

# The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 31 No. 4

Winter 2022

A photograph of a brown puppy lying on a patterned blanket. The puppy is looking directly at the camera. In the foreground, there are several duck decoys, including a large blue and white one with a bell, and a pair of brown leather gloves. The text "Boy Bluebills" is overlaid on the image in a stylized, blue, 3D font.

Boy  
Bluebills

# When it comes to your to-do list, put your future first.

To find out how to get your financial goals on track, contact us for a complimentary review.



**Jared Allen, CFP<sup>®</sup>, ChFC<sup>®</sup>,  
AAMS<sup>®</sup>**

Financial Advisor

1039a Pulaski Hwy  
Havre De Grace, MD  
21078-2603  
410-939-1621

[edwardjones.com](http://edwardjones.com)  
Member SIPC

**Edward Jones<sup>®</sup>**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING





### 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)



## Contents

### Features

- 2 George David Blackiston Memorial
- 4 2022 Festival Announcement
- 5 2022 Festival Schedule
- 7 Bay Blackheads
- 13 Shots from the Wild
- 17 Charter, Chowder & Cleveland?
- 27 Father & Son Tradition
- 33 C. A. Porter Hopkins
- 37 The Canvasback Naturalist  
*Greater or Lesser Scaups*

### ON THE COVER

River, an eight week old Chesapeake Bay Retriever, owned by Derek Anderson, is resting with an R. Madison Mitchell Bluebill Drake decoy after her first hunt. She's looking forward to retrieving diving ducks on the Chesapeake Bay for many seasons to come.

*Photo by Scott Moody.*

### Departments

- 3 From the President
- 44 Museum Members



## *George David Blackiston Jr.*

8/18/1928 - 1/2/2022

George David Blackiston, Jr. of Chestertown, MD died on January 2, 2022, at University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Chestertown. He was 93.

He was born in Chestertown on August 18, 1928, the son of the late George David and Margaret Emma Batchelor Blackiston.

David served in the U.S. Army in Korea for two years and was honorably discharged in 1952. He returned to Chestertown and began work as a printer with the Kent County News. He retired in 1992 after 39 years. He was married on September 6, 1952, to M. Arlene Whitlock of Nashville, Tennessee, she predeceased him on June 12, 2011.

Mr. Blackiston was a member of the Frank M. Jarman American Legion Post in Chestertown, MD, the Amateur Trapp Association, and the Kent County Gun Club. He enjoyed hunting and fishing and will be remembered for carving ducks and geese. An exhibition of his exquisite work was recently featured at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

He is survived by his daughter: Brenda B. Sproates of Kennedyville, MD and Thomas George Blackiston of Church Hill, MD. along with 4 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, at Fellows, Helfenbein, and Newnam Funeral Home 130 Speer Road Chestertown. Interment was in St. Paul's Cemetery Chestertown.





215 Giles Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
**410.939.3739**  
[www.decoymuseum.com](http://www.decoymuseum.com)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Michael E. Tarquini • *President*  
Rodney Swam • *Vice President*  
Ralph C. Hockman • *Treasurer*  
James W. Carroll, Jr. • *Secretary*  
Pat Vincenti • *Member-at-Large*  
Allen J. Fair • *President Emeritus*

Louis Caputo

John Currier

Dan Thanh Dang

David Farrow

John E. Hughes, Jr.

Todd Pauliny

J. Lloyd Sanders, Jr.

CONSULTANTS

C. John Sullivan, Jr.

ADVISORY DIRECTORS

Mindy Elledge

John Hostetter

Charles E. Packard

Jim Pierce

## The Canvasback

EDITOR

Mike Tarquini

CONTRIBUTORS

James W. Carroll, Jr.

Michael Daley

Dan Thanh Dang

Ralph Hockman

John Hughes

C. John Sullivan, Jr.

Chad Tragakis

GRAPHICS

Anne Fullem Design

PRINTING

Prestige Color, Lancaster, PA

*The Canvasback* is a quarterly publication of The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, Inc. All rights are reserved, and no material may be reprinted without prior written permission of the Museum. All correspondence should be sent as above.

## From the President...

The holidays are over and we find ourselves in yet another COVID-19 resurgence where positivity numbers are greater than 25%. As everyone brings out their face coverings once again, we at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum are extremely busy attending to our priorities for 2022.



The museum has begun work on our interactive project that will place electronic touch screen monitors throughout the facility that will give museum visitors an opportunity to learn more about our exhibits. First-hand historical perspectives from waterfowling, carvers and others who actually lived through what is being presented in the exhibits will be available literally at the visitors' fingertips. A 65" wide-screen monitor has been purchased for our reception area to greet all of our guests and will ensure that every visitor hears the very same welcoming message. This monitor will also serve to share up-coming events at the museum. This interactive project has been funded in part by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) with matching funds being funded through the museum's budget.

The museum store will undergo a face lift in early 2022. It's been years since the museum up-graded the store and it will receive our attention with new walls, new display areas, a relocation of our check out area, and a new floor covering. The museum store area needs to keep pace with the everchanging museum exhibits. The upgrades are intended to allow for fresh merchandise to be featured in a more contemporary way.

Perhaps the most ambitious project that we have in progress entails a museum expansion that is designed to encapsulate the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop and bring this exhibit into the museum proper. We recognize that the Mitchell Shop is being unfairly treated by its exposure to the weather and will soon sustain irreversible damage. This relic is the best exhibit that the museum offers and it's not readily accessible to museum visitors. After the planned expansion effort, the Mitchell Shop will be part of the museum's interior as everything will be under a single roof. The project is in the design phase and fundraising has already begun. We see this effort costing upwards of \$1M. Its success will depend heavily on our ability to garner support.

In 2021, the Decoy Museum celebrated a milestone anniversary of 35 years. COVID restrictions kept us from having a formal celebration in late 2021, but one is planned for 2022. Another COVID impacted event over the last two years has been our Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival. This year, the Museum will celebrate the 40th Festival and are very proud to have Charlie Pierce as our Honorary Chairman. Anticipating the COVID complications that accompany having an such an event within a public school facility, the museum has made the decision to move the event to the site of the former Havre de Grace High School where both the gymnasium and auditorium remain. The City of Havre de Grace now controls this facility and has welcomed our event. Plans are underway to update our marketing information to reflect this change. We hope to have a great showing of vendors and patrons to help us celebrate 40 years of having Havre de Grace being the "Decoy Capital of the World".

**Mike Tarquini**  
*Board President*



40th Annual

# Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival



Canvasback  
Sleeper Pair  
by Charlie Pierce



Honorary Chairman  
Charlie Pierce

April 29, 30 & May 1 • 2022

**April 29**

Exhibition Set-up & Carvers Reception at Museum

**April 30 & May 1**

Decoy & Wildlife Exhibition  
Gymnasium & Auditorium Facility of the  
former Havre de Grace High School



# Festival INFORMATION



## A note about the venue . . .

In light of the uncertainty surrounding the COVID 19 resurgence on the public school system and its facilities, the venue for the 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival has been changed to the Gymnasium & Auditorium of the former Havre de Grace High School, located at 710 Congress Avenue. This venue was the site of the inaugural Festival in 1981. This facility is now owned and operated by the City of Havre de Grace.

## A note about the Honorary Chairman . . .

Charlie Pierce is the youngest son of Jim Pierce (1991 Honorary Chairman). Charlie has worked side by side with his father making decoys since he was a youngster and has developed a style that he can now call his own. It's only fitting that Charlie serve as the Honorary Chairman of the very Festival his father help organize in 1981. Come celebrate 75 years of Pierce Decoys in Havre de Grace.



39th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

## Friday, April 29

- **Vendor Set-up**  
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **Carvers Reception**  
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM • Decoy Museum

## Saturday, April 30

- **40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival Exhibition**  
9:00 AM – 6:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **River Gunning Decoy Registration & Competition**  
Exhibition Venue
- **Carving Competition Registration & Competition**  
Exhibition Venue
- **J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Competition**  
Exhibition Venue

## Sunday, May 1

- **40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival Exhibition**  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **Student Art Contest Winners Announced**  
1:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **Museum Spring Raffle Drawing**  
3:00 PM • Exhibition Venue

**Food & Beverages will be available on-site  
throughout the weekend.**

Please visit our website [www.decoymuseum.com](http://www.decoymuseum.com)  
for up-dates to this schedule as we draw nearer  
to the event.

# Beyond Investing. Connecting.

No matter where you are in life—just starting out, in your peak earning years, nearing retirement, or contemplating your legacy—we are here for you.

When you work with Janney, it's about going beyond investing. It's about connecting your life and your finances. Wherever you are on your wealth journey, we can build a tailored financial plan and make recommendations that are aligned with your best interest based on your unique needs, goals, and preferences.

**CONTACT US TO DISCUSS HOW WE CAN HELP YOU CONNECT YOUR LIFE AND FINANCES.**

**TODD PAULINY**  
First VP / Wealth Management,  
Financial Advisor  
443.307.8009  
tpauliny@janney.com

**JAMES M. WINNER, CFP®**  
Senior VP / Investments,  
Financial Advisor  
443.307.8013  
jwinner@janney.com

**NATHAN SCARFF, CRPC®**  
Financial Advisor  
443.307.8010  
nscarff@janney.com

**Winner Pauliny Wealth Management  
of Janney Montgomery Scott LLC**  
116 Hays Street, Bel Air, MD 21014  
www.WinnerPaulinyWealthManagement.com



© JANNEY MONTGOMERY SCOTT LLC • MEMBER: NYSE, FINRA, SIPC • REF. 204307-0221



## Proud supporter of the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival

### Member owned. Member driven.

We're your community credit union, serving all who live, work, worship, volunteer, or go to school in Harford and Cecil counties.

Join today!

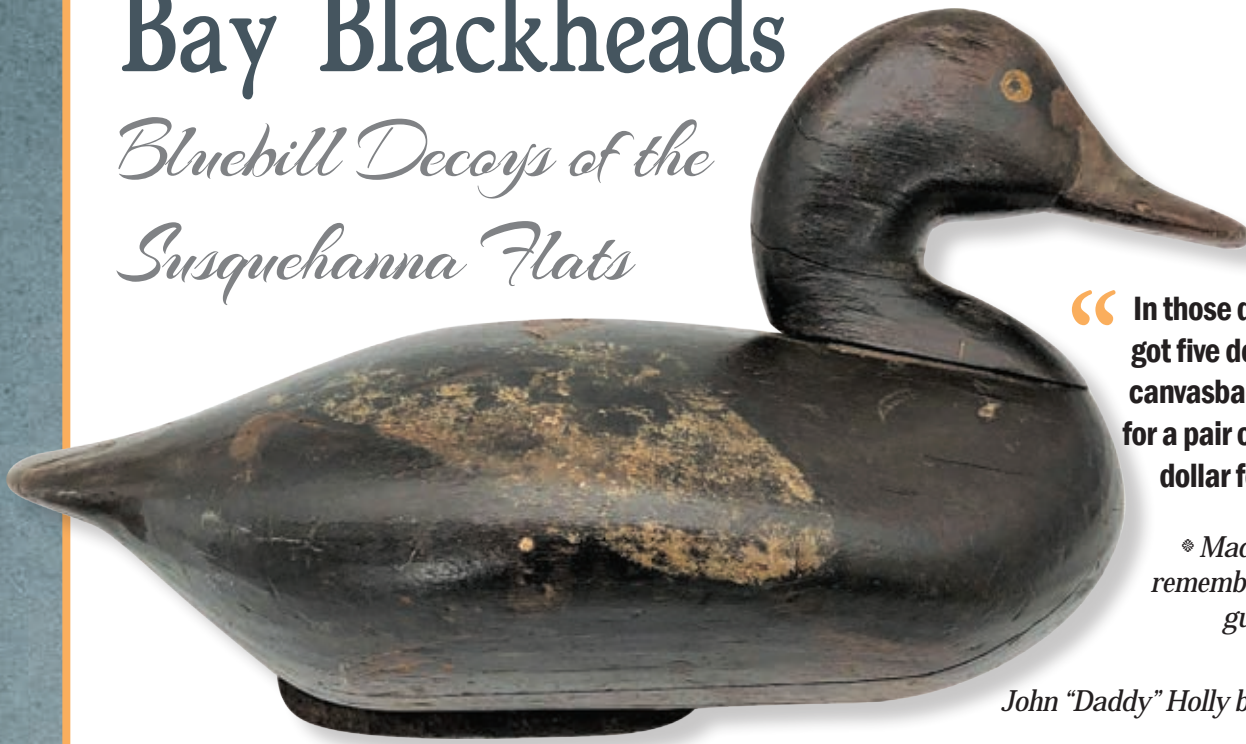
apgfcu.com | 410-272-4000

Federally insured by NCUA  
Membership eligibility applies.



# Bay Blackheads

## *Bluebill Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats*



“ In those days, the gunners got five dollars for a pair of canvasbacks, three dollars for a pair of redheads, and a dollar for blackheads. ”

◆ *Madison Mitchell, remembering the market gunning era*

*John “Daddy” Holly bluebill drake*

After canvasbacks and redheads, bluebills were the third most hunted and third most desirable of the diving duck species found on the Susquehanna Flats. During the “golden age” of American waterfowling, there were probably more bluebill decoys made on the Flats than any other species with the exception of canvasbacks. Nearly every commercial maker on both sides of the Flats produced them, and many local hunters who made their own rigs saw good reason to fashion a few for gunning. Logic would dictate that there would be more redheads made since they were more desirable for the table and the market, but they decoyed readily to the large rigs of canvasback blocks. Also, the fact that the white coloring in bluebill decoys made them more visible to ducks, while at the same time adding variety and authenticity to the large diving duck rigs consisting mainly of cans, also explains the sheer number of bluebill or “scaup” decoys found today.

