



51st Annual Show Is in the Books!

Dealers and Pheasant Run Meet the Challenge

Despite the many changes brought about by reconfiguration of the hotel property, the 51st version of the North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show at Pheasant Run came off without a hitch. Thanks go out to our member dealers for their flexibility in taking on new room assignments, and to Pheasant Run for delivering on their promise of improved service and food availability.

Room-to-room trading worked well in our new space with dealers occupying every available room in the Golf Wing, making it easier for attendees to get around to see their offerings. Dealers sharing common spaces reported that they particularly liked being freed up to "work the show" without leaving their merchandise unattended. Many dealers reported brisk sales of a wide array of hunting and fishing collectibles.

The annual Guyette & Deeter auction brought strong prices for some great decoys and sporting art throughout their two-day sale, including nearly \$150,000 for a stunning Gus Wilson merganser and \$46,000 for a high-head Pintail Hen from the Kankakee Marsh. (Check out our story on the history of the Kankakee Marsh inside.)

The show in the MegaCenter opened on Friday to a large crowd of anxious buyers. The hall featured an unprecedented number of displays and exhibits. Minnesota decoys were the focus of our annual "Member Display" including both waterfowl and uniquely colored spearing fish decoys. For the first time ever, displays included shot shell boxes, and animal traps, and gunning boxes were on exhibit for the second time.

This newsletter provides full coverage of the 2016 show including plenty of pictures of items from a number of private collections. Many of these pieces have never before been available for public viewing.

In the "Member News" section, you'll find a report on our membership and a full list of new members since our last newsletter. This section also features a Member Profile and some important information to help enhance your membership experience even more.

If you are not already a member and want to keep receiving these newsletters along with other club benefits, be sure to join today!

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and we always welcome your input. Send any feedback to jseregny@gmail.com.



Discover • Preserve • Celebrate

MIDWEST DECOY COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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Alan Haid	Joe Tonelli
Roger Ludwig	

WHO WE ARE

The **Midwest Decoy Collectors Association** is a nonprofit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. It invites membership to all persons. The purpose of Midwest Decoy Collectors is to foster the hobby of decoy collecting by attracting new collectors, seeking out and preserving old decoys, gathering data about carvers and their methods, and holding an annual show for decoy collectors and carvers.

OUR HISTORY

The **Midwest Decoy Collectors Association** was started in 1966 by a small group of dedicated decoy collectors as a gathering in Ottawa, Illinois to reconnect, share stories and trade decoys. Since then, the Club has grown to nearly 800 enthusiasts from all over North America and from all walks of life. They write books on collecting, manage auction companies, publish collector magazines, carve world class decoys, calls and collectibles, provide appraisal services, and form a core network of knowledge on sporting collectibles and their history. That humble gathering of collectors in 1966 has grown to become the **North American Vintage Decoy and Sporting Collectibles Show** – the largest show of its kind. The annual show features room-to-room trading, a tabled show and a major decoy auction in addition to a variety of networking events and educational activities including seminars, displays and carving demonstrations.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING is now being accepted in select issues of the MDCA newsletter. Contact Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and availability.

www.midwestdecoy.org



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I want to extend a special thanks to our members for handling all the changes at Pheasant Run this year. We adapted well and the event had great depth and offered unique collecting opportunities. I know that there was a lot of uncertainty and appreciate your ability to work through this with us.

Member Displays were tremendous.

Marty Hanson, Jim Krebsbach and Steve Handevidt led various parts of the Minnesota waterfowl display and, coupled with Doug Lodermeier's seminar, it provided a high level artistic and educational experience. Jim Wierzba coordinated another wonderful fish display and Roger Ludwig's shooting box exhibit draws more attention each year. Each year we try to add something of interest and the new shell box and trap displays certainly taught us about ingenuity in both graphic and mechanical design. Contemporary fish decoys will get even more attention next year.

Contemporary display and Carver's Corner have become large favorites.

Jim Wierzba came up with this idea several years ago and it has taken off well. Ben Heinemann assembled a great exhibit of his work and the Carver's Corner had another wonderful change with the continuous carving demonstrations. Well done to all. Thanks to Phil Jones and Pat Gregory for their leadership.

Pheasant Run has improved. We have been challenged with all the issues at the resort and road projects that took so long. We saw a service upgrade this year, but still experienced many changes at the last minute. We are conducting a review with the resort to evaluate our best opportunities for improvement.

Show changes are being reviewed.

There are diverse challenges that we must address as we face an aging collector community, a population shift to the South, and the reduction in the participation in hunting activities. We are focused on reviewing everything that we do, including the length of the show, venues, and even the possibility of including Sunday, when many other collectibles shows experience their best attendance. Expect more on this soon. Your perspective and ideas would be helpful as we explore various options.

