteer Fire Company hall just outside Havre de Grace. Jim Currier's grand-nephew, John Currier, met up with Jim Pierce to talk ducks. Jim Currier was like a second father to John's mother Jane, his niece, who seemed to spend more time at his house than at her own. During their conversation John mentioned to Jim that his mother had been reminiscing about some of her uncle's old stories and she was asking about what had happened to the old icebox. Just as his former mentor no longer had a need for it all those years ago, now, neither did he. "I'll fix it up for you and drop it off at Jane's house," Jim told John, and a few weeks later, with the refurbished ice box looking nearly as good as the day it was fashioned, he made a very special delivery. Now, visitors to Miss Jane's bed-and-breakfast, Currier House, can see the old contraption in its newly restored glory – from one Havre de Grace decoy making legend to another.

Author's Note: Part Two of this article will appear in the Spring 2021 issue of The Canvasback. Among the areas that will be examined and discussed: More on ice box shooting and the use of "ice duck" decoys; the impact of the winter freeze on the Susquehanna Flats, waterfowling and the various boats used in duck shooting; the early ice boat competitions held out on the Flats, and; the fascinating connection between early duck hunters, decoy makers and ice skating.

With special thanks to the late Evans McKinney, Allen Purner, Dr. Harry Walsh, Henry Fleckenstein, Uncle Holly Drennen, Ms. Bea Owens, Bill Weaver, Moke Boyd and Cran Henry; and also, to Jim Pierce, Jack Manning, Larry Ortt, John and Cindy Currier, Ms. Jane Currier, Dick McIntyre, Bill Cordrey, Rod Wittstadt and cecilcountydecoys.com, Dave and Joan Hagan, Jim Trimble and David Farrow.



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Attics & Other Favorite Places

By: C. John Sullivan, Jr.

For most of my life, attics and basements have been two of my most favorite places to visit. I realize that I have been extremely fortunate to have had access to these recesses in many homes and buildings. My first of many discoveries in attics was my grandfather's shotguns in our family home in Fallston. Several years after that, I found my grandfather's work journals from his years as the Building and Bridge foreman for the Maryland Pennsylvania Railroad. Later experiences would lead me to the attic and basement of the Harford County Courthouse, where I uncovered the assessment records for all of the historic gunning clubs in Harford County. A chance encounter placed me in the basement of a house in Havre de Grace, where bushel baskets of decoys carved by Charles Nelson Barnard were stored. My good fortune caused my best decoy friend and mentor, the late Henry A. Fleckenstein, to frequently ask me "so what did you get out of a basement or attic this week?" Perhaps one of my best days was spent in the attic and basements of the Pusey homes on Swan Creek. It was here that I discovered the mint 1929 Canvasbacks carved by Robert F. McGaw.







In 1992 following the Maryland Historical Society's exhibit "Maryland's One Hundred Best Decoys," a new exhibition was launched, "Treasures from the Attic." This was to be my first participation in an exhibit featuring objects that had not been viewed in decades. Fast forward to July 2020 and imagine my enthusiasm when Steve Smith called me from the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum with an idea of an exhibition of objects from the Museum's collection that had been stored since they arrived in Havre de Grace. I had walked by these objects many times and often thought we should do an exhibit someday so that visitors could enjoy viewing these things.

On a late July 90-degree day, Steve Smith, Jim Carroll, and I met Ginny Sanders upstairs at the Museum. We entered each storage area, searching shelf after shelf for items never viewed by visitors to the Museum. A wonderful rare skipjack model and our very own breech-loading punt gun were at the top of each one's list. We added other objects before beginning the selection of decoys. A delightful hand-chopped bailing scoop, a feather-light push pole, a pair of oars, and a painting of waterfowl in the air added to the variety of artifacts.

The decoys selected for display offer a wide range rarely seen in many exhibits. From the city of Havre de Grace, we selected an early James T. Holly canvasback wearing its original cast iron ballast weight and a pair of cork canvasbacks created by Samuel T. Barnes and branded High Point Gunning Club. Also from Havre de Grace are a black duck carved by Bailey Moltz and an early Robert F. McGaw pintail drake. From the other side of the Susquehanna, we included a Joseph Coudon decoy frame of bluebills. From the lower shore of Maryland, two pintails were chosen, one by the Ward Brothers, the other by Lloyd Sterling.



Reaching into the shelves of decoys from the State of Virginia, we uncovered a Miles Hancock merganser drake and an Elijah "Eli" Doughty brant. Adding to the Virginia group, an Ira Hudson Canada goose joined the rig. An Eastern Shore of Virginia shore bird and a diminutive bluebill drake rounded out the Virginia grouping. Several factory decoys add interest to the display. A Mason Factory brant among them, along with a rather funky owl decoy of compressed paper mache. One of my favorite factory decoys is a stuffed canvas-covered Canada goose. An oddity among the decoy selection, we included a pair of bluebill duck skins preserved and used as decoys. A display of cast lead decoy anchor weights rests among the selection. Hanging high over the exhibit is an extremely rare flying English wood pigeon. Last but certainly not least is one remaining artifact from our attic – a very early powder horn presented in wonderful patina and wearing several elaborate etchings carved into its surface.

For those of you who have not visited the Museum in quite some time, I urge you to stop by wearing your mask and maintaining a safe distance from others to view this exceedingly rare display of decoys and artifacts from our attic.