There are two prevailing thoughts regarding the origin of the species name. Some believe that it stems from the bird’s preference for feeding on “scalp,” the Scottish word for clams, mussels and oysters. Others, however, suggest it has everything to do with the throaty, discordant “scaup, scaup, scaup” sound that the hen makes. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century and probably even earlier than that, scaup

have been known collectively as “blackheads” in the Upper Chesapeake Bay. The nickname, of course, comes from the dark blue, almost black color of the duck’s prominent head. And when we talk about blackheads, we are really talking about two or three different species – the greater scaup (*Aythya marila*), lesser scaup (*Aythya affinis*), and the closely related and visibly similar ring neck (*Aythya collaris*).

Greater scaup, lesser scaup and, to a slightly lesser degree, ring necks, can be extremely difficult to distinguish, particularly from a distance. Even experienced hunters and birders sometimes have difficulty telling the species apart, especially when they appear together in large, mixed flocks. In fact, greater and lesser scaup are typically counted together in official population surveys since the species are so difficult to tell apart, especially from the air, where such studies are often made.

Both greater and lesser scaup have a shiny, dark head with bright yellow eyes, a black breast and tail, and a pearl gray colored back with a lighter, whitish underbelly. The hens’ heads and necks are dark brown, the bodies are a duller brown with light mottling, and they feature a white underbelly and a white patch at the base of the bill. The species are remarkably similar, virtually identical to the naked eye, but upon closer examination, there are some tell-tale clues to help



*Jim Holly bluebill drake*



differentiate them. The obvious difference is size, with the lesser averaging about three-inches shorter than the greater overall.

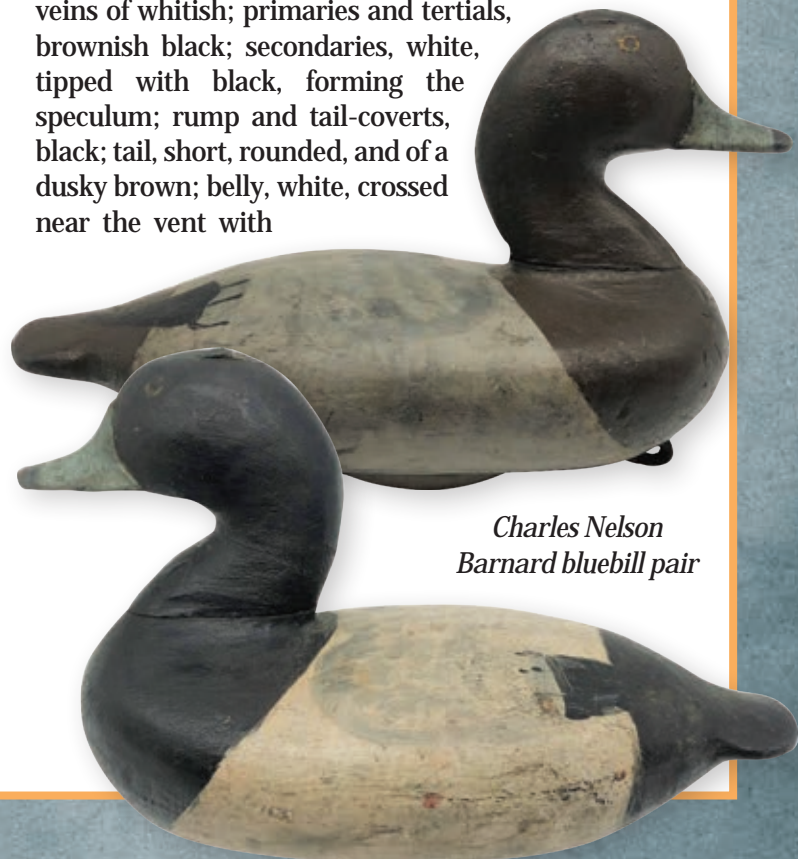
A good rule of thumb that many birders use is that lesser scaup average about 10% shorter and 25% lighter than greater scaup. The greater's heads also feature a fuller, rounder crown and show hints of green iridescence. The lesser's heads are comparatively smaller and display a slight tuft or peak toward the back of the crown, and they exhibit traces of purple rather than green iridescence. The greater's flanks are a brighter white while the lesser's appear more vermiculated and dirty, as if slightly smudged. Hens and drakes of both species feature pale blue-gray bills with a black nail tip, the tips being slightly larger on the greater. The bills are thick and wide and appear somewhat flattened, hence their popular vernacular name "broadbill."

The greater scaup seems to prefer salt water and is most at home on the coast, while the lesser favors freshwater. The lesser scaup is only found in North America and it maintains the status of our continent's most abundant diving duck. For the seasoned gunner or birder, taking habitat, range and time of the season into account can also help distinguish between the two species.

The third "blackhead" is the less common ring-necked duck or "ringneck." The ringneck is a compact diver, smaller than the greater scaup and about the same size as the lesser, and similar overall in appearance to both. The major differences are the ringneck's glossy black back (instead of the pearl gray seen on both scaup) and the flatter, more angular crown. Interestingly, the ringneck's faint "neck ring" of chestnut or cinnamon color is almost never visible in the field. Ironically, the species features one of the most unique and beautiful bills of any duck; wide bands of blue and white on the tip (hence its other nickname, "ring-bill"), with a distinctive white frame around the entire bill.

Other nicknames for the American scaup duck include black-headed duck, blackjacks, flock ducks, shufflers, graybacks, raft ducks, bullheads, bullnecks, Fall ducks, black necks, flocking fowl, mussel-ducks, troop ducks, troop fowl, winter broadbills, blueheads, bullet-winged ducks, cannonballs, and river ducks. Descriptive qualifiers were often used colloquially in conjunction with the basic name to differentiate between greater and lesser scaup. These were typically related to physical size (e.g., "big bluebill" or "little blackhead") and geography (e.g., "bay blackhead," "lake bluebill" and "salt-water broadbill" for the greater and "creek blackhead," or "river scaup" for the lesser). Nicknames for the ringneck include moon-bill, tufted duck, ring-billed duck, blackie, black scaup, ring-billed blackhead, ring-billed shuffler, ring duck, and ring-necked blackhead. The ring-necked hen was sometimes called a creek redhead because of the resemblance.

In his famous 1853 *Krider's Sporting Anecdotes*, John Krider vividly describes the species "called-the Blue-bill on the Delaware and the Black-head on the Chesapeake," writing: "This duck is nineteen inches in length, and twenty-nine in extent; bill, broad, generally of a light blue, sometimes of a dusky lead color; irides, reddish; head, tumid, covered with plumage of a dark, glossy green, extending half way down the neck; rest of the neck and breast, black, spreading round to the back; back and scapulars, white, thickly crossed with waving lines of black ; lesser coverts, dusky, powdered with veins of whitish; primaries and tertials, brownish black; secondaries, white, tipped with black, forming the speculum; rump and tail-coverts, black; tail, short, rounded, and of a dusky brown; belly, white, crossed near the vent with



*Charles Nelson Barnard bluebill pair*



waving lines of ash; legs and feet, dark slate. Such is the color of the bird in its perfect state. Young birds vary considerably, some having the head black, mixed with gray and purple, others the back dusky, with little or no white, and that irregularly dispersed. The female has the front and sides of the same white; head and half of the neck, blackish brown; breast, spreading round the back, a dark sooty brown, broadly skirted with whitish; back, black, thinly sprinkled with grains of White; vent, whitish; wings, the same as the male.”

Blackheads frequent lakes, rivers, and sheltered bays in winter and migrate south through the Chesapeake Bay in late fall and back north again in March and April. Some spend the winter on the Bay, but most prefer wintering grounds farther south. Blackheads can fly at speeds of up to 75 miles per hour, making them difficult to bring down. They are a classic “rafting” duck, forming large groups on open water that often contain hundreds and even thousands of birds. Historically, blackhead decoy rigs (like all diving spreads) were often large, emulating their propensity to raft in such huge groups. They feed on mollusks such as small clams, insects, and seeds, but are especially fond of aquatic plants including sedges, pondweed, muskgrass and wild celery. This made the Susquehanna Flats a particularly favored destination.

As John James Audubon writes in the descriptive Ornithological Biography accompanying his 1838 classic, *Birds of America*: “The Scaup Duck seems to float less lightly than it really does, its body being comparatively flat. It moves fast, frequently sipping the water, as if to ascertain whether its favourite food be in it. Then turning its head and glancing on either side to assure itself of security, down it dives with all the agility of a Merganser, and remains a considerable time below. On emerging, it shakes its head, raises the hind part of its body, opens its short and rather curved wings, after a few flaps replaces them, and again dives in search of food. Should any person appear when it emerges, it swims off to a considerable distance, watches every movement of the intruder, and finally either returns to its former place, or flies away... They appear to experience some difficulty in getting on wing, and assist themselves on all occasions, either by meeting the current or fronting the wind, while they also use their broad feet as helps. When danger is near, they frequently, however, prefer diving, which they find as effectual a means of security as flying. As they usually feed at some distance from each other, it is amusing to see them go off, as they emerge from the water in succession and to watch them when they collect

Joe Dye bluebill pair



again, and when, after flying for a long time in circles, now high then low over the water, they all realight. These habits, and the toughness of their sinewy bodies, render it rather difficult to shoot them.... When these birds are travelling, their flight is steady, rather laborious, but greatly protracted. The whistling of their wings is heard at a considerable distance when they are passing over head. At this time they usually move in a broad front, sometimes in a continuous line. When disturbed, they fly straight forward for a while, with less velocity than when travelling, and, if within proper distance, are easily shot. At times their notes are shrill, but at others hoarse and guttural. They are however rarely heard during the day, and indeed, like many other species, these birds are partly nocturnal.” However, in saying all of this, Audubon suggests that: “They are not worth shooting, however, unless for sport or examination, for their flesh is generally tough and rather fishy in flavour. Indeed I know none, excepting what is called an Epicure, who could relish a Scaup Duck.”

George Bird Grinnell picks up on this theme in his 1901 masterpiece *American Duck Shooting*, writing: “Many widely different opinions are expressed as to the value of the broad-bill as food, and those who debate this question are both right and both wrong. In other words, the flesh of the broad-bill, as of most other ducks, is sometimes good and sometimes bad, depending on the food which it eats. Along the New England coast, where, to a great extent it feeds on shellfish and other animal matter, the broad-bill is not a delicate bird, but further south, where its food is largely vegetable, and where its



name is changed to black-head and blue-bill, it is a most excellent fowl. In the interior, too, it lives chiefly on vegetable matter. There it is known as the scaup duck, blue-bill, raft duck, big fowl duck, and is eagerly sought after. However, the tendency of this bird appears to be toward the seacoast. It is abundant in California, where many are killed, but it does not seem to go as far south as its relative, the little black-head, and winters on the New England and New York coasts and in New Jersey, being, in my experience, rather rare as far south as Virginia and North Carolina, where the little black-head is very abundant.”

Grinnell is among the first sporting writers to address the distinctions between the greater and lesser scaup, stating of the “Little blackhead,” that it is: “Exactly similar in color to the broad-bill, but smaller. The gloss on the neck is likely to be bluish or purplish, instead of greenish. The length of this species is about 16 inches, as against 18 or 20 in the preceding. These two species were long regarded as the same, and, indeed, as yet there seems to be no definite character to separate them, except that of size. On the New England coast, during the migrations, the two are often found associated together, and this is true to a less extent further to the southward. At the same time the difference between them is well recognized by ornithologists and by gunners generally, and is expressed in the common names applied to this species, which Mr. Trumbull and others give. Some of these are little broad-bill, little black-head, little blue-bill, river broad-bill, creek black-head, river blue-bill, marsh blue-bill, mud blue-bill, mud broad-bill and fresh-water broad-bill.”

Grinnell provides additional clues to his readers on how to distinguish between the greater and lesser scaup: “Notwithstanding the fact that most of the little blackheads are readily to be identified by their size, there is considerable variation in the species and sometimes these birds almost equal the broad-bill in their measurements. It is stated that the adult males can be easily identified, no matter what their measurements may show, by the metallic gloss of the head feathers, these being always green in the broad-bill

and blue or purple in the little broad-bill. This metallic gloss, therefore, would seem to be considered by some naturalists a specific character. The little black-head is one of the swiftest fliers and most expert divers of all our ducks, and the task of retrieving one that has been wounded, unless one is provided with a good dog, is not always an easy one. This species is quite as much an adept at skulking and hiding; as its larger relative, and, on the whole, is very well able to take care of itself. The flesh is usually very delicate, yet the very reverse of this may be true in localities where it has had an opportunity to feed largely on shell-fish. Black-heads seem to be equally at home in shoal water and in deep; they can dive as well as the canvasback, and yet they are quite willing to puddle about through the edge of the marsh and to pick up a livelihood in company with the fresh-water ducks.

In describing the “ring-necked” duck or “ring neck,” Grinnell writes that: “The adult male has back of head and crown loose and puffy, at times showing almost as a crest. The head, neck, breast, upper parts and under tail-coverts, black; the head sometimes glossed with purple and the back with greenish.



*Ben Dye bluebill drake*





There is a more or less distinct chestnut or reddish-brown collar around the middle of the neck, and a white spot upon the chin. The speculum is bluish-gray; sides of body waved with white and blackish lines. The under parts are white. The bill is dark grayish blue, with a black tip, and a very pale (in life nearly white) band across it, near the tip; the eyes are yellow. The female does not show the neck ring and the bill is less plainly marked. The black of the male changes to brown in the female. The fore part of head, all about the base of the bill, is nearly white. The lower parts of the body are white, sometimes marked with brown or brownish-gray, growing darker toward the tail.”