New Directors join the board. Matt Bryant, Dave Kneebone and Larry Osentoski have joined the board. Alan Haid, Roger Ludwig and Joe Tonelli have all moved to a Director Emeritus role. This allows us to retain the knowledge and experience and bring some more help to the work on the association's and its members' needs. We need more band width and a fresh perspective as we consider the way forward.

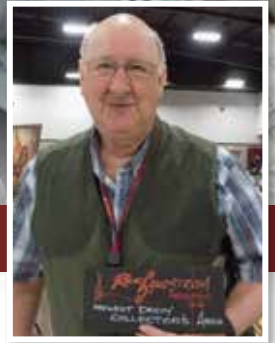
Member retention, reactivation and recruitment are critical.

We have been working to make sure that membership renewals are complete for this year. This is a great time to collect as many wonderful things that have been in private collections for a long time are coming available. We saw this at our event this year and we will see much more in the near future. Membership in the club and show attendance are the best ways to engage this opportunity.

Happy Collecting! All the Best!

Rick

Rick Sandstrom





THE 2016 SHOW



Minnesota Waterfowl Decoys Star in St. Charles

This year's Member Display featured some of the finest known examples of waterfowl decoys from the "Land of 10,000 Lakes." Show goers were treated to a close-up look at the best output of well-known greats like John Tax, Alfred Moes and Ole Gunderson, as well as lesser known but equally accomplished makers such as James Dalziel, Louis Setka, and Marv Bennet. Attendees particularly liked the distinctive, folksy work of Heron Lake makers Joe Marr and Abe Nelson. Likewise, rare stick-up decoys by John Tax – a drake mallard and a Specklebelly Goose – were real crowd pleasers.

The display also included some well-executed decoys from several Minnesota factories that thrived throughout the 20th century including the Tuveson Manufacturing Co. and Herter's, Inc.

Special thanks to members Marty Hanson and Doug Lodermeier for putting this wonderful display together and to the Minnesota Decoy Foundation (formed by the Minnesota Decoy Collectors Association) for lending many great pieces to this display.





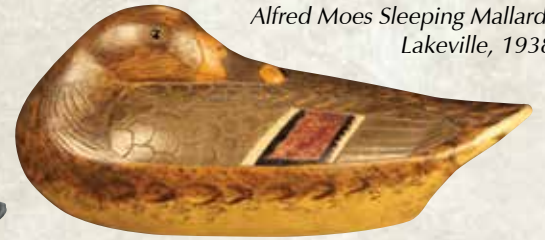
*Herter's Great Horned Owl,
Waseca, ca. 1940's*



*Horne & Danz Company
Snow Goose, St. Paul,
ca. 1884*



*Ole Gunderson
Cans, Ashby,
ca. 1920's*



*Alfred Moes Sleeping Mallard,
Lakeville, 1938*



*Max Gresser Pintail,
Blue Earth, ca. 1930*



*John Tax Stick-Up Goose,
Osakis, ca.*



*Ole Gunderson,
Ashby, ca. 1900's*



*Harry Anderson Mallard,
Winnebago, ca. 1920's*

Educational Seminar Attracts an Attentive Crowd



One of the key missions of the MDCA is to preserve and share the history of waterfowling in North America. This year's well-attended seminar on Minnesota waterfowling certainly achieved this goal. The seminar was presented by Doug Lodermeier, the country's foremost expert and author of the definitive book on the subject, "Minnesota Duck Decoys." Lodermeier shared his extensive knowledge of the state's major hunting grounds, clubs and, of course, the decoys and their makers. Attendees left with a copy of the Jan-Feb issue of "Decoy Magazine" which featured Doug's article on Minnesota's rich hunting history. Contact Joe Engers at Decoy Magazine (decoymag@aol.com) for a copy in case you haven't seen it.

Variety of Minnesota Spearing Fish Decoys a Real Eye Opener

Continuing this year's celebration of Minnesota decoys, the show also featured a large display of spearing fish lures. Attendees saw first hand the great variety of styles produced by makers in Minnesota – from realistic representations by Fred Lexow and John Tax to highly whimsical pieces by Leroy Howell and Frank Mizera. A grouping of brightly colored fish

by Albert Morris – painted in yellows and reds, some with floral designs – illustrated folk art at its finest. The display also included some beautifully carved and painted “ice sticks” from the 30's and 40's by Burnett Jacobs and William Faue. Thanks to the many contributors including Jim Krebsbach, Joe Tonelli, and Jim Weirzba, who pulled it all together.