A man with a beard and sunglasses on his head is smiling in a workshop. He is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a brown leather apron. He is sitting on a wire mesh sculpture. In the background, there are various tools and equipment, including a large wire mesh sculpture and a red power tool.

Design, Forge & Craft

The Matthew Harris Studio Story

By Mike Tarquini

**“I enjoy the variety
and the unique
challenges that
come along with the
sculpture projects.”**

-Matt Harris

In the Fall of 2019, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum embarked on a very ambitious mission to recreate the landscaping in front of the building. The Museum worked closely with Eagle Scout Liam McKaig (*Troop 238, Hickory, MD*) and several community partners to install approximately 360 Maryland native plants in an estimated 3,000 square foot area (*reported in the Spring 2020 issue of the Canvasback*). As this effort was taking shape, it became the desire of the Museum Board that a “tribute” of some sort be added to the newly landscaped area to honor the countless men and women whose dedication, vision and contributions have been invaluable in the growth and development of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

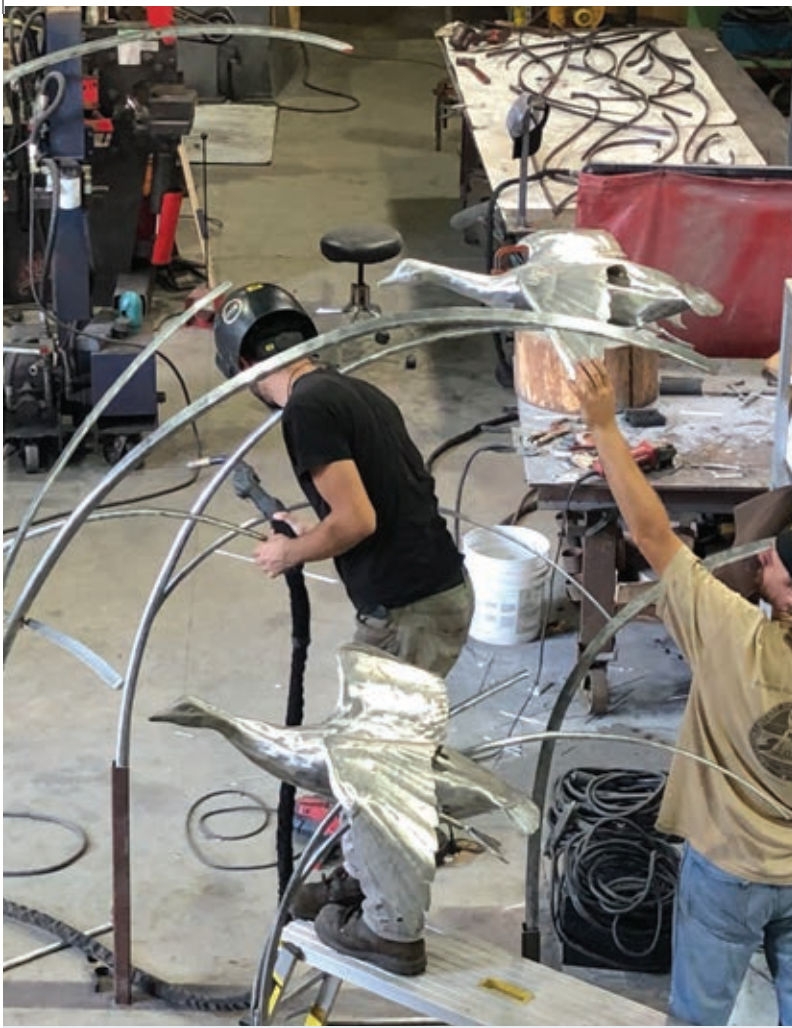
When the tribute idea was discussed with John Akehurst (*Akehurst Landscaping*), he immediately advised the Museum to contact Matt Harris, owner of Harris Metalsmith Studio. It was that advice, coupled with a phone call to Matt Harris that allowed our “idea for a tribute” to transition into a reality. Harris Metalsmith Studio worked directly with the Decoy Museum Board to create an outdoor art sculpture from Aluminum metal featuring a combination of flying full-sized Geese and Canvasback Ducks positioned among reed grass heading towards the famed Susquehanna Flats.

Beginnings

In 1994, Matt Harris (*age 14*) was a member of the Royal Rangers (*a religious based organization much like the Boy Scouts of America*) where he first became interested in working with metal as a blacksmith. After that experience, Matt advanced his interest in blacksmithing by working with the late Alphonsus Moolenshot. Moolenshot, a European Master Blacksmith who migrated to the United States in the 1950’s from Amsterdam (*the Netherlands*) operated a blacksmith shop in Rising Sun, MD. Matt initially worked only on Saturdays with Moolenshot, but that quickly morphed into a three- and one-half-year apprenticeship with his first mentor.

It was during this apprenticeship that Matt learned and refined his blacksmithing skills. Matt’s experience base broadened as he worked for three additional shops over the next six years. During this period, he focused on industrial forging, architectural metal work and 18th Century hardware production. Throughout this time, Matt was eager to establish his own shop. That became a reality when he operated out of a small shed located in his parents’ backyard in Port Deposit, MD. Ronnie and Maxine Harris (*Matt’s parents*) were supportive throughout his apprentice days, so it came as no surprise to learn that they hosted his first shop. Matt stated, “at





that point, Harris Metalsmith Studio was born.” Matt moved his operation from its humble beginnings to its current location on the historic property of Principio Furnace (*Perryville, MD*) in 2004.