Regarding the similarities between the ring neck and the greater and lesser scaup, Grinnell notes that: “The ring-necked duck is by no means so abundant as many of our other species and is quite commonly confused with the little black-head, which it closely resembles in habits. In fact, as a rule, gunners do not distinguish between the tufted duck and the little blackhead, and when counting up their score at the end of the day always refer to this species as a black-head. Its common names indicate this confusion. It is called ring-necked scaup, ring-necked black-head, marsh blue-bill, bastard broad-bill, ring-billed black-head, ring-billed shuffler, and sometimes it is called creek redhead because of its resemblance to that species. I have also heard boatmen, who had happened to notice the red collar about the bird’s neck, call it a hybrid between a black-head and a redhead.” But while the drake ring necks share similarities with the scaup, Grinnell notes that the hens closely resemble those of another species, writing that: “The female of the ring-necked duck is very similar to that of the redhead, but the former is darker, except about the bill, where the pale markings are much paler, often almost white.

The difference in the bills is characteristic, that of the female ring-neck being much the shorter and broader.”

Grinnell concludes of ring-necks that: “They decoy well and are easily killed when they come up to the stools, although very swift fliers. It is said that this bird is more abundant on

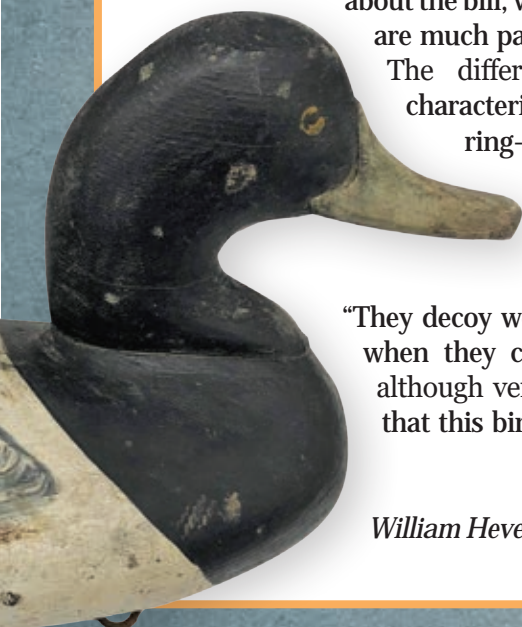


*Bob McGaw bluebill hen*

our inland waters than on the sea-coast. Even there, however, it can never be called an abundant species. Its flesh, under favorable circumstances, is excellent eating, and if it were more abundant it would be one of the most desirable of our fowl.”

Just as birders, game wardens and ornithologists today have difficulty distinguishing the various bluebills, so too did hunters during waterfowling’s golden age. They were often recorded collectively in hunting journals, gunning club game counts and tallies. Even though all three species frequented the Upper Chesapeake Bay and were actively pursued by gunners there, few, if any, early decoy makers attempted to differentiate their carvings to represent them. Several seem to have done so, albeit inadvertently, in terms of the size of the blocks they were shaping and in the way they blended the colors and applied their paint patterns. Today, collectors can find blackhead decoys as small as teal and as big as canvasbacks. For example, there are bluebill decoys made by John Graham measuring only eight inches in length, and examples by William Heverin that are more than twice as long. Most, however, seem to fall between 11 and 14 inches in length. By the 1950s and 1960s, responding to the growing demand from collectors, some decoy makers did begin to produce truly distinct greater scaup, lesser scaup and ring neck decoys in the proper sizes and relative proportions and with appropriate detail in the paint patterns.

In this instance of art imitating life, the floating wooden sculptures representing “Bay blackheads” are really imitating three different species. This helps explain the wide array of sizes and styles found in vintage working bluebill decoys from the Susquehanna Flats region. Perhaps more variety is seen in bluebills than in the decoys of any other species made there – from pert and diminutive to hefty and sturdy, short and squat to long and streamlined, and blocky and functional to fluid, rounded and sculptural.



*William Heverin bluebill drake*



*Scott Jackson bluebill drake*



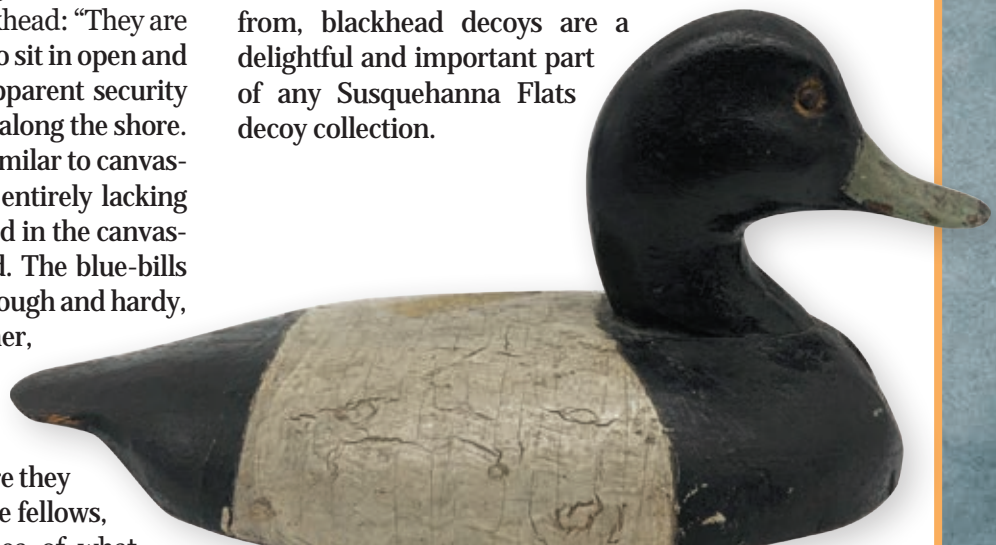
Baltimore sportsman and birding enthusiast William H. Fisher, writing in the March 1894 issue of *The Oölogist*, an early ornithological journal, shares the following in a short article on Maryland's gamebirds: "The Blackhead is a common Duck in our rivers and in Chesapeake Bay. It decoys well and is a good table Duck, but not so highly esteemed as some of the other species. It often associates with the Redhead." Of the Lesser Scaup Duck, ("Little Blackhead" or "Creek Blackhead"), he writes: "Much smaller than the preceding species. Decoys well. I have killed a great many on Dundee Creek." Dundee Creek, just south of the Gunpowder River, was home to such notable waterfowling grounds as Bengies, Grace's Quarters and Marshy Point.

In his 1888 treatise, *Wild Fowl Shooting*, William Bruce Leffingwell says this of the mighty blackhead: "They are essentially open-water ducks, and like to sit in open and broad water, where they can rest in apparent security from the intrusion of prowling hunters along the shore. In their habits in this respect they are similar to canvas-back and red-head, although they are entirely lacking in the shrewdness and caution displayed in the canvas-back and so frequently in the red-head. The blue-bills are the little salts of the open streams. Tough and hardy, loving rough and inclement weather, they are found in the most turbulent weather floating on the crested waves, bobbing up and down with each swell, looking like big black corks, so far out are they in the open water. They are restless little fellows, and often fly without any definite idea of what they are flying for, or where they are going to. They simply like to be on the move, seemingly self appointed

committees of investigation whose duties are be on the go continuously. This is especially noticeable on stormy days, or when the wind blows strong and raw. On bright, warm, still days, when the sun beats mildly on the calm water, the prevailing spirit of indolence, so catching to human life, is contagious with them, and they float idly on the surface of the open lake, or are carried down by the swift flowing current of some rapid river, huddled closely together in a black, blue, and white mass of soft feathers, with their heads hugging their breasts with quiet contentment."

With regard to the use of decoys in luring the "hardy" and "restless" birds, Leffingwell shares this: "After enjoying their fun, they settle down to business, and repair to the ponds, little lakes and shores, there satisfying their sharp appetites. Then is the time to shoot them over decoys, and decoys in profusion should be used, —the more the better, as the water will be from three to ten feet deep. Wooden decoys must be used. They should be placed in the open, plainly in sight, and if the stream is narrow, say seventy-five yards, set your decoys well away from you, that the birds may light between you and them."

If it were possible to go back in time 100 years, we might see a wonderfully diverse rig made up only of Upper Bay bluebills. The sleek Hollys and blocky Barnes birds floating right next to the small, proud Barnards, the rounded Dyes and the massive Heverins. With so much variety and with so many for today's collectors to examine and choose from, blackhead decoys are a delightful and important part of any Susquehanna Flats decoy collection.



*Bluebill wing duck drake, unknown  
Susquehanna Flats maker*



*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
*Steve Keller*



# SHOTS

---

## From the Wild

**Are you a photography enthusiast who loves snapping pictures of the local wildlife?**

If so, submit your shots from the wild to [wildlifephotography@decoymuseum.com](mailto:wildlifephotography@decoymuseum.com).

Only high resolution photos will be accepted. (i.e. at least 2,500 pixels wide)

*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
*Earl Blansfield*



*Lesser Scaup Hen*  
*Earl Blansfield*



*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
*Scott Krieger*







*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
*Scott Moody*



*Greater Scaup Drake*  
*Steve Keeler*



*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
*Earl Blansfield*



*Greater Scaup Drake*  
Scott Moody



*Lesser Scaup Drake*  
Steve Keller



*Scaups Gathering*  
Ralph Hockman



*Lesser Scaup Hen*  
Ralph Hockman







# Charter, Chowder & Cleveland?

## The History of One Cecil County Gunning and Fishing Club

In the beginning colonial settlers prospered...

**T**he Stump, Whitaker and Coudon families were all early colonial settlers to the area originally known as the Susquehanna Hundreds. They found safe haven at the mouth of the Susquehanna River. The Stumps held property on both sides of the river. Stump Point is in Cecil County and Stump's Island is partially located within the legal limits of the Susquehanna Flats. The decedents of these families remained and prospered. By 1850, these families dominated the evolving Cecil County areas of Perryville, Principio and Aikin.

Johann Henrich "John" Stump (1701-1747) was born in Prussia. He married an English bride named Mary Catherine Bakerin (1700-1748) in Philadelphia's Christ Church on November 11, 1726. Prior to the end of the 19th century, two of the Stump's grandchildren married each other. John Stump III (1756-1828) married his first cousin



*Colonial Map circa 1777 of the Chesapeake Bay*

Hannah Stump (1762-1824) in Cecil County on March 14, 1786. They had 10 children together. Their second daughter was Ann Stump (1793-1859).





### ***The John & Mary Stump Family (1892)***

*Left to Right: Stevenson Archer (family friend, 1818-19010, Florence Coulson (Bromwell) Craig (family friend, 1817-1954), Elizabeth Hooper "Bessie" (Stump) Boswell (daughter, 1854-1924), Judge Henry Arthur Stump (son, 1857-1934), Mary Alicia (Mitchell) Stump (wife, 1817-1894), Jane (Mitchell) Stewart (granddaughter, 1870-1945), Alecia Mitchell Stump (daughter, 1854-1930), John Stump (husband, 1804-1896), Anne (Chambers) Stump (daughter-in-law (George), 1852-1918), Anna Theresa Stump (great granddaughter, 1891-1981), Caroline Theresa "Carrie" (Riegel) Stump (daughter-in-law (Henry), 1863-1935), Elizabeth Russel "Lizzie" Mitchell (granddaughter, 1876-1941), Henrietta Mitchell (Stump) Mitchell (daughter, 1842-1900), Alexander Mitchell, Judge Fredrick Stump (son, 1837-1901)*

The patriarch of Cecil County's Coudon family was the Reverend Joseph Coudon (1742-1792). He was a highly regarded and important resident of the eastern side of colonial Chesapeake Bay. He eventually settled in Cecil County. Rev. Coudon and his second wife Rachel Wallace (1750-1875) were blessed with four children. Their youngest was named after his father. Joseph Coudon II (1787-1860) married Ann Stump (1793-1859) on May 5, 1820.

This marriage bonded two of the area's major families. As did their family members before them, the young Cecil County couple prospered. During the marriage, Joe and Ann had two boys. Each was given their great grandfathers' names. Their highly prosperous parents assembled two significant and similar farm properties so that each son would have one in later life. Both boys were highly educated at the best schools.

Joseph Musgrave Whitaker (1755-1838) was born in Leeds, England. Joe married a woman from his hometown on November 5, 1754. Her name was Sarah Butler Op den Graeff (1759-1823). They migrated to Colonial Berks County, PA before their first child was born in 1779. The couple had 13 children in total. Their youngest was George P Whitaker (1803-1890). George married a Delaware woman named Eliza Ann Simmons (1808-1875) on November 1, 1827 in Cecil County, MD. They had three girls and then

they were blessed with seven boys. The Whitaker family were proprietors of a very successful foundry. They owned and operated the foundry known as Principio Furnace.

Their second daughter Caroline Whitaker married Joseph Coudon III (1858-1940). Joe's parents bequeathed their lovely farm property called "Woodlands" to their son and his wife. The young couple were very successful and they became the proud parents of two sons. Both were named after their grandfathers. Their son Joseph would be known as Woodlands Joe to distinguish him from his first cousin with the same name.