Robert Umlandt, Park Rapid
c. 1900



Wm. Faue, Hanover, c.1930



John Ryden, Aitkin, c.1930



Fred Lexow, Balsam Lake, c.1940



Albert Morris: Grand Rapids, c.1920



John Tax Bird House, Osakis, c.1930



Frank Mizera, Ely, c.1930



Raymond Stotz, Cleveland, c.1920



Unknown Blue Gill



Otto Faue, Hanover, c.1930



Scandinavian Sunfish, c.1930,



Fred Johnson, Bovey, c. 1940



'Angel Fish', LeRoy Howell, Hinkley, c.1920



Raymond Thompson, Park Rapids, c.1930



Kissing Fish Jigging Stick, Faue Bros., c.1930



Trout plaque, Fred Lexow, Balsam Lake, c.1940

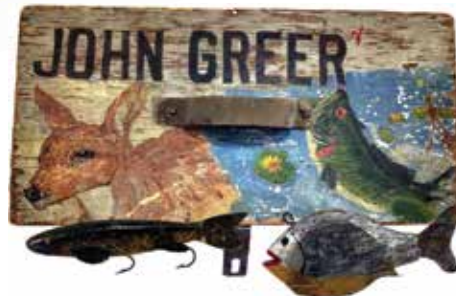


Herter's Commercial Decoy, c.1940

*Wilbur 'Willie' Peterson
Frog, Brainard, c.1935*



*John Greer, Dark
House Box, Fish*



Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Magazine

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Vintage & Contemporary Hunting & Fishing Artifacts**

Our 16th Year

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Over \$160 million in sales.

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We are pleased to announce that Robert J. Koenke has accepted the position of Guyette & Deeter, Inc.'s Sporting and Wildlife Art Expert. We are confident that he will be an excellent fit within our organization as he brings nearly 30 years experience in appraising, buying and advising, both to individuals and to museums. He was the publisher and editor in chief of Wildlife Art Magazine from 1983 to 2005.

Call 410-745-0485 to discuss your artwork with Robert Koenke

April Auction Highlights

Just a few of our very successful results on paintings and decoys



"Good Luck," watercolor,
Arthur Burdett Frost
\$92,000



Oversize Monhegan Island style
merganser decoy, Gus Wilson
\$149,500



"Chance Shot While Setting Out Decoys,"
watercolor, Arthur Burdett Frost
\$92,000

Visit guyetteanddeeter.com for more July preview items



Exceptional pair of 1936 mallards
by the Ward Brothers

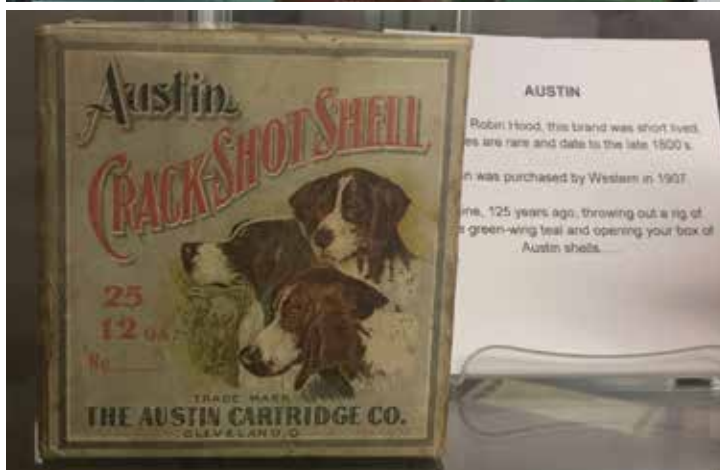


Outstanding yellowlegs by
William Bowman

Now taking consignments for future auctions
Contact Gary (410-745-0485) or Jon (440-543-1416)

Shot Shell Boxes Debut at Show

For the first time, this year's show included a display of near mint one and two piece shot shell boxes from most of the major ammunition producers such as Peters Cartridge Co., Austin Cartridge Co., Clinton Cartridge Co. and the Robin Hood Powder Co. Stocked primarily with examples from his personal collection, Jim Krebsbach was able to display pristine examples of the most popular collector boxes featuring their bright, full-color graphics depicting ducks, retrievers, game birds, and more. These boxes are absolutely beautiful and represent the best of ammunition company marketing and creativity.



A Sobering Lesson in "Fakes"

Jim's display also featured an important demonstration of how modern printing technology and a little ingenuity makes production of fakes so easy. Using three seemingly identical Peters 12 gauge boxes, the display offered a vivid illustration of how good fakes can be today. The "authentic" box was a very clean example from Jim's collection. One of two "fakes" appeared to be an extremely crisp example of the same box. It was, however, a contemporary copy with a label that was probably "too" clean and would likely raise questions from a savvy collector. The second box, however, started out the same as the first fake, but after some applied aging, even the most experienced collectors would be challenged to distinguish it from the real thing.