Current Focus

Harris Metalsmith Studio focuses on high-end architectural metal work and select unique sculpture projects (like the Decoy Museum’s project). According to Matt, “I enjoy the variety and the unique challenges that come along with the sculpture projects.” Matt shared that, “hand-crafted work is becoming more unique as metal work increasingly relies on more modern mechanical techniques.” Oftentimes, it becomes necessary to work with engineers and architects to ensure the artwork created by Harris Metalsmith Studio meets all his customers’ requirements and can withstand the conditions it will endure when it is installed in its final resting place. The current focus on unique sculptures prompted Matt to recently change the name of his business to Matthew Harris Studio in 2020.

Family Affair

Ever since Matt Harris’ parents began their involvement in his blacksmithing endeavors, they have continued to support him every step of the way. Ronnie Harris, a retired Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police Officer (*2008*), has worked with Matt on many projects. Ronnie had to learn how to transform raw metal stock into desired forms using handcrafting and modern mechanical techniques. Matt shared his earlier blacksmithing learnings with his dad quickly shaping him into an asset within his shop. Ronnie, a decoy maker and collector, brought some of his talent and experience to the blacksmith shop and is especially helpful with projects requiring waterfowl imagery. Maxine Harris, Matt’s mom, learned to perfect a “repoussé” technique that hammers and chisels flat metal in order to give it a third dimension. The Statue of Liberty was created by a “repoussé” technique out of copper metal. Both Ronnie and Maxine have been major contributors to the various projects that Matthew Harris Studio undertakes.



As the business grew, Heidi Harris (*Matt’s wife*) joined as Studio Manager in 2016. Heidi’s responsibilities ensure that the customer interactions and business documentation keep pace with the ever-growing number of projects that enter Matthew Harris Studio. Heidi shared, “even our children contribute in the shop where they can.” Matt and Heidi Harris have four children ranging from eleven to fifteen years of age. With the children involved in the business, Matt has set the stage to teach the craft of blacksmithing to the next generation of the Harris family.

The Decoy Museum Project

When asked why the Decoy Museum project appealed to him Matt stated, “he saw some special artistic and technical challenges within the project that enticed him to take it on”. He went on to say, “my father’s decoy making experience made this a great project that we could work on together.”

The Harris team used both goose and canvasback duck taxidermy mounts to ensure the sculptures were technically accurate. Tissue paper was employed to create templates from which the sheet metal was shaped to provide a three-dimensional body for both the geese and canvasback ducks. Ronnie Harris whittled the goose and duck heads out of wood that would later serve as templates for a “match plate casting” technique that was used to make the heads. The wings and tails for both species were created by the “repoussé” technique described earlier in this article.

Both MIG and TIG welding techniques were used to attach the wings and tail feathers to the bodies. The heads were casted from Aluminum at ALL Quality Aluminum Forgery (*Smoketown, PA*) in order to give the birds a lifelike and realistic appearance. The finished sculpture was powder coated in order to provide a protective surface at East Coast Powder Coat (*North East, MD*). Lastly, the reed structures were forged from solid Aluminum rods. The forging process involved heating and hammering the metal into the desired form. According to Matt, “forging Aluminum presents some special challenges not found with other metals as it cannot be heated as much and shows no visible color difference when ready.”

Future

The current strategy for Matthew Harris Studio is to continue to produce high quality architectural and sculpture work. Plans are underway to establish an on-line store in the very near future that will feature home furnishings which will allow Matt to incorporate his artistic ability and metal working skills in order to bring a uniqueness to household items. According to Heidi Harris, “shopping on-line is becoming increasingly popular for consumers and we need to be there.” When asked about what differentiates Matthew Harris Studio from others, Matt proudly stated,

“we use our artistry to Design, we use our blacksmithing talent to Forge and we use our hand crafting expertise to Craft the final high-quality product.”



Spring 2020

Raffle Winners



1st Prize:
\$500 Cash
Judith Lubcher



2nd Prize:
Hooded Merganser
by Jeanne Hiss
Peter Jay



3rd Prize:
**Print - "Mitchell Shop & 1950's
Canvasbacks"**
Joe Miller



4th Prize:
Redhead Drake
by Joe Cook
Tom Coudon

Fall 2020

Raffle

A chance to win ONE of four valuable prizes.
Four tickets will be drawn.

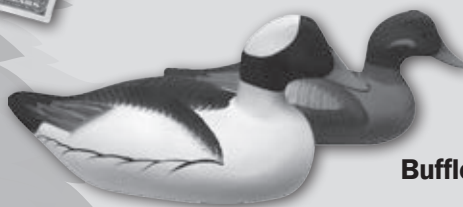
Tickets are \$5.00 each
6 for \$25.00 • 10 for \$40.00



1st Prize:
\$500 Cash



2nd Prize:
Canvasback Pair by Capt. Harry Jobes



3rd Prize:
**Bufflehead Pair by Dan
Carson**

4th Prize:
"Autumn Resting Place" Print
by Rob Leslie

Drawing Saturday, Dec. 12th at 8:00 pm. • Havre de Grace Decoy Museum
For tickets call **410.939.3739** or email: information@DecoyMuseum.com
(additional tickets will be available at the Museum)

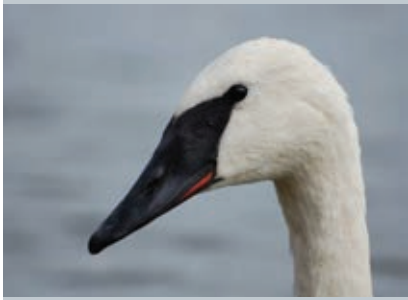
TRUMPETER SWAN

(*Cygnus buccinator*)



CANVASBACK NATURALIST

Canvasback Naturalist is a new feature of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum's quarterly Canvasback Magazine. Each edition will feature a natural history topic relating to the mission of the museum. The author, **John Hughes** is a retired science teacher from the John Carroll School (1972-2015). His subject areas included Chesapeake Bay Studies, Ecology (freshwater and marine) and Environmental Science. As a naturalist, John helped to develop natural history programs for a myriad of environmental organizations and schools. As a field educator and canoe guide, he led trips throughout the Eastern United States (especially the Southeast), Central America and the Caribbean. He presently serves as a member of the Museum's Board.