*The John & Mary Stump Home (1892)*







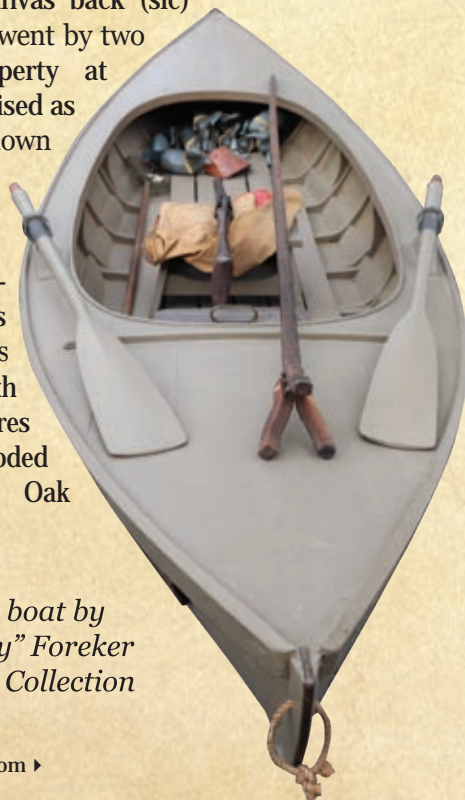
shoreline frontage on the river that measured about three quarters of a mile. 168 acres were farmland and another 75 acres were timberlands. That left about 20 acres of wetlands. Henry's life was good until about 1888. In September of that year, Henry bought 26 head of cattle in Baltimore. Ten days after their delivery, nine were dead. They were diagnosed with "Texas Fever". The cause of the problem was a tick. Unfortunately, that knowledge was not determined until the next decade. It was not long before the ticks that came onto their cattle farm in 1888 financially devastated Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stump Coudon.

In March of 1889, the Midland Journal published a story lamenting the business losses of Mr. Coudon. The story contained the information that Coudon was a valued leader who was cherished by the community. It also reported that Henry and Martha had assigned all of their property to an attorney in Baltimore for the benefit of their creditors.

Come the fall of 1889, the Cecil Whig was advertising the pending public auctions of two farms. One was the Coudon's cherished 278-acre farm in Perryville called "Ellerslie". The gift from his parents was almost all in cultivation with some woodlands. The farm had apple and pear orchards, notable fencing, a barn, outbuildings and a large brick dwelling having brick and stone walls covered in stucco.

Henry and Martha Coudon's second property was advertised in the auction notice as a "Splendid Farm on Chesapeake Bay". The advertisement went on to say: "The location of this farm is one of the best in the state, having a front of three-quarters of a mile directly on the Chesapeake Bay, and in the immediate vicinity of the celebrated feeding grounds of the canvas back (sic) ducks." This farm went by two names. The property at auction was advertised as "...all that Farm known as Chowder Hall or Charter Hall...".

This over 262-acre property was detailed as 168 acres in cultivation with the remaining 75 acres of land being wooded containing mostly Oak



Restored rail boat by Howard "Ducky" Foreker - Jack Manning Collection

**TRUSTEE'S**  
**PUBLIC SALE**  
Of One of the Most Beautiful and Valuable Country Places and Farms in the State of Maryland.

The undersigned Trustee will sell at Public Auction upon the premises on  
**Friday, the 22d day of October, 1889**  
AT 4:30 P. M.

all that tract of land called "ELLERSLIE" formerly the property of Henry S. Coudon, situated near the town of Perryville, Cecil County, Md. and comprising

**278 ACRES OF LAND**

MORE OR LESS.

The farm is well watered, and is all under cultivation except a few acres of woodland. All the fencing (including hedges) in good condition. Apple and Pear Orchard.

The improvements consist of a large and substantially built DWELLING HOUSE (brick and stone walls covered with stucco.) A large and well-built barn with straw house attached and all necessary out-buildings.

Accessible both to the H. & O. R. R. at Alker, (a station on the place) and to the P. W. & M. R. R. at Perryville.

TERMS OF SALE—Cash on Ratification of Sale. A deposit of Five Hundred Dollars will be required from the purchaser at the time of sale.

ALFIELD S. NILES,  
Trustee.

Plans of the property and full particulars will be given upon application to  
NILES & WOLFF,  
Attorneys at Law,  
S. W. Cor. Lexington and Ohio Sts.,  
Baltimore, Md.

*Ellerslie Auction Notice  
(1889)*

**ATTORNEY'S SALE**  
—OF A—  
**Splendid Farm**  
ON CHESAPEAKE BAY.

The undersigned as attorney named in a mortgage from Henry S. Coudon and Martha R. Coudon his wife to Jacob Tome, dated the 24th day of February 1887 and recorded among the Mortgage Records of Cecil County in Liber J. A. 15, No. 11, 1070-22, by virtue of the power therein contained, will offer for sale at Public Auction on  
**Tuesday, the 8th day of October 1889**  
AT 12 O'CLOCK, NOON.

at the Court House door in Elkton, Maryland, all that Farm known as "Chowder Hall" or "Charter Hall," situate in Cecil County, Maryland, about one mile and a half from Perryville station on the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore R. R. where it crosses the Susquehanna River. The location of this farm is one of the best in the state, having a front of three-quarters of a mile directly on the Chesapeake Bay, and in the immediate vicinity of the celebrated feeding grounds of the canvas back ducks. The farm contains

**262 1/2 Acres**

of land, more or less. About 168 acres are in cultivation and the residue is woodland. The acreage is FINE OAK AND CHESTNUT TIMBER.

The cleared land is of the quality and in good state of cultivation, divided into convenient fields under fencing.

There is on the farm a BRICK DWELLING HOUSE, 40 x 50 feet with addition for 24 rooms. Fine and good of every kind abound and together form one of the most desirable country places which has been in the market for years.

TERMS OF SALE—As prescribed in the mortgage are cash on the day of sale, but if the purchaser desires arrangement may be made by which a loan or mortgage equal to one-half the purchase money can be negotiated.

W. J. JONES,  
Attorney named in mortgage to make sale.  
Sept 15

*Splendid Farm Auction  
Notice (1889)*

and Chestnut. There were notable fences to divide the fields. The house was brick and the barn was 40' x 50'. There was a mortgage on this farm held by another Cecil County notable named Jacob Tome (1810-1898). Mr. Tome was a resident of Port Deposit. His hometown was just up the Susquehanna River from Perryville.

**From failed farms to comfortable clubs and perhaps presidents...**

On Saturday October 12, 1889, the Cecil Whig reported the following: "Wm. J. Jones, Esq., attorney for Jacob Tome, mortgagee, sold at public auction in Elkton on Tuesday last the "Charter Hall" farm in the Seventh District. It was purchased by Henry W. Kelsey of Philadelphia who is said to represent a gunning club, for \$6,800."

The geographic area in Maryland known as the Susquehanna Flats is one of the most renowned duck hunting grounds in America. The area's most glorious period from the perspective of waterfowl gunning took place for roughly the 50 years between 1885 and 1935. The gunners' available technology changed significantly by 1936, but a good level of gunning continued for more than another 20 years into the 1960's. The sport continues today on the Susquehanna Flats.

Once the War Between the States concluded, in general, the USA became a juggernaut. New technology brought better tools for all. Ingenuity, initiative and increased productivity expanded both products and demand. That





simple cycle continued in increasingly rapid rotations as the 19th Century wound down and America flew into the 20th century.

Most importantly, the development of steam power and combustible engines using naphtha, diesel and gas exponentially expanded during this time. Those inventions enhanced the distribution of goods from one region further out to other regions. Simultaneously, the ability to communicate rapidly across long distances emerged. So did refrigeration.

Given the progress of the industrial revolution, formerly local markets became regional. Then, the regional economies expanded exponentially before they quickly metamorphosed into multi-state and eventually national and international markets.

The quality of the lives of the families living along the Susquehanna Flats at the very top of the Chesapeake Bay moved in the same positive and upwards direction. The resources of their area rapidly enjoyed an unprecedented abundance of demand, as more buyers were able to interact with more sellers.

The demand was diverse. There was a new demand for product. Given the enormous amount of uneven miles of bay, rivers and estuaries, many early families survived working the land as farmers. These families were skilled with hammers and saws. Carpentry was a life-style for most farmers. They were also hunters and fishermen. The early colonial families lived off the uplands, the wetlands and the waters of the flats. Their tools were plows, boats, guns and decoys.

As an alternative, transportation was a primary source of income for many early families in the Upper Bay area. The water provided not only fishing jobs. There were many

merchant mariners supporting their families as captains and crewmembers. Many, many others along the flats worked for the railroad. Most families employed multiple sources of income to make ends meet.

During this period, nationally, there was also a new and ever increasing amount of leisure time. As the 19th century ended and the 20th century commenced more Americans were more affluent. With affluence came disposable income. Suddenly, the Susquehanna Flats experienced a previously unprecedented demand for the sporting life by upwardly mobile residents of the big east coast cities.

The path to ducking the flats for many of these newly wealthy so-called “sports” in the big east coast cities was farmlands fronting on or around the Susquehanna Flats. At that trustee’s auction in the fall of 1889, Henry W. Kelsey of Philadelphia bought Henry Coudon’s farm as one of 16 men. The farm was near Principio Creek on the road between Principio and Carpenter Point. Much of the shoreline was on Furnace Bay.

It is no coincidence that the property was conveyed in late October. The Susquehanna Flats ducking season of 1889-1890 began in November. The 16 Philadelphia men used the brick home on the farm as a clubhouse. They hunted the three quarters of a mile of shoreline on their property. They enjoyed pass shooting and they gunned from blinds. They likely also sought the services of the area guides with licenses for the flats. The local families offered the sports access to bushwhack boats and sinkboxes. It is likely that during this first year the new Philly club’s members acquired and branded a rig of decoys. Their brand was “C.H.G.C.”.

Just before the ducking season on the flats began in November 1890, the Philadelphia Times reported the following in their October 29 issue: “...a quartette of well-known Philadelphians who have spent several days in New York traveled up to Yonkers where they bought a forty-foot naphtha launch for use during the gunning season on the Chesapeake. The party consisted Abraham S. Paterson and his brother Joseph, both well-known iron manufacturers; H. W. Kelsey, the brass manufacturer, and who is largely interested in the Turkish baths of Philadelphia, and Charles B. Baeder of Baeder, Adamson & Co. These gentlemen acted as a committee of the Chowder Hall Fishing and Gunning Club, whose boat house (sic) is on the Chesapeake. The price paid for the launch was \$1,500.”

That story is the first time we find the club’s name. We also learn that these men located their club on Charter Point to both gun and fish. Their new 40-foot naphtha powered vessel would put them on both the ducks in the gunning





*Ben Dye*

- Patrick Vincenti collection



*Ben Dye Redhead Decoys with Charter Hall Gun Club Brand*

season and the rockfish during fishing season. With 1890 being their second gunning season, along with the fact that they now had their own gunning scow, the club's decoy rig would require an expansion.

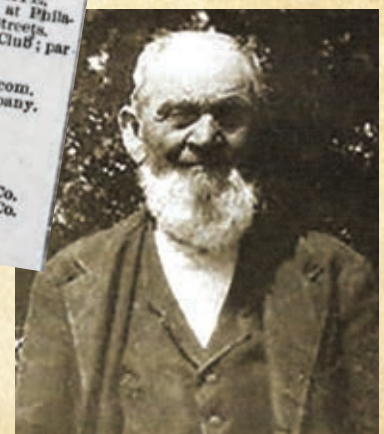
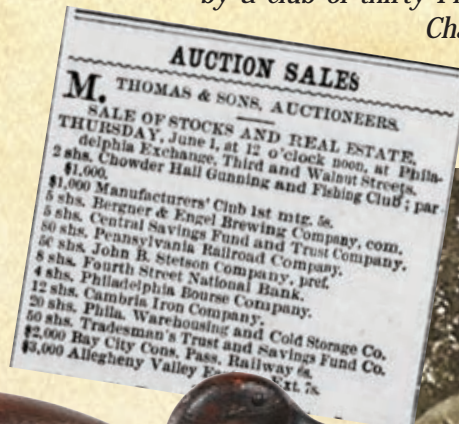
Toward the end of that 1890-1891 ducking season, the Philadelphia Times ran the following short piece of news: "George Miller, the Germantown brewer; John S. McKinlay and H. N. (sic) Kelsey have returned from a gunning excursion to the grounds of the Chowder Hall Gunning Club on Chesapeake Bay." Given their new power vessel, the club's rig of decoys would likely have expanded during their second year. The club's C.H.G.C. brand is found on decoys from the shops of Cecil County carvers active at the time the club was started. Both John B Graham (1822-1912) from Charlestown and Ben Dye (1832-1896) from Stumps Point were sources of the club's early decoy rig.

The club membership would change and expand during the next decade, but Mr. Kelsey continued to be the owner of record. In 1893, a month after the end of the gunning season there was an auction at the M. Thomas and Sons Auction House. This was a sale of stocks and real estate. Most of the lots were shares of bank and railroad stocks.

The auction was held at the Philadelphia Exchange located on the corner of Third and Walnut streets. The item listed at the very top of the auction listing was two Shares of Chowder Hall Gunning and Fishing Club stock. Each had a par value of \$1,000.

We have additional evidence that the 16 original Chowder Hall Farm club members enabled an expansion from the original membership. It is likely that the two shares sold at auction were part of a capital-funding plan employed to raise capital as the club's membership expanded. The gunning season was in full swing during February of 1898 when the club suffered from a robbery. It provides evidence of an expanded membership of thirty.

The Baltimore Sun reported the following on February 8, 1898: "Havre de Grace, MD., Feb. 7. - The clubhouse owned by a club of thirty Philadelphians, located at Charter Hall, on the Cecil county (sic) side of the river, was broken into last night and



*John B. Graham. Photograph in the private collection of Rod Wittstadt and reproduced here with his permission.*



*John Graham Teal Decoys with Charter Hall Gun Club Brand*



a fine Scott breech-loading gun and a suit of clothes and many other things were taken. The manager of the club, Mr. John Wright, was in this city this evening trying to trace the movements of a party suspected of the robbery." One follow-up story in another paper indicated a man who worked on a farm in the neighborhood disappeared the night of the theft and was suspected as being the thief.