Jim's advice is to always buy from a trusted dealer and get a written guarantee of authenticity along with a return privilege.

For collectors, this demonstration underscores the importance of carefully examining shell boxes and any other sporting collectibles that have any value. It also reinforces the responsibility that makers of copies have to sign or in some other way clearly mark these items as "reproduction" or "new." Not doing so will continue to allow unscrupulous forgers to take advantage of unwitting collectors and damage our hobby in the long run. We all need to be vigilant in recognizing these "fakes" and alerting other collectors when we come across copies that are not identified as such.





Consignment Wanted

Extraordinary Firearms Auction | October 2016

Our Fall 2016 Auction should be an outstanding one. We currently have amassed a great number of superb items (many from well known collections). This will be a truly extraordinary sale. For years, Julia's has been the world's leading auction house for rare and expensive firearms. In fact, no other auction house on Earth sells more high-end, expensive guns than Julia's. We offer the best terms in the industry - **0%** Seller's Commission on high-end, expensive items. We offer some of the finest expertise in the trade. Our reputation for honesty and fairness is renowned and most important are the results. We regularly generate some of the strongest results in the industry for rare and desirable items. Our trucks are on the road almost continually dealing with pick-ups or shows, so if you have items you are thinking about consigning, call us immediately so we can arrange for a meeting.

Some of the finest collectible firearms in the world pass through our hands.

Here is just a sample of some of the treasures to be offered in our October 2016 auction. Do you have one item or an entire collection that you are thinking about consigning? If so, please contact us to be part of this upcoming historic sale.

Ext. Rare L. D. Nimschke "Bank Note" Engraved Winchester M1866

Spectacular One of A Kind Ulrich High Relief Engraved Winchester M66. One of the Best Examples Known

Extremely Rare and Historic Cashmore Double Barrel Shotgun of the greatest female shootist ever, Annie Oakley, exceptional provenance

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Contact: Francis Lombardi | **Email:** firearms@jamesdjulia.com
Tel: (207) 453-7125 | www.jamesdjulia.com | Fairfield, Maine
Auctioneer: James D. Julia | **Lic#:** ME:AR83 | MA: AU1406 | NH 2511

Attendees Marvel at Ingenuity in Design

First-Time Animal Trap Display



In a continuing effort to educate and inform show attendees about the great variety of sporting collectibles, this year a wonderful display of rare animal traps was added to the mix. Thanks to collectors and new members Sam and Margaret Delavan of Glenwood, Iowa, attendees were able to view and discuss over 40 different traps designed for a variety of purposes. One of the most intriguing of these was nicknamed the “Armadillo,” a trap that certainly resembled one of these armored critters. It was designed to capture a muskrat in the water and mechanically raise it up to keep them from drowning, thus ensuring that it stayed alive until harvested. A special thanks to Sam and Margaret for sharing their collection and knowledge.



“Armadillo” Muskrat Trap, W.A. Gibbs, ca. 1920’s



Alligator #2 (small animal) Trap, Trappers Supply, 1914



Nebraska Trail Wolf Trap, G.A. Barnard, ca. 1927



Peter Norberg Seal Trap, Canada, ca. 1932 (one of only two known)



S. Newhouse No. 35 Bear Trap, ca. 1900 (one of rarest traps in existence)

Encore Gunning Box Display

Once again, Roger Ludwig gathered a number of old Wisconsin gunning boxes demonstrating the unusual and creative ways hunters in the “Badger State” transported and protected their hunting paraphernalia – from gloves to thermoses and everything in between. And most included some sort of cradle for the hunter’s gun to keep it dry and safe. One particular box display demonstrated real ingenuity with a Universal Gun Bracket by the New Process Specialty Co. in Milwaukee mounted to the side. These unique boxes were certainly functional but at the same time represented folk art at its best. Thanks again Roger for assembling this great display.



Clayton Stannard, Oshkosh



Otto Bretschneider, Winneconne



Ted Thyron, Green Bay



Unknown Maker



Universal Gun Bracket New Process Specialty Co., Milwaukee



Contemporary CORNER

Contemporary Folk Artist Ben Heinemann Displays His Breadth of Talent

North Carolina native Ben Heinemann was this year's featured contemporary decoy maker and folk artist, and the high quality and variety of his work did not disappoint. Ben is a widely recognized artist with numerous "Best of Shows" to his credit. In 1977, he won his first of five "Best in World's" for a Canadian Goose, and has been named "Artist of the year" in his home state. His work is in great demand and he genuinely enjoyed sharing it with the crowd.