As a young naturalist exploring the Chesapeake Bay, I was excited by observations of the Tundra Swan then known as the Whistling Swan. I remember watching huge flocks perform “Swan Falls” (Sir Peter Scott). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mute Swans expanded in the Chesapeake Bay

and showed the harm that an exotic species could deliver. Although Trumpeter Swans were occasionally reported, I was never able to spot one. I had hoped my parents could take the family to Yellowstone National Park so I could observe one, but that didn’t happen.

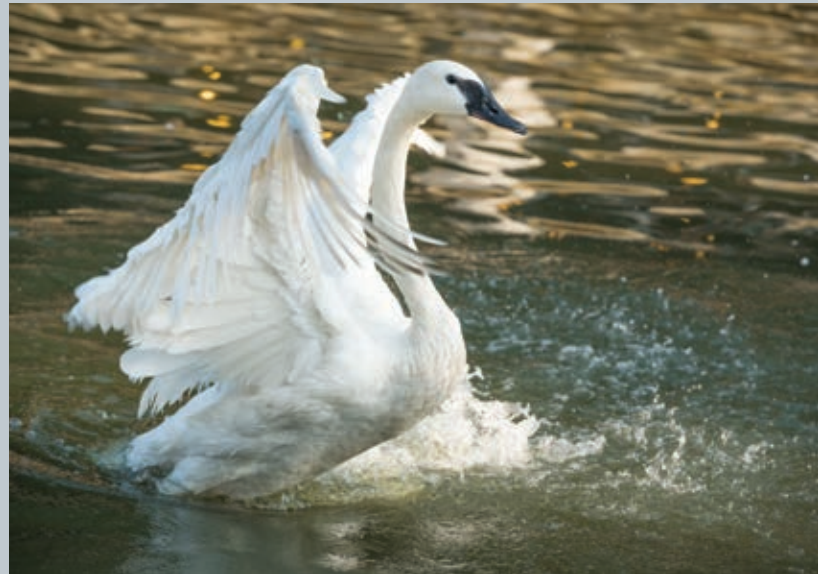
In 1979, while working as a naturalist for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), I would have my first encounter. As a field educator with CBF, one of my responsibilities was to lead waterfowl study trips throughout the Northern and Central Bay. Occasionally, these trips would be with Dr. William Sladen and his Swan Research Project. On one such winter program with eight students from John Carroll School, we met Dr. Sladen at his house on the Magothy River. In the morning, my students and I worked with Dr. Sladen doing a necropsy (autopsy) on dead Tundra Swan. We were looking for evidence of lead pellet ingestion leading to lead poisoning-induced mortality. Unfortunately, that proved to be the outcome.

In the afternoon, we went down to Dr. Slater’s pond near the river and there it was—a huge Trumpeter Swan! Obviously, I was ecstatic only to be told that I was responsible for capturing him. After much effort, I had him in my arms but just barely. His power and strength were quite challenging. With luck, my students were able to measure him: weight, body size and blood work. What a thrill for both the students and of course me (even Dr. Sladen). I was most impressed by the beauty and power of this magnificent bird. Also, a side-note that this particular swan was given to Moscow as a part of emerging Détente between the former USSR and the United States. At the time, I was teaching a course in Russian history at John Carroll School. Could this have really happened? It did!

Flash forward to the Christmas holidays of 2017 with my birding pal Tom Tafton and I doing our Christmas Audubon bird count on Furnace Bay near Perryville, MD. Under the scope, swimming by us was an immature Trumpeter Swan. Size, bill color (red line on edge of bill lamella), overall color and shape lead to our confirmation. It was a super addition to our count that day! Update to Covid-19 spring 2020, while riding down the Route 40 corridor (near the intersection with Route 24) in the wetland ponds along the road, what do I see, but two iron-stained Trumpeters enjoying the wetlands that Harford County has provided them.

Well I guess you can sense my excitement. Could this be a regularly developing pattern for the future? Time and observation will tell. At age 70, I’m not ready to capture a Trumpeter Swan on my own, but maybe one of our Have de Grace decoy carvers will be inspired to capture the spirit of this noble bird in a block of wood. I hope so, but only time will tell!

John Hughes



TRUMPETER SWAN

(*Cygnus buccinator*)

Description: Largest waterfowl in the world. Heaviest and longest swan in North America (20-37 lbs. measuring 56-62 inches from bill to tail). Wingspan is up to 6 ft. All-white plumage often stained a rusty color as a result of feeding in iron rich waters. Cygnets (immature swans) are grey/brown up to maturity at first year. Long straight black bill. Large black palmated feet. Field identification possibly by size, lack of yellow pattern between eyes and bill of the Tundra swan, and distinct trumpet like call “ko-who”. Voice is a key determinant.