Of considerable note, is an undated article written by Gary Koehler and titled "Duck Towns". You can find it on the Ducks Unlimited website. In his article, Mr. Koehler highlights Havre de Grace, MD as one of several "duck towns" in his piece. He also writes: "... President Grover Cleveland was known to hunt ducks at the Charter Hall Gun Club near Havre de Grace. The club, it's told, had special quarters for the accompanying Secret Service agents."

If the above information provided by Mr. Koehler is accurate, then the former president Steven Grover Cleveland (1837-1908) would likely have gunned at the club during Mr. Kelsey's ownership. Grover's first term ended in 1889. That was the same year the club was formed. Cleveland's second term ran from 1893-1897.

Norris Pratt wrote the Susquehanna Flats chapter in the 1972 book edited by Robert Richardson entitled *Chesapeake Bay Decoys, The Men Who Made and Used Them*. Norris tells us that Cleveland "...was a familiar figure in eastern (U.S.) sporting areas between 1885 and 1897." Another book by C. John Sullivan was released in 2003. In *Waterfowling on the Chesapeake 1819 -1936*, John tells us that Grover Cleveland spent a weekend during March 1886 gunning from the Domingo Farm Club in Harford County. John also tells us the former president "reportedly" gunned from the shore of the Northeast River near Charlestown.

In 2014, a super book was compiled and printed by Henry C. Penden and Jack L Shagena. The title is *Duck Hunters on the Susquehanna Flats 1850-1930*. In addition to Cleveland's 1886 gunning trip to the San Domingo Farm Club, these authors documented a second Grover Cleveland trip to the flats in 1892. This time he gunned at the Spesutia Island Rod and Gun Club owned by a group of businessmen from New York.

Meanwhile the Chowder Hall Farm club remained gracious and one new member seemed prominent as the new millennium approached. Mr. Kelsey was still the official owner with Mr. Wright serving as the manager. We find in the December 3, 1898 issue of the "Cecil Whig" in the "Principio Furnace Items" that "...Jacob Myers, of Philadelphia, spent a few days at the Chowder Hall Club House." The following year the Cecil Whig Newspaper reported: "The Sunday



*Philadelphia Exchange*

*School picnic held at Chowder Hall was quite an enjoyable one as there were about 128 persons present. After a good dinner ice cream and cake were served in abundance."* The farm was a regular location for such outings. In early 1900, the Cecil Whig's Principio Furnace section reported on February 16: "Mr. Jacob Myers, of Philadelphia, spent Wednesday at Chowder Hall Club House."

The 1900 millennium occurred and then, after about a dozen years, it appears Mr. Kelsey fell behind in his Chowder Hall Farm's mortgage payments to Jacob Tome. Just as the 1901-1902 waterfowling season began on the Susquehanna Flats, via a public auction, Mr. Kelsey passed both his mortgage and his deed for the Chowder Hall Farm over to a Philadelphia building contractor already quite familiar with the club.

We find in the Philadelphia News on November 14, 1901 that "The Chowder Hall property at Principio was sold at public sale yesterday to James (sic) Myers, of Philadelphia, for \$5,500." The Philadelphia Times on November 24 confirmed the typo above. The purchase appears to have been a very, very good deal for Jacob Myers.

The demand for farms at the start of the new millennium's first decade was high. The use of Cecil farm ownerships by Philadelphia residents to gun the flats at the top of the Chesapeake Bay did not go unnoticed as the 1901-1902 ducking season began on the Susquehanna Flats. Posted below is a chart prepared from a Philadelphia Times story found in their November 24, 1901 issue. The lead on this story read: "...Elkton, November 23. -During the past few days many farms in this county have changed ownership, the bulk of them being purchased by Philadelphians."

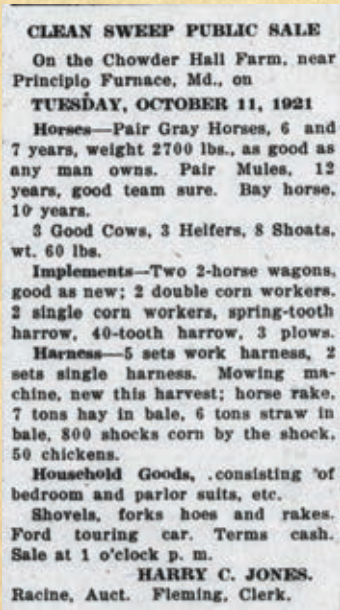


Buyer	Home	Cecil County Farm	Location	Size	Price	\$/Acre
George W Watts .....	Philadelphia .....	Capt Manly Farm .....	Elkton . . . . .	187 .....	\$6,000 .....	32.09
Jacob Meyers.....	Philadelphia .....	Chowder Hall.....	Perryville . . . . .	262 .....	\$5,500 .....	20.99
Thomas Blackwell.....	Philadelphia .....	Simpson Farm .....	Elkton . . . . .	48 .....	N/A .....	N/A
W. & George Rogers.....	Philadelphia .....	Ben Sapp Farm.....	Elk River . . . . .	N/A .....	N/A .....	N/A
Jane Lynn .....	Frankfort, PA .....	WK Griffith Farm.....	Lombard . . . . .	26 .....	\$4,100 .....	157.69
Clinton W Purner .....	Cecil County .....	MH Kerlin Farm .....	Town Point . . . . .	N/A .....	\$8,500 .....	N/A
Jacob W Kline .....	Philadelphia .....	Fowler Shore Farm .....	Elk River . . . . .	N/A .....	\$3,000 .....	N/A
George Janvier.....	N/A .....	Caleb N Price Farm .....	Cecil/New Castle . . .	N/A .....	\$12,000.....	N/A
Sarah Whiteoak.....	N/A.....	Jos H Brinton Farm.....	2nd Dist CC . . . . .	266 .....	\$7,000 .....	26.32
Emma England.....	Philadelphia .....	Peirson Farm.....	9th Dist CC . . . . .	N/A .....	\$2,500 .....	N/A
James T Morgan.....	Cecil County .....	F Morgan Farm .....	1st Dist CC . . . . .	266 .....	\$7,000 .....	26.32
Aron L Duyckinck.....	N/A.....	Briscoe Farm.....	6th Dist CC . . . . .	136 .....	\$13,000.....	95.59

As you view the chart, please take note of the number of women making these purchases. Perhaps some gunning gents were looking to remain anonymous?

The property’s clubhouse and frontage was of considerable value to the Chowder Hall club members. Apparently, they did not value the remaining upland portion of the property from a sporting perspective. Thus, in 1903, the first order of business for the new owner was to purge the woodlands portion of the farm for his own commercial business use.

On June 23 of that year, the Daily New Era of Lancaster, PA reported that: *“Mr. John F. Herr, of 16 Dorwart street (sic), this city, has purchased for Jacob Myers & Son, builders, of Philadelphia, a tract of eighty acres of woodland on the*



Newspaper advertisement for the Chowder Hall auction (1921)

*Chowder Hall farm, in Cecil County, ND., and a tract on the Timothy Haines farm, now owned by D. A. H. Stubbs, near Peach Bottom. A large force of men will be put to work at once to clear the land.”*

Mr. Meyers exploited the farm property once he got it and then he quickly flipped it for a profit. The club’s deed was passed from Meyers in December of 1905 to Frank George Butler. Mr. Butler got control of the club’s 262 acres from Meyers when he assumed Meyer’s \$3,500 mortgage to Tome and paid Myers an additional \$3,000

in cash. In about four years, Meyers had bought the club at an under-market price of \$21/acre, acquired the timber rights, harvested all the hardwoods and then sold the property for 18% more than he had paid for it.

F.G. Butler advertised “No Trespassing” on his Chowder Hall farm regularly in the Cecil Whig from 1905 through 1911. No outsiders were welcome to gun the family’s property. Butler family member William Butler was living at Chowder Hall with another employee named John Crate when the clubhouse burned down in 1915. There was some insurance to put towards the restoration. William Butler pulled a sinkbox license that year. The Chowder Hall farm’s personal property was entirely sold off at auction by the Butler family in 1921.

**From Premier Gun Club to Down-on-her-luck Murderess’s acquittal...**

Once the Butler’s were no longer the owners, for the next three decades, the Charter Hall Rod and Gun Club continued to quietly exist on the Susquehanna Flats. The Baltimore Sun reported the following about four gunners from that city on November 7, 1926: *“A little cooler weather and breeze of more than zepher strength will bring ducking into its own up on the flats is opinion of Thomas J Fyffe, who, with Dr. Erasmus H. Kloman, R. B. Mason and R. P. Wall shot from the blinds of the Charter Hall Rod and Gun Club across from Perry Point, on the northwest side of the flats. Never before, according to Mr. Fyffe, has he ever seen so many ducks on the Susquehanna as he has this season. On the opening day the party bagged a goodly bunch of 70 canvasbacks, pintails and black ducks. On Wednesday, however, the same blinds yielded but a scattering few canvasbacks and pintails.”*



That was pretty much the last printed good news in the gun club's history. At the start of 1932, the "Charter Hall Rod and Gun Club, Inc." was advertised in the Baltimore Sun as one of a number of Maryland corporations that were alleged to be in "Arrears for Taxes". Ten years later, on August 21, 1942, the club's caretaker Oliver Wesley Strong passed away at the Charter Hall Rod and Gun Club near Perryville, MD. The farm's owner at that time was G. H. Kimmicutt. He lived on Wall Street in New York City.

Six years later, on several occasions from July through October in 1948, The Baltimore Sun and the Star Democrat ran the following advertisement in their classified sections: "MAN & WIFE—Exp. As farmer, duck guide, waterman for Charter Hall, a private property on Susquehanna Flats near Perryville, MD. Wife occasional cooking and caretaking. Good salary, own house, 50 acres located on water. Write giving past experience, ref. and by whom employed. Salary asked, to H Buller, 8 W. King St., Lancaster, PA. Once again, a Pennsylvania resident was back running the club.

Come June 17 of 1953, the Charter Hall Rod & Gun Club made local news for the last time. On that day, Ella Elizabeth Gray shot and killed her abusive husband Phillip L. W. Gray with his own handgun. Mr. & Mrs. Gray were the club's caretakers at that time. Less than 90 days later, Mrs. Gray was found to be innocent of her husband's murder by a jury of her peers.

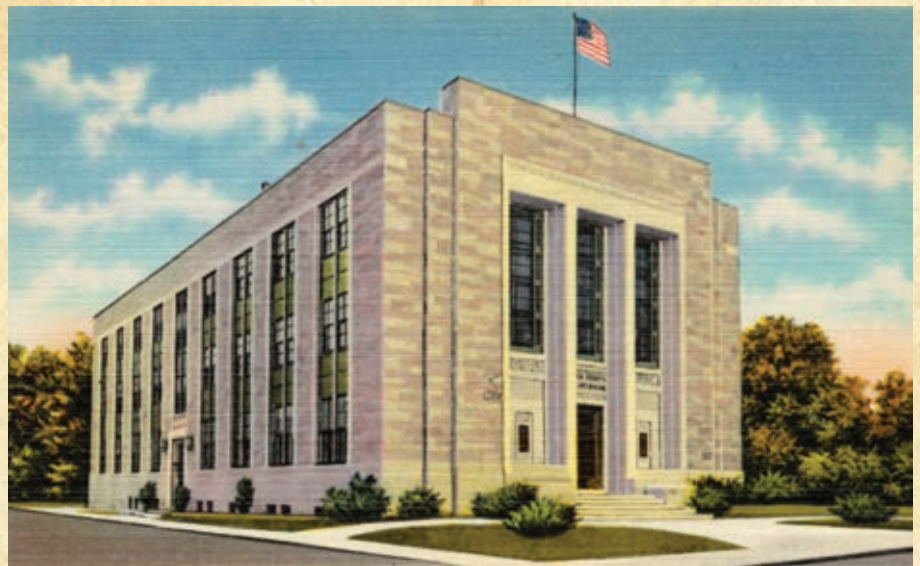
In October of 1989, about 114 acres with around 2,000 feet of frontage on Furnace Bay was sold via a public auction for the then owner. This parcel was a portion of the former 262 acre "Charter Hall Farm". The property was advertised as 50% wooded and 50% cleared, with an unsurpassed view of the Bay.

From an 1850 farm with more than 260 acres and a two-headed cow to a 1989 parcel of about 1/2 that size. The Chowder/Charter Hall farm survived, many owners, some with wealth and power, thefts, fires and deaths (from both natural causes and murder) across about 150 years. There even may have been presidential visits. Just what do we have to show for that farm's long and storied history?

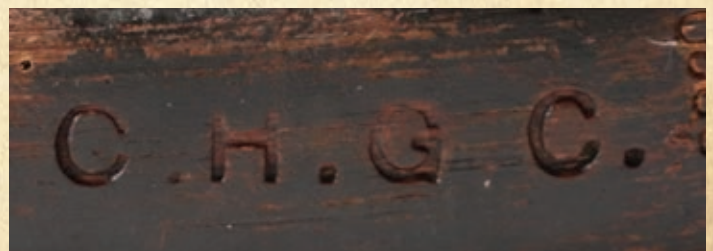
We have some very collectable 19th century upper Bay decoys made by the early Cecil County masters. You will know them when you find them. They will have C.H.G.C. cold stamped onto their bottoms. Enjoy the hunt for them and may you have the best of luck with your endeavors.



*Elkton, MD Courthouse*



*Charter Hall Gun Club Brand*





**Spring 2022** *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:*  
**Mallard Pair by Paul Gibson**



*3rd Prize:*  
**"Mallard Family" Print  
by Luke Raffin**

*4th Prize:*  
**Seagull by Charlie Bryan**



**Drawing: Sunday, May 1, 2022 - 3 pm • 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival**

For tickets call **410.939.3739** or email: [information@DecoyMuseum.com](mailto:information@DecoyMuseum.com)  
(Additional tickets will be available at the Museum and at the Festival venue during the show.)