The display included a wide range of Ben's work from working decoys to decoratives, from flat art to dimensional plaques, and everything in between. Ben was kept busy at the show discussing his work with the many interested admirers in attendance.

Many thanks to Ben for sharing his wonderful work. You can learn more about Ben and his folk art on his website at benheinemann.com.





Carvers Demonstrations Teach Attendees Tricks of the Trade

Always-popular show events are the carving and painting demonstrations conducted by some of today's best contemporary decoy makers. This year, Geoff Vine and Pat Meneely generously shared their skill with many interested watchers. In addition, a number of other makers also displayed their work for all to see. Thanks to Lenny Maiorano, Steve Quiram, Marty Hanson, Tim McEntire, Spencer Tinkham, Bob Swann, Bill Thumm, Duane Turnock and others who showed off their considerable talents.



Member News

Are Your Membership Dues Current?

Membership dues are the lifeblood of our organization, allowing us to put on what we all know to be the biggest and best show of the year. Dues also fund other member benefits such as the member directory, newsletters, our website along with our member database, as well as other important member communications throughout the year.

As of this writing there are about 160 members who paid their dues for 2015 but have not yet renewed for 2016. If you are one of those, please do so as soon as possible. If your dues are not paid in full for 2016, you won't be able to continue to enjoy the member directory, club newsletters, or the many other benefits that come with membership. So, we strongly encourage you pay your dues either on-line (once you have registered and set up your personal profile) at midwestdecoy.org, or by sending a check made out to "MDCA" to: Curt Froyen, 1957 120th Avenue, Knoxville, IA 50138.

We hope to see your name in the member directory next year!



"Members Only" Facebook Group



One of the benefits of your MDCA membership is access to the Members Only group on Facebook. Over 100 members have joined thus far and are using it as an opportunity to share their collections, get help with decoy identification,

and to buy, sell and trade online in a secure environment with other members.

If you currently have a Facebook account, just go to the "Midwest Decoy Collectors Association" Facebook page and ask to join. If your dues are current, you'll be admitted within a day. If you don't have a Facebook account, it's easy to set one up.

More Club Communications To Be Sent Through Email

As most of you know, we have been increasingly using email to communicate important club information including a show related issues like table registration, Pheasant Run updates, and more. It's fast and it's free to us. We have to ensure that we are using our members' dues as efficiently as possible and we will continue to move more and more toward online communications to achieve that goal.

Fall Newsletter Will Only Be Emailed To Members



A next step in our transition to more on-line member communications will be to send our next newsletter -- Fall, 2016 -- to members exclusively via email. This represents significant savings by eliminating all printing and postage costs. However, it can only be sent to members for whom we have a good email address.

So **NOW** is the time to make sure that we have a current email address for you in the club database. If you haven't been receiving email communications from the club, or just believe we may not have your current email address (if it's not in the Member Directory, then we don't have it), please send it to club Director, Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com. He will make sure that your file is updated so that you'll get all of the news you need in the future. For those few members who do not have an email address, the newsletter will be available on the club website at midwestdecoy.org.



New Members Come From Coast to Coast

The Midwest Decoy Collectors Association continues to be the largest decoy and sporting collectibles organization anywhere. We had 121 collectors join the club in 2015, and 44 have joined since our last newsletter in February (see full list below). They come from every corner of the country – from Oregon and California in the west, Louisiana and Texas in the south, New York and North Carolina in the east, and Ontario to the north. You'll see that many of these new members collect a broad range of sporting collectibles including animal traps, wildlife art, cartridge advertising and fishing tackle. The MDCA is truly a North American organization representing interest in a wide variety of sporting collectible categories.