Range: Distribution in Western North America (especially Montana, Wyoming and Idaho), Western Canada, Alaska, and Eastern portions of Russian Siberia. Relocation populations have met with some success. Historic wintering grounds included the Chesapeake Bay and the Mid-Atlantic region. Population recovery has led to range expansion back to historic areas. See Map (Bellicose, Trumpeter Swan Distribution).

Population Status: In the early 1900s, wildfowl biologists feared the extirpation (local extinction) of this species. Market hunting had largely wiped out this swan. In 1933, as few as 70 birds were observed in the Western United States (Winston Banco). Through positive management, recovery has led to 46,000 birds in 2010 and 63,000 in 2015 (Trumpeter Swan Trust).

Habitat: Shallow freshwater lakes and ponds as well as tidal rivers and bays. Aquatic systems with SAVs and emergent wetlands along the shoreline. Treed upland periphery. At least 100 yards of open water for take-off. Preference is for wild areas with limited human incursion.

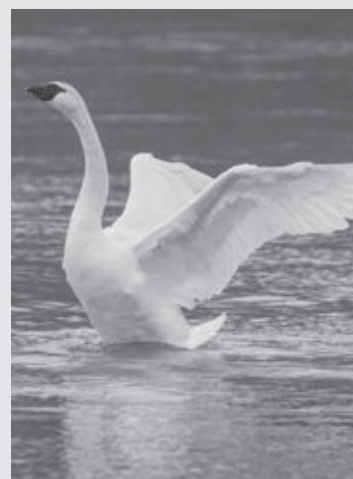
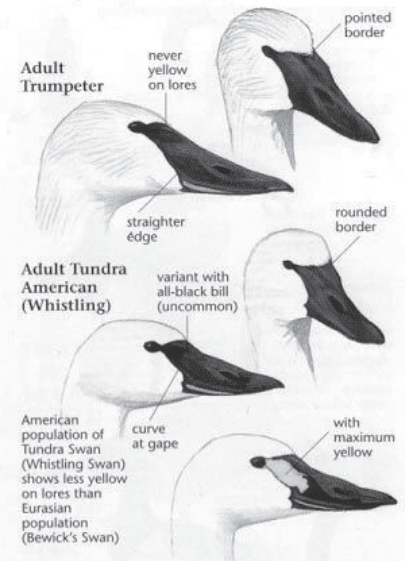
Biology: Trumpeter Swans form monogamous pair bonds for life. Captive birds have lived to 29 years but in the wild much less (Paul Johnsgard). Reproductive behavior may begin as early as 12-18 months. Females are largely responsible for nest construction of cattail like materials. Both sexes rear young. Most commonly five eggs are laid (4-8 eggs, Paul Johnsgard). Active nest protection by both sexes. Incubation is 33-37 days. Cygnets grow rapidly. Fledging periods vary from 84-120 days. Minimum aggressive interaction with other bird species.

Diet: Diet is dominated by wetland vegetation such as cattails, Nuphar seeds and other herbaceous materials. Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAVs) are readily consumed. Duck and pond weeds are also a part of their diets. Feeding behavior is characteristic of puddle ducks. Aquatic insects and mollusks are consumed by cygnets and adults.



Identification of Swans

Trumpeter Swan is best distinguished from Tundra by its longer bill with straighter base (lacking sharp curve at gape).



2nd Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show was Very Successful Despite COVID-19

by: Mike Tarquini

After months of uncertainty on whether the 2nd Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show would be yet another victim of COVID-19, the event was successfully held on Saturday, September 12 at Galena Fire Station in Galena, MD. According to show chairman Allan Schaub, “we took every precaution to keep our vendors and show patrons safe during this most unusual time.” Show organizers worked closely with the Kent County Health Department to ensure that CDC guidelines were followed.



All Participants Wore Face Coverings



Contact Tracing Information was Collected



Temperature Checks Before Entering the Show



Social Distancing & Hand Sanitizer were in Abundance

Before entering the fire station, medical professionals took everyone's temperature and recorded their contact tracing information. Face coverings were required for all vendors and patrons at the show. There was plenty of hand sanitizer on hand for everyone to use. Hand sanitizer stations were located throughout the show layout and were used by all in attendance. Social distancing was encouraged.



Thirty-six vendors utilizing forty-eight tables provided rows of waterfowl decoys and collectables for all show attendees to savor.

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and Upper Bay Decoy Collector's Club gave show attendees the opportunity to acquire a membership or just discuss the up-coming events being hosted by both non-profits. Members of both organizations were on-hand to answer questions and promote their respective organization.

Included within the exhibitor area was a well-appointed exhibition of Charlie Joiner's work courtesy of Allan and Bill Schaubert. In addition to being well acquainted with Charlie Joiner, both Allan and Bill have collected many of Charlie's works of art. Having learned the art of decoy making from Charlie, both Allan and Bill create and paint waterfowl decoys in the Joiner style.

Despite drawing less attendees than the inaugural show in 2019, the 2nd Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial



Charlie Joiner Decoys on Display



Bill Schaubert Signs an item for a Customer

Decoy Show was a great success. Both vendors and show attendees were glad to finally be able to enjoy a decoy show again during the age of COVID-19. The Joiner Show was the first to be held since February 2020. Although many shows were scheduled for 2020, essentially all of them have fallen victim to COVID-19 cancellation. Everyone in attendance agreed on one thing, they are all hoping for a better 2021.

The Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show benefited the Charlie Bryan and Charlie Joiner Trust which has been established at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.



UBDCC Recruits New Members



Decoy Museum Table Top Display



Paul Shertz Exhibits his Artwork



Pat Vincenti Exhibits at the Show



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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

AT THE HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

TRAVELING PRESENTATIONS:

Schedule a time for our education coordinator to visit your school!

The guest speaker presentations have no fee for Harford County Public Schools. Book your presentation today!

What is a Museum (Primary Grades) 45 minutes

This presentation explores the purpose of a museum. Students will learn that museums are community buildings designed to educate and inspire visitors on any variety of topics from art to history. The presentation also introduces waterfowl and birding facts that are presented in the museum.

Waterfowl Wonderings (Upper Grades) 60 minutes

Waterfowl migration, habitat, and breeding are presented in this science-based interactive lesson. The presentation concludes with a Kahoot review, students will need tablets for this part of the lesson.

FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITIES:

Museum Tours:

Our tour guides students through our 3 galleries.

Gallery 1: "What is Decoy": teaches students about the local history related to our museum, what decoys are, and how they are made.

Gallery 2: "Gunning the Flats" Displays the different hunting rigs used in the early 1900's when Havre de Grace was known for duck hunting. Students will discover how they attracted hundreds of ducks for hunting during the season.

Gallery 3: "Carvers Gallery" Showcases extraordinary life-like figures of some of our most famous carvers and their work. Here we have a beautiful display of hundreds of decoys a wonderful example of folk art, plus an amazing view of the Susquehanna Flats.



Promenade Expedition

Students walk the promenade and complete the "expedition book" as they read about the old Bayou Hotel and the British attack on Havre de Grace. The expedition also covers the environmental life of the Susquehanna Flats. There is an expedition for grades 2-3 and one for upper grades.

Bird Identification:

Here students will use the Merlin Bird app on an i-Pad to identify a variety of ducks at five different stations. Students will work at these five stations developing their skills in bird identification. They will discover a resource they can use anywhere to learn more about the birds of the area. This experience can be combined with a museum tour.

Escape Room Activity:

After learning about local history, gunning the flats, and basic waterfowl habitats, students can compete to open the lock box that will "rescue" the hunter in danger. Of course, they will need to work in groups to complete the missions that lead to the key code for the lock on the "rescue bag".

Book your tours early, call Heather at **410.939.3739**
or email the Museum at **education@decoymuseum.com**

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Don't Miss These Upcoming Events at the Museum!

January

Like Father, Like Sons

an evening with legendary carver **Jimmy Pierce** and his sons **Charlie and JK**. A directed discussion of the Pierce decoy making tradition from one generation to the next. Date TBD. Admission \$20.00. Refreshments provided.

February

World of Waterfowl

a visual presentation of the diversity of North American Waterfowl. Local naturalists **John Hughes** and **Tom Tafton** will present an overview of the ducks, geese and swans of North America and the Chesapeake Bay. Monday, February 22, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM. Admission \$10:00. Refreshments provided.

March

Waterfowl Study Trip I

a day-long tour of the Upper Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. This field trip will provide a search for the waterfowl of this region in late winter. Transportation provided. **John Hughes & Tom Tafton**. Saturday, March 13. Admission Free.

April

An Evening with Captain Jeff Coats

Captain Jeff Coats, Honorary Chairman of the 39th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival, will share his experiences hunting sea ducks and other waterfowl species. Date TBD. Admission TBD. Refreshments provided.

May

39th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

Come spend time with the area's most prominent waterfowl decoy makers and wildlife artists. Havre de Grace Middle / High School & the Decoy Museum. Saturday / Sunday, May 1 & 2. Honorary Chairman is **Captain Jeff Coats**. Admission \$10.00 for the weekend.

For more information on 2020 events at the museum check out our website at WWW.DECOYMUSEUM.COM

June

Meet the President

Decoy Museum Board President, **Mike Tarquini** will discuss the mission, history and future of the Museum. Board members will lead tours of the Museum. Sunday, June 6, 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM. Admission Free. Refreshments provided.

July, August

Chesapeake Bay and its Waterfowl Tradition

a three-evening course on the Chesapeake Bay. The programs will present the natural history of the Bay, human interaction with the Bay and its waterfowl legacy. Wednesdays, July 21, 28 & August 4, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM. Admission \$15.00 (for the complete course). Refreshments provided.

September

The Pulaski Saga

join author **Robert F. Lackey** as he discusses the Pulaski family history in Havre de Grace and the Chesapeake Bay from his ten-part book series. The historical fiction series follows the events in U.S. history and puts the setting in Havre de Grace as the Pulaski family determines its destiny. A door raffle of the series will occur the evening of the presentation. Audience questions will be welcomed. Actual date TBD. Admission \$20.00. Refreshments provided.

October

Wetlands & Waterfowl

a visual presentation on wetlands and their association to ducks, geese and swans. Local naturalists **John Hughes** and **Tom Tafton** will present the key aspects of wetlands and their avian wildlife. Wednesday, October 20, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM. Admission \$10.00. Refreshments provided.

November

Waterfowl Study Trip II

a travel tour of the upper Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. Early season waterfowl will be compared and contrasted to late winter populations (see previous March trip). Transportation provided. **John Hughes & Tom Tafton**. Saturday, November 6. Admission Free.

An Evening with Patrick Vincenti

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum's "**Meet the Carvers Series**" continues with a directed discussion with **Patrick Vincenti**. Mr. Vincenti will share his history as a carver, his decoys and his association with the Museum. Sunday, November 14, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. Admission \$20.00. Refreshments provided.