*Innovative  
&  
Inspiring*

Now building in Bulle Rock  
and historic Havre de Grace.

**Trademark Custom Homes**  
200 Man O'War Place  
Havre de Grace, MD.  
(443) 804-9616





# Father & Son Tradition

By Dan Thanh Dang

**O**n any given day of the week, Bernie and Bryon Bodt can be found sitting across from each other in their Churchville wood shop. Paints in a rainbow of colors, hundreds of brushes in all shapes and sizes, and all manner of fowl standing at attention on shelves surround them.

Silently and swiftly, the two men pass carved birds back and forth, brushing bright whites and muted browns on the body and then another pigment swept through for feathers. Two or three hours can pass without a spoken word, the pair pausing only to adjust their speed and rhythm.

Over two dozen decoys might get painted in this time, or maybe only six depending on the species of duck gracing the table that day. What is certain is that those hours, the days, the many decades that father and son have spent together pursuing and perfecting their craft is not lost on them.

“How many people do this?” Bryon Bodt, 58, said as he looked upon his 78-year-old dad.

**“To carve is unique. To carve with your father is special.”**

Indeed, no one can say for sure why a child chooses the same line of work as their parent. In years past, helping put food on the family table or build a family business were major factors. In all likelihood, it was easy to do what you saw your parents doing day after day.

But, the path to decoy carving is anything but easy these days.

That’s evident by the declining number of decoy carvers still keeping the folk art alive. Historian C. John Sullivan believes



**Bryon & Bernie Bodt**

there are about 12 local carvers practicing today compared to 32 in the 1950s.

Back then, Sullivan said, decoy carving was far more utilitarian than artistic. Its history dates back to Native Americans fashioning replicas of waterfowl out of reeds, sticks and other found materials to entice ducks and geese into their nets.

Early European immigrants followed suit by handcrafting their own rustic decoys for hunting migratory birds as a means to put food on the dinner table. With the emergence of railroad transportation, hunters were able to make a living selling birds to cities far and wide as the appetite for waterfowl grew, consequently increasing the demand for decoys. Known as the market hunting boom, thousands upon thousands of birds were killed using thousands of decoys.

Then came the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1918, which placed serious limitations on waterfowl hunting. With the drop in duck hunting and the proliferation of factory made plastic decoys that are cheaper for hunting purposes, Sullivan said, the number of decoys and their carvers also shrank around the country.

The demand for decoys became less about their ability to float on the water and more about the skills required to turn a block of wood into a striking semblance of avian fauna. Little wonder then that the progeny of even some of the most celebrated artisans in the decoy carving world would choose not to follow in their footsteps.





## Jim & Charlie Pierce

James “Jimmy” Pierce knows this all too well.

At the age of 87, the man considered to be the patriarch of Havre de Grace carvers feels lucky to be able to continue painting decoys with his 53-year-old son, Charles, who handles most of the carving now. His older son by two years, James, no longer practices.

“I wanted him to go out and get a real job,” said the elder Pierce, who made his first decoy at 13 out of necessity. Back then, if you wanted to hunt, he said, you needed decoys. If you needed decoys and had no money, you had to make your own decoys. Many carvers like Pierce got their start this way. “But he came back here after school and never left.”

True, “Charlie” Pierce thought he had his mind set on being a stockbroker.

But maybe it was the hum of the belt sander, the fresh smell of sawdust or the wonder of transforming a block of wood with your hands, the pull of the craft brought him back to his dad’s Havre de Grace shop.

“I think he secretly wanted me to follow in his footsteps,” said Charlie Pierce, as he sat across from his dad in the paint room where specks of Rustoleum primer and Ronin Japan paints encrusted their pants and every surface of every object, be it chair, table, wall, and light fixture.

“My dad was always working when I was a kid,” added Charlie Pierce, now a full-time carver. “He was always here, but he was always working. We had an hour together for dinner as a family when I was a kid. We would go hunting together. I would help him carve. But, what was really weird was that when I came back here was when I really got to know my dad. I wouldn’t trade that for anything.”

You don’t have to twist Jimmy Pierce’s arm to find out he always hoped his work would continue on in his son.

*“It’s fun,” he said, adding, “especially when you’ve got your son beside you.”*



*Charlie sanding heads*



Some carvers hope their sons emulate them. Then, there are the rare instances where a son has to learn despite his old man. William “Bill” Schauber couldn’t shoo his son out of his shop.

“Allan was a thorn in my side,” Bill Schauber, 83, said with a laugh. “The other children took no interest. But, Allan was constantly asking, ‘How do you do this? How do you do that?’ I’m trying to make a living and he’s bothering me. Finally, I said, ‘Listen here. You watch me. You learn like I learned.’ Except Allan is left-handed, so he had to learn everything I did backwards.”

So Allan Schauber did watch and learn, using a mirror.

In the mirror, Allan watched his dad carve so that he could copy his movements in the opposite direction. He watched father Bill shape a wood block with a band saw, eschewing the use of a lathe to turn the body. Allan learned to set up his home-made vice on the opposite side of the table to accommodate his left-handed needs and use a draw knife to round off the edges in the same manner. While the elder excelled at full size decoys, the younger specialized in miniatures.

“He was more of a critic than a teacher,” said Allan Schauber, 64, rolling his eyes.



**Bill & Allan Schauber**



*Bill working with the draw knife*

“I told him what he did wrong, not about what he did right,” his father quipped.  
“What you do right, you sell.”

To this day, while the pair insist that they can’t work together in the same room, the bond between them is plain. They hunt together. They enjoy similar hobbies, like searching for antique Mustangs together. They talk just about every day.

“He’s a good boy,” Bill Schauber said, wistfully. “I’ll tell you, he makes a better duck. He carves better. He paints better... If you don’t pass this on, it gets lost. As you get older, you want to pass it on.”

Without a doubt, there are many things a father can pass on to his children.

Maybe it’s a gruff, no nonsense manner of speech or a wicked strong work ethic. Perhaps it’s something more tangible like a family home. And then there are the more transcendental things like the magnetic energy that draws people to you like moths to a bright light.





**Joey & Charles Jobs**

But the single greatest thing that Captain Harry Jobs – a patrol boat captain at Aberdeen Proving Ground who put Upper Bay decoys on the map – passed on to his three sons was a gift for carving decoys.

On a recent afternoon in December, a steady stream of visitors flocked to eldest son Harry R. “Bobby” Jobs Jr.’s Otsego Street shop as he brushed black acrylic paint on the bills of Whistling swans that he carved for Christmas orders. One after another, friends, family and clients wandered through his door and gathered around the wood stove to share a story, buy a decoy or bask in the warm camaraderie.

In the carving room, Casey Jobs, 30, cut out duck heads on a band saw while his father, 62-year-old Bobby Jobs Jr. prepares to draw knife them. More often than not, Casey can

be found by his father’s side, carving and crabbing, grinding away at duo callings that few hear anymore.

*“This is a dream, my son working with me,” Bobby Jobs said to the crowded room.*

The scene harkens back to a time in the Havre de Grace shop of the venerated R. Madison Mitchell, who employed and taught nearly every practicing carver in the Upper Chesapeake Bay area. Mitchell was like a father to their father, the Jobs brothers said, taking Harry Jobs under his wing after his wife, Helen Mitchell, discovered the 7th grader’s decoy carving talent in a school art show.



*The father and sons tradition lives on in Joey’s shop as evidenced by the photo that proudly hangs on his paint rack reminding all of the relationship that existed with their father and still exists among his sons.*



Once Captain Harry established himself as a carver, Charles Jobs recalled, there was no stopping him. He worked and traveled up and down the East Coast nonstop to promote and sell his masterpieces. And as part of that, Captain Harry would round up his boys after school and take them to his Aberdeen shop where he would strap a ball and chain to their ankles and have them help carve decoys for hours.

*“I’m kidding,” said Charles Jobs, 57, wryly. “It was fun and it was different. But it was hard work. You could say it was inevitable that we would be making decoys now. We never did anything else.”*

To hear plainspoken Joey Jobs tell it, Captain Harry often thwarted his sons’ career ambitions in order to have them work for him. All the traits that made Captain Harry a legend, his youngest son added, also helped forge a strained work relationship with their father, who passed away two years ago.

“We were born to be carvers,” said Captain Joey Jobs, who like his brothers worked the water fishing and crabbing as watermen. “My father didn’t want us to work and have a job. He wanted us



**Casey & Bobby Jobs**



*Bobby Jobs painting a swan*

to work for him. I guess that’s why we never actually made a business with him. I love my father for what he was, but we did good by getting away from my father. We made our own names.”

Each brother is revered in his own right. Each known for their own carving shop. Charles and Joey carving full-time and Bobby and his son carving in their downtime when not working the water. All three, in their own way, keeping Captain Harry’s memory and legacy alive.



*Captain Harry Jobs  
Photo courtesy of Dave  
and Joan Hagan*

*“We think about him all the time,” each Jobs brother said, separately.*

The love that inspires is easy to understand. But, that relationship between father and son can sometimes be a complicated one.



It can lift you up and sometimes it can stifle you. It can guide you or it can paralyze you. It can crush your spirit or it can liberate you. Many times, it can induce all these feelings at once in a son trying to live up to or surpass the family patriarch.

That might have been what eventually led David Sproates into carving.

When the avid hunter married Brenda Blackiston nine years ago, the landscaper by trade found something he didn't even know he was searching for at the time.

With determined admiration, Sproates began learning how to carve and paint from his father-in-law, a highly respected decoy carver from Chestertown, Md. David Blackiston worked closely with and was influenced heavily by good friend and renowned carver Charlie "Speed" Joiner, who lived a mere 12 miles away in Betterton, Md. The two men later lived less than a mile from each other in Chestertown.

Although David Blackiston's two children had no desire to carve, he found an eager student in Sproates.

**David Blackiston had lost his eyesight and ability to make decoys, Sproates said, but he was still a skillful and patient teacher of the craft.**



*David Blackiston*



**David Sproates & David Blackiston**

"He took me under his wing," said Sproates, 65, of Kennedyville. "He has taught me a lot. How to mix colors. How to whittle the nose out right through the beak. The life lessons I've learned from him had nothing to do with carving. I've gained a friend in him, a mentor, and a father. He's just the best man I know." Blackiston died January 2 at age 93.

Mercifully, bloodline is not the only driving force behind the love of decoy carving.

Spend any time with this quirky group of artists and it's clear that those who practice all seem to have a self-possessed will to teach and share their knowledge with anyone willing to learn. They are passionate competitors in a small and distinctive market, be they related or not, but they are also friends and supporters of each other in pursuit of their craft.

And that might be exactly what is needed as many fear that as the members of this clan grow ever older, this sought after folk art could die out with them. But not if another group of fathers and sons can help it.

"In my personal case, there were maybe six decoys in the house I grew up in," said Sullivan, the historian who has written several books on the subject matter. "They became a passion for me until I got my own. I have hundreds now. My son, seeing that, followed in my footsteps. He started collecting and now his sons are collecting. At the decoy shows now, you see fathers and sons, brothers and family, collecting decoys.

"In the end," Sullivan added. "It might be the collectors who drive this art form in the future."





C. John Sullivan (left) & Porter Hopkins

# C. A. Porter Hopkins: Journaling for a Lifetime

By: C. John Sullivan

I first came to know Porter Hopkins from observing him at decoy auctions. I would see him at auctions associated with the Easton Waterfowl Festival and later at several decoy auctions held in New England during the summer months. Porter could be found standing at the back of the auction house, catalog in hand, inscribing notations as each lot was sold. I would hear interesting stories of Porter from my dear friend the late Henry A. Fleckenstein Jr. I discovered he had been a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and later served as a Maryland Senator. Porter is a farmer, historian, conservationist, environmentalist, preservationist, sportsman, educator, decoy carver and artist. He has excelled in each of these fields.

Before entering politics, he worked at the Maryland Historical Society. The notes he maintained through his research have aided me in chronicling the history of numerous ducking clubs in Maryland. His attention to detail in researching various clubs proved invaluable. While attending his different jobs, he maintained daily journals and sketch books. The covers of his journals note the locations of the illustrations he created within its pages and the dates the images were captured. The earliest journal is from 1940 and the most recent 2021. *(As a note of his accomplishments, Porter shared with me that the only prize he ever won in school was the art prize in 1948.)*

Incorporated in his daily writing are fabulous watercolor illustrations of what he saw each day. A fishing trip, a duck hunting venture or a view of nature's beauty, the images he captures are wonderful. His artistic endeavors range from as far north as Alaska and Northeast Harbor, ME, to the southern fields of Argentina. Most artists would want to share their body of work with an audience, but Porter's watercolors reside in his journals, stacked neatly in chronological order on the lower shelf of a secretary in his home.

Porter's carvings are on display at the Wendell Gilley Museum in Southwest Harbor, ME, and in Salisbury, MD, at the Ward Museum. In addition to drawing, he carves each day in his barn/studio. His folk





art carvings range in size from half-inch to life size. His barn is situated in the middle of his waterfront farm in the Town Point region of Dorchester County, MD. I call his barn a museum because it houses hundreds of his carvings and illustrations. The freshly carved wood, the paint and the wood-fired stove generate a pleasant scent for those of us who love such places.

During his years as a delegate and senator in the Maryland Legislature, while not enacting conservation legislation or filibustering along with fellow Senator Frederick Malkus, he was known to annoy his seatmates with his artist's sketch pad, whittling knife, or a tiny piece of sandpaper as he refined his artwork or carvings.

Former Harford County Delegate William H. Cox Jr. remembers well the filibuster talents of Porter. He shared: "Senator Hopkins and Senator Fred Malkus (*a Baltimore County Republican and a Dorchester County Democrat*) were both on the same page when it came to legislation that was in the best interest of Maryland. They both sang the same tune from the same page."