Michael Beale

Rockingham, NC
*Canvasbacks; Eastern Shore Blackducks/
Geese*

Brian Byers

Decatur, IL
Duck Calls

Tim Carter

Hawthorn Woods, IL
Carver

Skip Couvillion

Shreveport, LA

Samuel Delavan

Glenwood, IA
Traps

Robert Delk

LaPorte City, IA
*Woodworking tools; Shorebirds/
Songbird Carvings*

Steve Dorrell

Grasonville, MD
Chesapeake Bay Decoys

Richard Ellis

Rapids City, IL
Whittington Decoys

Stacy Fickle

Hebron, IN

John Finnessy

Colorado Springs, CO

Greg Ford

Chillicothe, IL
Decoys & Calls

Peter Gottlick

Rockford, IL
Duck Decoys; Carver

John Griffiths

Amagansett, NY
East Coast Region

Mark Harding

Bath, ON
*Eastern Ontario/Toronto School Decoys;
Nichol Decoys*

Don Helgason

Timonium, MD
*Canvasbacks; All Madison Mitchell
Decoys & Coots*

Kevin Hubbard

Freeburg, IL
Fishing Decoys

Derek Jackson

Pekin, IL
Decoys & Duck Calls

Tim Jansen

Creston, NE
Decoys by Chas. Perdew; Carver

Robert Jaobsen

Wheaton, IL
Decoys

Martin Jeffers

Lake Forest, IL
Vintage Working Decoys

Grace Jeffers

New York, NY
Working Decoys

Red Johnson

Santa Rosa, CA
Fishing Reels; Santa Rosa Show Promoter

Steven Knutson

Apple Valley, MN
Minnesota Decoys

Karen Lawson

Crisfield, MD

Corbin Leininger

Rochester, MI
Mason Decoys

Gerald Loar

Woodruff, WI

Vern Manselle

Beavercreek, OR
Duck, Goose, Shorebirds; Calls

Dennis Mazur

Bartlett, IL

Colin McDonough

Rockford, IL
Wildlife Art

Jeffrey Moore

Chicago, IL
Decoys

Mike Moser

Mokena, IL

Ryan Osentoski

Clarkston, MI

Nelson Philip

Anoka, MN
Minnesota Decoys

Bob Poel

Linden, MI
Duck/Fish Decoys; Vintage Duck Boats

Jerry Purdy

Kalamazoo, MI
Loons

Richard Sedlachek

Arbor Vitae, WI
Contemporary Decoys

Bob Stein

Kimball, MN
Duck & Spearing Decoys

John Stephens

Stuttgart, AR
Duck Calls and Illinois River Decoys

Rick Stephens

Newark, DE
Old/new decoys in great paint/condition

Richard Swift

Monticello, NY
Traps; Ice Fishing Decoys/Spears; Cartridges

Patrick Walsh

Catskill, NY
*Northeast/Midwest Decoys/Minis;
Antique Hand Tools*

Spencer White

Coppell, TX
Vintage Waterfowl

Ron Willis

Chillicothe, MO
*Winchester/Western Cartridge Co.
Advertising/Catalogs*

Robert Wiseman

Shakopee, MN

MEMBER
PROFILE:

California Dreamin'



Charles Bergman Cans, ca. 1930



*Dick "Fresh Air" Jansen Cans
(unrigged), ca. 1930's*

Californian Mike Cole has dreamed about ducks ever since he was a young boy when his family moved from the Bay Area to the San Joaquin River Delta area in the Sacramento Valley, the very heart of the Pacific Flyway. This was Mike's introduction to waterfowl and it changed the course of his personal, professional and collecting life forever.

The Dream Comes To Life

With just a little exposure to duck hunting through his uncle, in the 8th grade Mike got an old 20 gauge shotgun and taught himself to hunt, honing his skills by shooting blackbirds in a nearby field. Early on he met Stan (whom everyone called "Pete") Bennett, an old decoy carver and hunter who would eventually become one of Mike's most influential mentors. In 1964, "Pete" took Mike hunting, his

first experience hunting from an "official" duck blind. This would shape what would become his second career.

Following his passion for nature, Mike studied biology and agriculture in college. That led to a job with a major fertilizer company as a pest control advisor in Yuba City (his current home) in northern California, smack in the middle of prime rice farming and duck hunting land.

In 1980, Mike joined the Live Oak Club, which he jokingly refers to a "low rent duck club," located in a natural marsh in the Sacramento Valley. Here he met Mike Passaglia who would become his business partner and one of his closest friends. Putting his agricultural know-how to work, both men donated their time to improve the club's blinds and the overall habitat for migrating waterfowl.



*Ed Snyder Hen Mallard,
ca. 1925*



*Hiram Hotze Mallards (unrigged),
ca. 1925 (only known turned
heads)*



*Hy Crandell Green Wing Teal,
1930's (McCleery Collection)*

Dreaming Big

Buoyed by the skills they had developed, the pair eventually decided to start a duck club of their own. They leased 200 acres and got it up and running by borrowing duck blinds, trading for backhoe work, and just winging it without any insurance. They made it all work and over time grew this to 1500 leased acres.

A few years later they bought 150 acres next to the Sutter National Wildlife Refuge, land that produced revenue from both duck hunting and rice farming. From there, Mike's second career, called C&P Duck Company, really took off. Today, Mike has sole or part ownership of over 2500 acres of hunting and farming land in northern California, including five duck clubs.

Dreams Turn to Decoys

Mike's involvement in the duck club business eventually led to a passion for old decoys. In 2000, his old friend "Pete" Bennett started selling some of his carvings. Mike bought his first decoy and was hooked. But he started slow,

"specializing," as he puts it, in "unknown, repainted, re-headed decoys." He had a lot to learn.