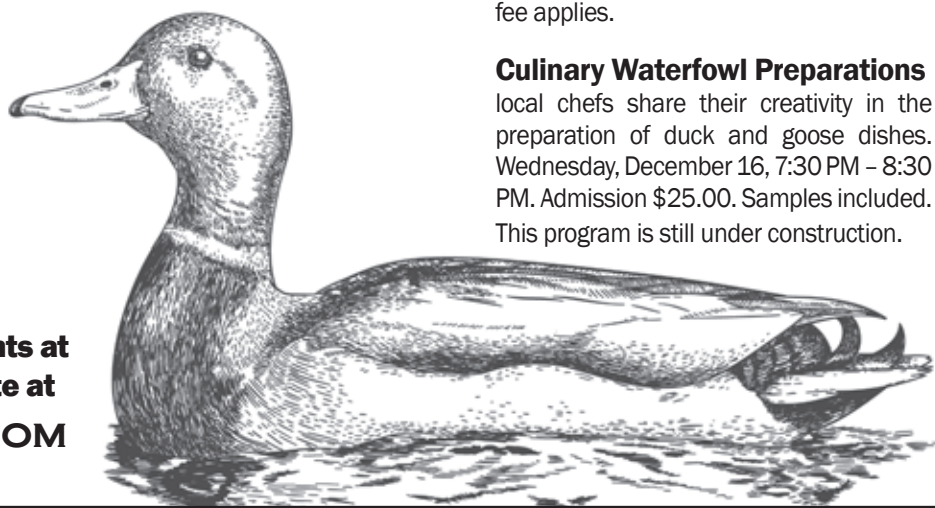
December

Annual Candlelight Tour

an open house at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum as part of the annual candlelight tour of Havre de Grace sponsored by the Lockhouse Museum. Saturday, December 11, 4:00 PM – 8:00 PM. Candlelight Tour fee applies.

Culinary Waterfowl Preparations

local chefs share their creativity in the preparation of duck and goose dishes. Wednesday, December 16, 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM. Admission \$25.00. Samples included. This program is still under construction.



48th Annual

Candlelight Tour

of Historic Havre de Grace

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is proud to again be a featured stop on this year's Candlelight Tour. A self-guided tour of the numerous participating homes, churches, and museums that showcase the diverse character of our historic, charming, & decorated City.

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Museum News



MEET OUR STAFF

Meet our Membership Coordinator . . . *Dorene*

membership@decoymuseum.com



Dorene is our membership coordinator and gift shop administrator and is likely the first face visitors see when they enter the museum. In the absence of a director, she has assumed additional duties as assigned by the board. She is a mother of two and has been a

resident of Maryland for about 40 years. She graduated from Maryland Baptist College with a degree in education and music. Dorene joined the museum staff in 2016 after 20 years of elementary and high school instruction. When not working at the museum, Dorene is involved in her local church, working with children's groups and choirs.

Meet our Curator / Registrar . . . *Ginny*



Ginny has served as the Curator and Registrar of the Decoy museum since 2009. She was raised on a dairy farm in Connecticut and has spent the last 50-years in the Harford and Cecil County area. Ginny and her husband have become collectors of waterfowl

art from the Susquehanna region. After earning a Bachelor of Music Degree from Boston University and a Master of Science Degree from the University of Illinois, she taught instrumental music for 34-years. She has also performed with several musical ensembles.

Meet our Education Coordinator . . . *Heather*

education@decoymuseum.com



Heather joined the museum staff in the fall of 2019. She graduated from Towson University with a degree in Elementary Education and earned her master's degree from McDaniel College in Curriculum and Instruction. She enjoyed a 31-year teaching career

in Harford County working in Aberdeen Middle, Fallston Middle and Bel Air Middle Schools. She has 2 daughters currently living in Westminster, MD, and Raleigh, NC.

A Bel Air resident with a passion for the outdoors, Heather enjoys the beauty of Harford county while biking, hiking, and running. Her favorite bike ride has always been to Havre de Grace. As a retired teacher, she considers herself a lifelong learner who always embraces new experiences. She brings her passion for teaching and learning in her position as our Education Coordinator. She is excited to create learning experiences that can range from the history of gunning the Flats in Havre de Grace to understanding bird migration.

Come visit the museum and enjoy a scavenger hunt, a study of our carvers, or a history challenge on hunting and carving in the early 1900's, and more. Our education program has tours for school and adult groups as well as traveling presentations such as "What is a Museum?" and "Wonderings about Waterfowl".

Check out her Teaching Tuesday posts on Facebook and look for more online opportunities to learn via Wonder of the Week Wednesday's and Fun Fact Friday's.

Seasonal events for children along with on-site educational experiences are currently under construction and will be posted on Facebook and our Website. Come visit and enjoy any one of the creative activities we are happy to offer with Heather as your educational guide.

Meet our Finance Manager . . . *Mindy*

finance@decoymuseum.com



In July, Mindy completed 20 years working for the Havre de Grace Decoy museum. Although hired to handle the day-to-day bookkeeping, over those 20 years she has done practically every job at the museum except special events and education.

Mindy currently limits her time to the financial end of the museum. Mindy prefers working in the non-profit world and held two similar positions in Colorado before moving to Maryland in 2000. Mindy's passion is music. She has sung in a variety of large and small groups in Ohio, New Jersey, Colorado, and Maryland. She currently performs (or did before the Covid-19 pandemic) with the Harford Choral Society and sings in the choir at the Episcopal Cathedral of the Incarnation in Baltimore.