In 1976, Porter purchased Stoney Ridge Farm, below Cambridge, MD. He not only restored the historic house but also

permanently preserved the farm land to prevent any further development. It was in a goose blind on his farm with original Chesapeake Bay Foundation founder Arthur W. Sherwood that Porter made the decision to place an easement on the historic property. Just as a flock of 150 Canada geese pitched into the field in front of the blind, he said to his friend, "This property needs to be preserved so that future generations can share this experience."

Prior to moving to his farm, Porter was editor of *The Maryland Conservationist Magazine*, taught at the Gilman School in Baltimore and served as assistant editor of the *Maryland Historical Society Magazine*. In 1964, while writing for the *Conservationist*, he authored an article titled "*Maryland Decoys and Their Makers*." The article served as the catalyst for two young Eastern Shore decoy collectors and dealers, Henry A. Fleckenstein Jr. and Robert H. Richardson, to begin their pursuit of the wooden fowl. Porter began collecting decoys in the 1950s; his eye for form and function of early wooden decoys allowed him to create a diverse collection of great birds.

In 2016, Porter and his wife, Patti, made a life-changing decision that would impact any collector... they donated their extensive decoy collection to the Ward Foundation. Many of the decoys were sold to benefit the museum, while some pieces remain in the permanent collection. The donation was approximately 400 objects, the largest number of objects in a single donation to the Ward Museum.

Porter's commitment to the Ward Foundation continues as his donated miniature carvings of birds, waterfowl and assorted other creatures sell in the museum gift shop –





That is, until Sammy showed up.



Sammy was a wood duck...

Treetops Gifts of Art and Nature . One of those pieces is a duck press that belonged to Porter's grandfather. The press is rare and unusual and was used for generations to prepare fowl before cooking.

I recently asked Porter about his passion for museums and, in particular, how it relates to fellow Marylanders. He had this to say: "Museums are so very important. They let us know where we came from and give us a sense of where we are going. They give us an anchor, without which we have no feeling of place. Maryland and the history of this great state are so important to me. Our history must be saved and shared."

In 1964, U .S . Senator Daniel Brewster asked Porter to chair the Citizens Committee for the Preservation of Assateague Island. He then testified before Congress, and as a result of their efforts, the Assateague Island







National Seashore was established. In 1975, Porter was named Outstanding Legislator and received the Conservationist Award from the Izaak Walton League. In 1978, Senator Hopkins sponsored legislation creating the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program, preserving such areas as Deer Creek and the Gunpowder River.

Porter is one of the founders of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. In a discussion with senior preservationists and conservationists about reviving the Old Bay Line, a Baltimore steamship line, the conversation morphed into a discussion of the Chesapeake Bay itself. It was at this time that Porter is credited with saying “why not save the Bay?” And thus, was born the concept for the Chesapeake Bay

Foundation and its well-known motto. C. A. Porter Hopkins is quick to call up quotes from many famous poets and authors, but perhaps his philosophy is best summed up by a 17th century English poem by an unknown author. It concerns itself with property; the preservation of land, of open spaces and of the history associated with these areas; and saving these spaces for all, including those yet unborn, to enjoy.

*All illustrations in this article are personal sketches from Porter Hopkins' journals.*

**The law locks up the man or woman  
Who steals the goose from off the common  
But leaves the greater villain loose  
Who steals the common from the goose.**

**C.A. Porter Hopkins miniatures are available at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum gift shop.**



Scaup Drake  
Scott Moody

# Bluebills

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*)  
or  
Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*)?



## CANVASBACK NATURALIST

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.





**December:** It's a dark grey, early morning as we're wedged between the Honga River on our left and the main-stem Chesapeake Bay on our right. As we cross the bridge from Upper Hooper's Island to Lower Hooper's Island in Dorchester County, Maryland, the wind is blowing about 25 to 30 knots from the northwest, and it is really cold. Looking to the east, various groupings of waterfowl swim about on the water. We see tundra swans, Canada geese, horned and pied-billed grebes, mergansers, and some diving ducks. They seem to bounce about in the chop. To the west, looking across at the nuclear power plant at Calvert Cliffs, 2- to 3-foot waves, with some even larger, blow down the Bay and batter the break wall and marsh. This heavy chop hides large numbers of diving ducks as they ride from crest to trough. A large group of surf scoters is present, but their numbers are dwarfed by many hundreds of bluebills, canvasbacks, and redheads. We set up our spotting scopes on the south side of the bridge and watch the birds work and compete for food in this brackish-water realm. Plunging below the surface, they seek out clams and any underwater grasses that are available. It seems as though some sort of frenetic energy has been loosened as the birds plunge and surface and plunge and surface. This is such an amazing sight as we stand just above Bay water level finding that the limits to our personal exposure are challenged by the physical elements. The rough water and open horizons on both sides of our observatory position are humbling to my human experience, and I feel as though I'm overwhelmed by my environment. As I return to the warmth of my car, I wonder if the ducks feel the same way.

**January:** A bright rising sun reveals Rock Hall's harbor to be relatively flat. It is a cool morning, but a breeze from the southwest promises warming conditions to come. As we grab our binoculars and spotting scopes and set up in a marina parking lot, any remnants of frost have dissipated. Looking to the south where the Bay Bridge towers on the horizon, we spot a few individual ducks swimming about in the harbor. I observe tundra swans, redheads, canvasbacks, ring-necked ducks, bluebills, and buffleheads. Tom Trafton, my birding friend, adds several black ducks and mallards moving about between some boats. This small, sheltered inlet seems to offer a placid area for restful duck "contemplation". Scanning farther out to the jetties, and beyond into open water, large rafts of diving ducks of maybe a thousand or more birds are sighted. This shallow brackish water offers both feeding and roosting opportunities for the birds. Just north on the western shore of the Bay, we can see Baltimore City and the Key Bridge with cars travelling north and south across the harbor. It's interesting to contemplate how close hundreds of thousands of people in an urban environment are to thousands of waterfowl in a wild Chesapeake Bay environment. It's fun and rewarding to watch the diving ducks near Rock Hall do their thing within such close juxtaposition to Maryland's big city and to think about the interactions between humans in their civilized environment as opposed to the ducks in their wild state. Probably, like many of the ducks, it's time for us to fill our bellies with some good food. I wonder if the Waterman's Crab House is open today for some cream of crab soup.



**February:** Another gray, wintery morning, but not nearly as dark as that December day in Dorchester County. Another warming breeze from the south brings heat to battle the winter cold. We are in a small park in Cecil County, Maryland overlooking the Susquehanna River, Susquehanna Flats, and Furnace Bay. It is here that the underwater prairies of sub-aquatic vegetation (SAV) once existed and brought thousands of diving ducks to winter and to gain their nutrition by feeding on them. Wild celery was a favorite of many of the birds. Today, SAV can still be found but not in the same abundance, so many divers feed instead on mollusks and other aquatic animal life.

This freshwater section of the Bay with its shallow waters has a long tradition with the people of the region. We pull up next to the kayak and canoe launch and grab our gear. Tom spots our usual cast of characters on and in the water. Lots of divers are swimming about and submerging, and to these we will add a large group of coots. Suddenly, all of the birds are spooked as a pair of adult bald eagles fly over their heads and perch in a nearby tree. The ducks and coots slowly regain their composure. In short order, we spot double-crested cormorants on a dead snag, great blue herons on the shoreline, and a red-tailed hawk soaring overhead. In past years, we have seen white pelicans and trumpeter swans in the same area, so we do a complete and patient survey in order not to miss anything. Our enthusiasm is sparked by watching the divers and coots do their thing. There is always so much activity, and it never seems to grow old to watch. Tom and I reflect on how lucky we are to be retired and to have time for these events whose observations enrich our spirits.

Thinking back to these three scenarios, and many more just like them, I know how my conversations with Tom generally flow as we watch the birds:

*Tom:* Look at all those divers, any redheads mixed in?

*Me:* A lot of bluebills working, see any baldpates?

*Tom:* Are there any greater scaups in the raft?

The conversation rarely wavers until these points are addressed. It always seems to come back to bluebills. Are they greater or lesser scaups? Over the years through both study and field practice, it has become easier to identify the differences leading to which bird it is. However, it's not always easy even today because the birds seem so similar at first glance, and in the late morning sloth why not just confirm bluebills; yeah, they are bluebills. Even our local decoy carvers produce bluebill decoys. Few seem willing to break it down to the specific species. I have often pondered – can the birds tell the difference when they land in a decoy spread? I'm sure the birds can be fooled, as well as we humans. So how can we tell the two species apart? What are the characteristics to look for to differentiate the birds?

First a word on the natural history of these two diving duck species. From a distance without visual aid, these ducks seem very much alike. Even scientists evaluating aerial monitoring of the birds have difficulty in distinguishing the ducks from one another. Pochard's typical profile of feet to the posterior, large, webbed feet for swimming, and a broadened bill apply to both species. The bluebill's black heads and their overall body color of greyish-white is common to the males of both species. Females differ



*Greater Scaup Drake*  
*Ralph Hockman*



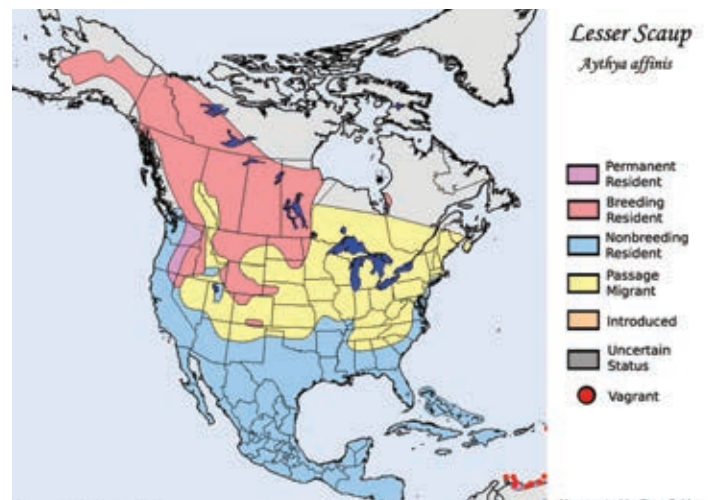
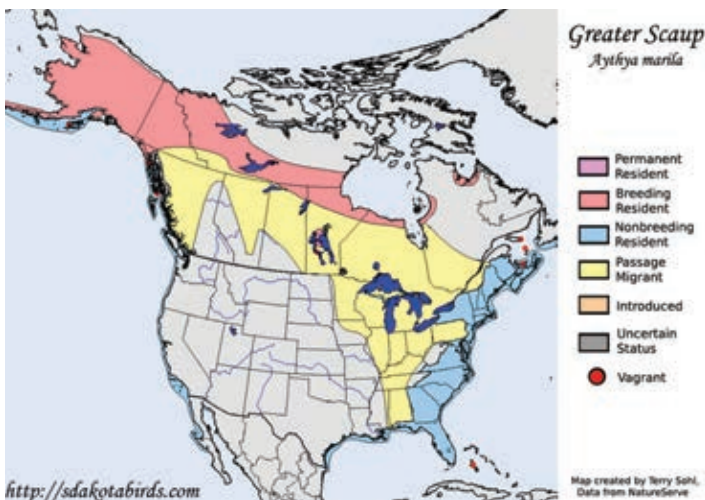
*Scaup Drake*  
*Scott Moody*



in color pattern with a predominant brownish-grey hue and a large, white, half-moon patch between the bill and eye. If seen close enough, they possess yellow eyes. They both possess beautiful blue bills with a dark bill tip (more pronounced on the greater), and they are both about the same size, being somewhat smaller than redheads.

Wintering birds of both species form large rafts of gregarious birds. Food sources of both birds include vegetation and animal materials depending on availability. To distinguish greater from lesser scaup, the observer must look for specific detail differences. The following chart can hopefully aid in the determination of greater from lesser scaups.

<b>Greater Scaup</b> ( <i>Aythya marila</i> )	<b>Lesser Scaup</b> ( <i>Aythya affinis</i> )
Length: 17 to 18.6 inches Weight: 2.1 to 2.35 lbs.	Length: 16.5 to 17 inches Weight: 1.65 to 1.82 lbs.
Smooth rounded head with greenish tint.	Smaller knobbish head with purplish tint.
Larger bill with black nail. White under wing through much of primary feathers. Paler back coloring. Overall, a larger and bulkier look.	Smaller bill with less nail. White under wing does not continue to primaries. Brighter back coloring. Overall, a smaller and thinner look.
Range (see map): Northern portion of Northern Hemisphere. In North America, winters throughout the west, east, and Gulf Coast. In the east, especially north of the Jersey Coast. Nests north of tree line in the tundra. Longer migration.	Range (see map): Specific to North America only. Winters throughout North America, including Mexico and Central America. Nests south of the tundra, especially in the Prairie Pothole Region of the US and Canada. Generally shorter migration.
Habitat: Winters in deep open coastal water. More saline water. Nesting in Arctic coastal marshy areas close to water.	Habitat: Shallow open water areas in winter. Fresh- to brackish-water areas in grassy wetlands within 50 feet of water. Prefers small islands in ponds
Diet: Omnivorous. Prefers clams and other aquatic animal life (90%), SAVs, and sea lettuce. Deeper water feeder.	Diet: Omnivorous. Clams, mussels, and aquatic animal life, especially amphipods, and SAVs. Shallower water feeder.
Clutch size averages 8 eggs. Incubation period 24 to 25 days. Fledge in 40 to 45 days. Both nest parasitizer and parasitized. Significantly less abundant than lesser scaup	Clutch size averages 10-plus eggs. Incubation period 47 to 61 days. Fledge in 22 to 23 days. Both nest parasitizer and parasitized. More abundant than greater scaup.