That education came from many collectors willing to share their knowledge. Bennett had introduced Mike to Bill Mori, a collector and mentor who then introduced Mike to other serious collectors who helped him identify and acquire some better birds. In 2006 he went to Ohio for his first decoy show, which opened up a whole new world. He met seasoned collectors such as Marty Hanson, Len Carnaghi, Jon Deeter and Ken Cole to pick their brains about formulating a collecting philosophy and identifying great decoys. Mike would eventually become friends with noted west coast collector, Jay Koetje from whom he was able to acquire some great decoys as Jay upgraded his own collection.

Initially, Mike was naturally drawn in West Coast decoys but as he was exposed to more broad-based collections, his interests broadened as well. His collection today consists of a variety of wonderful examples (primarily pairs)

by the top makers from virtually every decoying area of the country – the Ward Brothers, Mason Factory, Ira Hudson, Shang Wheeler, Hy Crandell, J.N Dodge Factory, Charles Bergman, Bill Buchner, Hiram Hotze, and many more.

While Mike's says that his "favorite" decoy is the one most recently acquired, he does have a special fondness for a pair of 1928 Ward Brothers Knothead Cans. He enjoys the form of these wonderful carvings and views them examples of the originality this carving duo brought to their work.

Through it all, Mike's philosophy on collecting has never wavered – consult with other collectors before you buy, and always be a little cautious. Above all, he insists that the most important thing is to keep it fun. While his collection includes some of the finest examples available, Mike counts as most important the people he has met and the experiences he's enjoyed along the way. It is these things that fill Mike Cole's dreams today. When not working his farm or hunting, Mike can be reached at (530) 682-8217 or mcole@succeed.net.



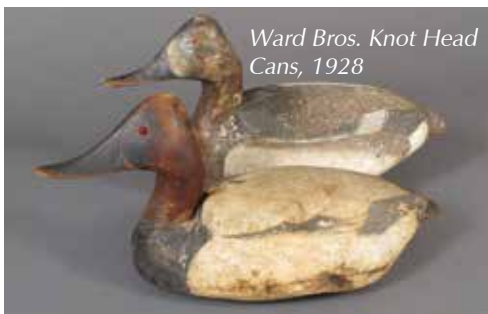
*J. N. Dodge Factory
Cans (unrigged), ca. 1885*



*Jim Schmiedlin
Mergansers*



*Mason Slope Breasted
Mallards, ca. 1890*



*Ward Bros. Knot Head
Cans, 1928*



*Shang Wheeler Wigeon,
ca. 1930's*



*Stan Bennett Pheasants,
ca. 1950's*

The Grand Kankakee Marsh:

“The Everglades of the North”

Northern Indiana was once the site of a massive freshwater marsh encompassing approximately nearly a million acres of land and home to some of the highest concentrations of wildlife on the planet.

The Kankakee River meandered its way southwest across Indiana over 250 miles, starting in South Bend and continuing into Illinois, with countless creeks and tributaries feeding it along the way. The river watershed was a natural wildlife refuge with marsh prairies of aquatic sedges and grasses and wild-rice sloughs and flag ponds lined with muskrat houses.



(An “Extremely rare high-neck pintail hen from the Kankakee Marshes, Indiana, circa 1900” sold at this year’s Guyette & Deeter auction for \$46,000. The decoy is one of seven known pintails, three drakes and four hens, which first surfaced publicly in 2007 when a drake was sold at the Guyette & Schmidt/Christies sale. Through the tireless work of Gene and Linda Kangas and Ron Gard, these magnificent decoys are now strongly attributed to Herman R. Trinosky (1874-1956), a German-born retired railroad maintenance worker from North Judson, Indiana.

This is the story of this rich hunting ground and its ultimate demise in the name of progress. It is adapted from an article written by Donna Tonelli, supplemented by information published by the Kankakee Valley Historical Society. Find out more at thekakakeeriver.com.