Meet one of our docents . . . *Patty*

Staff2@decoymuseum.com



Patty was born in Washington, DC, raised in Maryland, and now resides in Aberdeen with her husband Steve. Having started as a museum volunteer, Patty is currently a part-time employee whom you will find at the front desk greeting our guests. Patty worked in the

hospitality field for most of her career. Prior to her retirement in 2017, Patty worked at the Aberdeen Proving Ground where she oversaw the completion of applicant security forms. In her spare time, Patty is an avid textile artist. She makes tee shirt quilts for those wishing to preserve memories of loved ones or to commemorate special events. She is the source of the lovely embroidered tea towels offered for sale in the museum gift shop. In the summer months she enjoys swimming and crabbing in the Chesapeake Bay. Patty is the proud owner of a 3-month old black Labrador named Sam, whose joyful energy fills her days.

Meet one of our docents . . . *Sean*

Staff3@decoymuseum.com



Sean joined the staff of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in August 2020 as part of the weekend staff. He is currently studying at Harford Community College for his Associates Degree in Science focusing on Physics.

He plans to continue his studies in science with a bachelor's and master's degree. Sean is a resident of Havre de Grace. His family moved to Maryland when he was a child, and he spent 21 years growing up in the city. He first became involved in the museum was when he was 12. His mother worked as the membership coordinator, and he often volunteered to help her around the museum. During those few hours when Sean is not working or studying, he enjoys kayaking and hiking around the Harford county area.

Meet one of docents . . . *Susan*

Staff1@decoymuseum.com



Susan is a former NJ girl who moved to Havre de Grace in 2013 when her husband began working at Aberdeen Proving Ground. She joined the museum as a part time docent in 2017. Sharing the treasures of the decoy museum is a joy that dovetails with her

twin passions of making art and preserving the natural beauty and diversity of our planet. Susan is a self-taught watercolor artist and a member of the Baltimore Watercolor Society. She also volunteers at the local community hospital. She raised two energetic daughters who use their science backgrounds to champion our ecological world and health initiatives in developing countries. Susan's favorite activities are hiking local nature trails and delighting in each eagle, turtle, and frog which crosses her path.



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Museum News



Farewell & Best Wishes to Kerri Kneisley



The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum reopened its doors to the public on a full-time basis on June 26, 2020. Just as we were all happy to be back in operation, we sadly learned that Kerri Kneisley, our Executive Director had decided to accept a new position and announced her departure from the Museum.

Kerri served as our Executive Director for about five years. During that period, she was a “true ambassador” for the Museum and has left her fingerprints on essentially everything that we have accomplished during that period. Kerri pioneered both the “Carve and Candy” Halloween event and the “Cottontails and Web-Footed Trails” Easter event that have entertained children of all ages.

Kerri was active with community affairs as she represented the Decoy Museum on many committees throughout Harford County and the City of Havre de Grace. She is highly spoken of inside all the circles that she has traveled.

Kerri, a Lancaster, PA native has chosen to work in a position closer to her home. All of us at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum thank Kerri for her many contributions and wish her luck in this new chapter of her career.

Current Exhibits @ the Museum

■ A new exhibit “From Our Attic”

A collection of never exhibited items from the Museum coffers.



■ A collection of Len Burcham’s unpainted red cedar decoys with beautiful grain patterns.

■ The breathtaking decorative carvings from the personal collection of master carver and 2018 Festival honoree J. Noble Mentzer.



■ The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association’s stunning collection of coots in the Carver’s Gallery.

■ The Home Run Baker rig and bushwhack boat.

■ A traditional tule decoy in the centuries-old “Lovelock style” by Paiute decoy maker Joe Allen.



■ A teal carved in the 1930s by Joseph Coudon of H, a gift from Pat Doherty.

■ A lifelike rockfish (striped bass) carved by master carver Lee Tate, Sr.



■ A beautiful decorative eastern blue bird carved by master carver Barb Wachter

■ The extraordinary pair of “Daddy” Holly canvasbacks, a gift from the Michael family.



■ A collection of songbirds created by various artists donated by John Hostetter in memory of his parents, John and Edith Hostetter.



Museum Members

Thank you and welcome to the following members and businesses that recently renewed their membership or newly joined us. Your continued support and contributions are essential to the overall success of the Decoy Museum:

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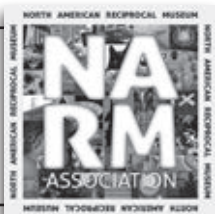
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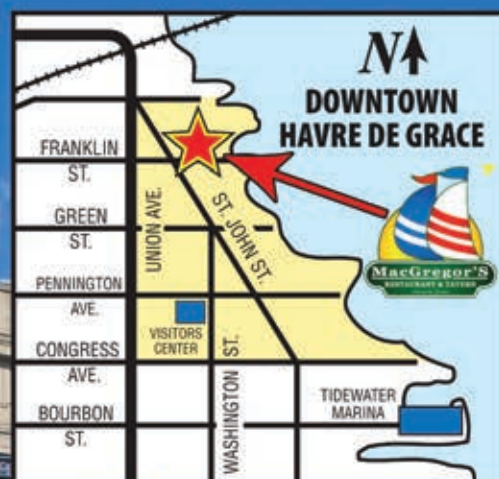
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