Throughout the 20th century, the numbers of greater and lesser scaups have both experienced drastic declines. Since the 1980s, the lesser scaup's numbers have greatly declined. Reasons range from habitat loss (both wintering and nesting), overhunting, pollution, as well as drought, warming, and climate change.

Bluebills, whether greater or lesser scaup, can be identified by a close look at specific characteristics: head and bill shape, head color, body size and color, underwing color patterns and to an extent overall habitat location. There is also no doubt that a quick, initial observation will probably require a closer inspection to be sure. I hope I have provided some key thoughts to your identification. Most birding, and in particular waterfowl guides, are also great aids to getting

it right. So, whether Tom or I are recording our list count, we know that bluebills can yield 2 species slashes rather than one if we tune in to the specifics. For decoy collectors, a lesser scaup-like bird will have to do. Otherwise, they will have to pursue a more-fancy carving over a working decoy carving. In the field, I doubt the ducks will even care! However, after your reading of this bluebill article, I hope you will be able to distinguish whether you're spotting a greater or lesser scaup. I hope you also have fun and enjoy the sightings our great Bay can still provide.

For comments or questions on this or any past "Canvasback Naturalist" article please contact the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum at [info@DecoyMuseum.com](mailto:info@DecoyMuseum.com). I look forward to your responses!

*Scaups*  
*Ralph Hockman*







## Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl

# Annual Banquet

Saturday, September 17, 2022

HdG Community Center

For tickets: [www.deltawaterfowl.org](http://www.deltawaterfowl.org)  
or 410.404.6652



*Join us to make a difference!*

Contact Rob Glassman at 410.404.6652 or via e-mail at [woodchuck4070@gmail.com](mailto:woodchuck4070@gmail.com)



2nd Annual

## Jim Pierce Sportsman & Decoy Show

## Antique & Contemporary Decoys

Hunting & Fishing Items • Oyster Cans & Shell Boxes  
Sporting Arts & Books • Rods, Reels & Powder Tins  
Guns, Ammunition & Knives

**Saturday, February 19, 2022**

**8 am - 3 pm**

**Minker Banquet Hall**

920 Principio Road • Perryville MD 21903

**ADMISSION: \$5**

**Early Bird 8 - 9 am: \$10**

For Information & Exhibit Space, Contact

**J.K. Pierce**

**443-966-0312**

**BUY • SELL • TRADE**



# GUYETTE & DEETER, INC.

THE LEADING AND MOST TRUSTED DECOY AUCTION FIRM IN THE WORLD  
EST. 1984 • OVER \$190,000,000 IN SALES

Helping to build the most distinguished decoy collections in North America.

With three auctions per year, we can assist you in buying items ranging from \$500 to \$500,000.



[www.guyetteanddeeter.com](http://www.guyetteanddeeter.com)

410-745-0485 | P.O. Box 1170 | St. Michaels, MD 21663  
Gary Guyette | 410-745-0485 | [gary@guyetteanddeeter.com](mailto:gary@guyetteanddeeter.com)  
Jon Deeter | 440-610-1768 | [jdeeter@guyetteanddeeter.com](mailto:jdeeter@guyetteanddeeter.com)

# PIERCE'S DECOYS

Collector & Carver of  
**GUNNING DECOYS**

MADE IN THE FINE UPPER BAY TRADITION



Jim & Charles Pierce  
318 N. Lapidum Road  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
[cpdecoys@gmail.com](mailto:cpdecoys@gmail.com)

**410-939-2272**  
**410-688-6809**

**BriteStar**

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS *We have YOUR Solutions!*

APPAREL • EMBROIDERY

SCREEN PRINTING • PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

GRAPHIC DESIGN • BANNERS

PRINTING/MAILING • MARKETING SOLUTIONS

MAILING SERVICES

888.409.6227

[promos@britestarbusiness.com](mailto:promos@britestarbusiness.com)

[WWW.BRITESTARBUSINESS.COM](http://WWW.BRITESTARBUSINESS.COM)

1305-B GOVERNOR CT. ABINGDON, MD 21009



# DAFFIN MARINE

WHEN YOUR BOAT'S LACKIN'  
WE GET CRACKIN'...

[DAFFINMARINE.COM](http://DAFFINMARINE.COM)

**410.745.9279**



# VINCENTI DECOYS



**Store - Jeannie**

353 Penington Ave.  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
**410-734-7709**

**Decoy Shop - Pat**

303 West lane  
Churchville, MD 21208  
**410-734-6238**

[www.vincentidecoys.com](http://www.vincentidecoys.com)



**LYON'S**  
PHARMACY

**410-939-4545**

328 St. John Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
[www.lyonspharmacy.com](http://www.lyonspharmacy.com)



**Prescription Medicines**

Gifts • Candles  
Souvenirs • Home Decor  
Jewelry • Greeting Cards  
Collectibles  
Health & Beauty Aids

**Rory G. White**  
Financial Advisor

**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

218 S. Union Avenue  
P.O. Box 338  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
Bus. 410-939-5270  
Fax 410-939-5271  
TF. 800-755-4537  
[rory.white@edwardjones.com](mailto:rory.white@edwardjones.com)  
[www.edwardjones.com](http://www.edwardjones.com)

# GUILFORD & COMPANY

FINE JEWELRY  
ANTIQUe & ESTATE

ROBERT N HOCKADAY  
410.745.5544  
CELL 410.340.2587

101 N. TALBOT STREET  
P.O. Box 1076  
St. MICHAELS, MD 21663

[BOBHOCKADAY@VERIZON.NET](mailto:BOBHOCKADAY@VERIZON.NET) • [GUILFORDANDCOMPANY.COM](http://GUILFORDANDCOMPANY.COM)





# 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:

## **INDIVIDUAL**

Rose Mary Evans  
 Robert Glassman  
 Mason Goodpaster  
 Hazel Goodwin  
 Gene Gregory Sr.  
 Carl Grove  
 Marie Hanna  
 Daniel H Hurt  
 Patti Keller  
 Steve Keller  
 Roger L. Keller  
 Scott Krieger  
 Logan Lowers Jr  
 Nicholas Miele  
 George Milto

Howard Nickle  
 Stephen Schaare  
 Michael Schlepner  
 William Sepe  
 John Sprout  
 Carolyn Trimble  
 Karl Yankey

## **FAMILY**

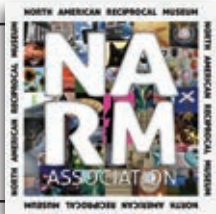
Carol Abrams & Barbara Moulton  
 Kathy & Harry Acker  
 Robert Bastedo  
 Harold & Marcia Boccia  
 Patrick Campbell  
 Edward Coudon

Rocco & Ann DiGiovanni  
 Chip & Patty Heaps  
 Jeremy Houser  
 Ken & Kay Keetley  
 Kevin Kerrigan  
 William Master  
 Ms. Deborah L Menking  
 Stephen O'Brien Jr  
 Mr. & Mrs. John & Anne Popowski  
 Ellis & Edith Porter  
 Norman Pritchett  
 Mr. John Rauh  
 Patrick Schlagel  
 Jay & Dixie Stauffer  
 Paul Stokes III  
 Rodney & Lou Ann Swam

Mr. Thomas Trafton  
 Pat & Jerry Whited  
 Chris & Vivian Worch

## **NARM - Family**

Jim & Sue Brackbill  
 Thomas & Margherita Coudon  
 Ralph & Pat Hockman  
 Stephen Swanson  
 Ms. Barbara Thompson



The North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association<sup>sm</sup> is one of the largest reciprocal membership programs in the world with 1,122 arts, cultural, and historical institutions along with botanical gardens, children's museums, science and technology centers that offer NARM-qualified members reciprocal benefits.

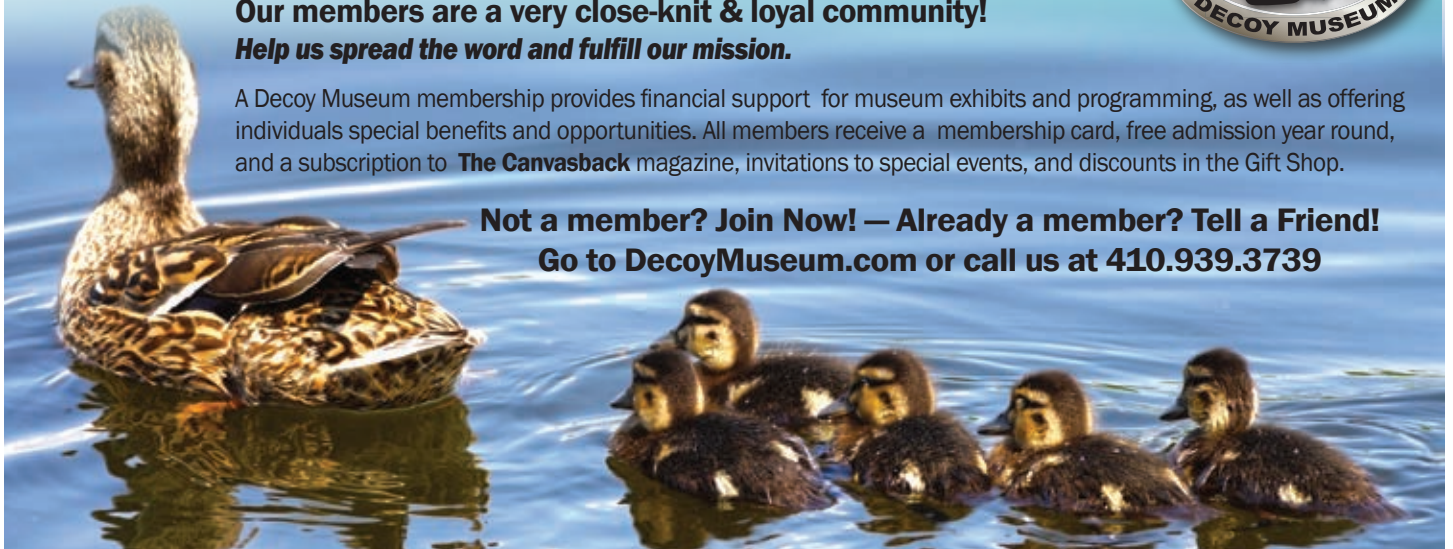
## Get in the **FORMATION!**



**Our members are a very close-knit & loyal community!  
 Help us spread the word and fulfill our mission.**

A Decoy Museum membership provides financial support for museum exhibits and programming, as well as offering individuals special benefits and opportunities. All members receive a membership card, free admission year round, and a subscription to **The Canvasback** magazine, invitations to special events, and discounts in the Gift Shop.

**Not a member? Join Now! — Already a member? Tell a Friend!  
 Go to [DecoyMuseum.com](http://DecoyMuseum.com) or call us at 410.939.3739**





# Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

## Special Events Spring 2022

The museum will assess the risk of COVID 19 as each event approaches and render an appropriate decision.

### Wetlands and Waterfowl

Monday January 31 • 7-8:30 PM

Local educators and naturalists, Tom Trafton and John Hughes will give a presentation on Chesapeake Bay wetlands and their value to waterfowl. A moderated discussion will first consider the definition, location, types of wetlands, and their importance to ecosystems and their associated plants and animals. The second part of the presentation will focus on the association of wetlands and plants to specific waterfowl species. A moderated discussion of the interaction as well as questions will be entertained. Refreshments will be provided.

Fee: \$10.00

### Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats

Sunday February 20 • 6-7:30 PM

Author Michael Daley will discuss his recent book, Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats. Mr. Daley's well researched book and presentation considers from a historic perspective the decoys, their makers, and the hunting and hunters of the upper Chesapeake Bay in particular Harford and Cecil Counties over the past 200 years. A moderated discussion will begin the program followed by audience questions. Bring your books for autographing by the author. Refreshments will be provided.

Fee: \$15.00



### Gunning Clubs of Northern Bay - Spesutie Island

Sunday March 27 • 7-8PM

Local author and collector C. John Sullivan Jr. will discuss two hunting clubs that were located on Spesutie Island near Aberdeen in Harford County, Maryland. He will tell us of their traditions, history, and the men associated with them. A question and answer period will follow. Refreshments will be provided.

Fee:\$10.00

### An Evening with Charlie Pierce

Sunday April 24

Charlie Pierce, the Honorary Chairman of the 40th Annual Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival, will tell us about himself and his carving. His discussion will serve as a backdrop to the activities of the following weekend's festival and events, Charlie will be open to questions and will also show us some of his as well as his dad's (Jimmy) and his brother's (JK) works. Refreshments will be provided.

Fee:\$10.00

### 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

Friday, Saturday, Sunday April 29,30 and May 1

Gymnasium & Auditorium Facility of the former Havre de Grace High School. Times to be announced. Please register as early as possible. Refunds will be given in the event of cancellation.





# HOSTETTER AGENCY, INC.

206 West Bel Air Avenue  
Aberdeen, MD 21001

Hostetter Agency, Inc.  
provides dependable service  
& fair, comparably priced  
insurance coverage.

Home  
Life  
Auto  
Business  
Health  
Disability  
Long Term Care

For a friendly consultation  
about your insurance needs  
please call, fax or email us.

**410.272.6110**  
Fax: 410.272.3057

Email:  
[insure@hostetteragency.com](mailto:insure@hostetteragency.com)



**Havre de Grace  
Decoy Museum**  
215 Giles Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078  
[www.decoymuseum.com](http://www.decoymuseum.com)



*Many Thanks*

TO THE  
HOSTETTER AGENCY –  
THE PRINCIPAL SPONSOR  
OF THE HAVRE DE GRACE  
DECOY & WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL.

[www.hostetteragency.com](http://www.hostetteragency.com)