Tapping into the riches of the marsh

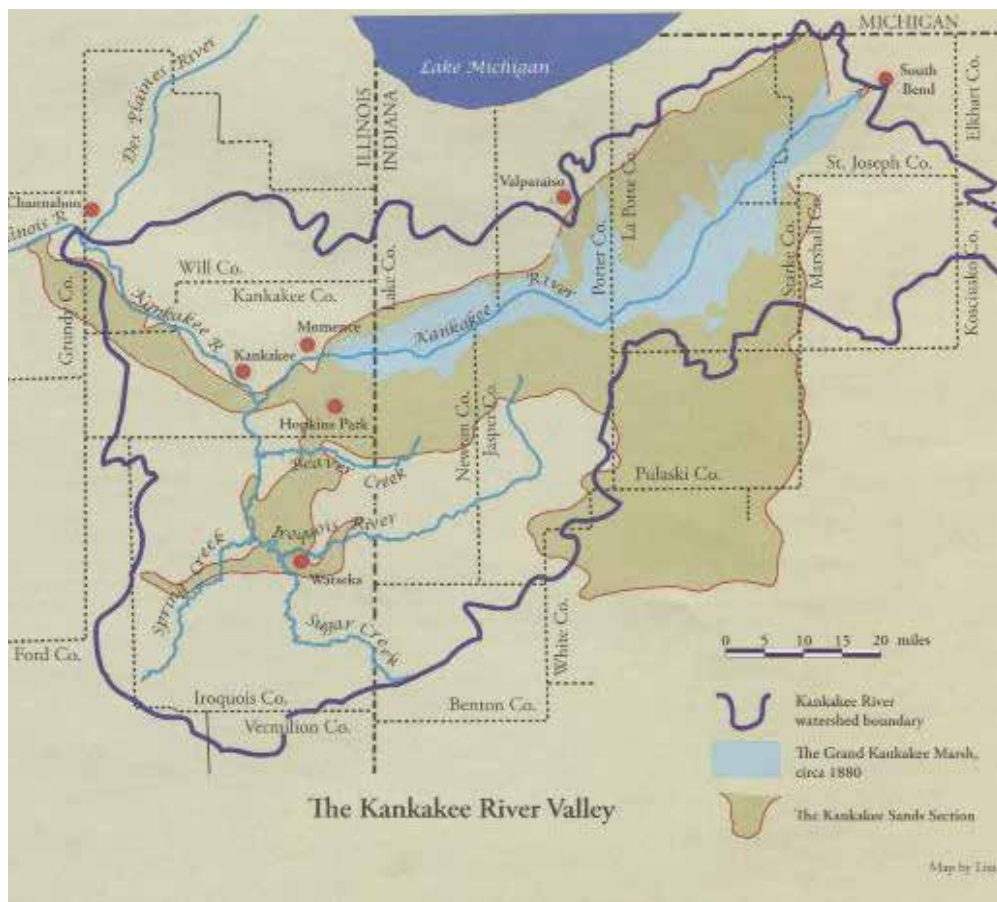
The wet prairie was interspersed with sandy island oak barrens that made it habitable by humans. The local Potawatomi Indians claimed this rich natural hunting and fishing paradise as their own until 1838 when they were relocated from present day Plymouth, Indiana to Kansas.

The first non-native settlers began homesteading the land surrounding the marsh in 1834. They quickly learned how to reap the bounties of this rich land. The marsh was visited each spring and fall by every sort of migrating waterfowl -- swans, ducks, geese, and cranes. Millions of passenger pigeons



*A Successful Day on the Marsh
(Collection of Gene Kangas)*

nested here creating flocks that would block out the sun when they flew, while bison and deer grazed on the marsh prairie grasses. Three large lakes created by the rivers provided fresh fish, and river clam beds that rendered shells for buttons and precious freshwater pearls.



Commerce comes to Kankakee

It wasn't long before the commercial value of this rich land became evident. In the 1860's the Chicago businessman Marshall Field sent work crews to gather cattails to stuff furniture sold at his famous store. Families would gather on marshland islands to pick wild cranberries and huckleberries that they sold to brokers for a dollar a quart during the summers. Trappers caught beaver and muskrats by the thousands for the fur trade. And of course waterfowl were harvested to meet the needs of an evolving American palette. Soon, the Kankakee Marsh became known as "Chicago's Food Pantry."



Hunting on the marsh (Kankakee Valley Historical Society)

Sawmills were established as the large red and white oaks, beech and maples were cut to clear the dry land. After the Chicago Fire of 1871, these mills provided the lumber to rebuild the city.

A sportsman's paradise

At the same time, word about the abundance of wildlife and game spread quickly among affluent sportsmen in the Midwest. An enterprising Enos Baum built a toll bridge crossing the Kankakee River in 1860 making the marsh accessible to sportsmen who came from cities all over the Midwest and East. Many established hunting clubs were conveniently located near the bridge.

The Studebaker family belonged to the Indianapolis Club, and dignitaries like Presidents Grover Cleveland and Teddy Roosevelt hunted at the Valley Hunt Club. In fact, the name was eventually



The Valley Club estab. 1879 (Kankakee Valley Historical Society)

changed to the White House Club recognizing their frequent visits. General Lew Wallace (1827-1905), author of "Ben Hur," spent many months hunting near Baum's Bridge, and had this to say about the place: "Never, in all my world travels, have I found a more perfect spot, not a more tantalizing river." Living on his houseboat 'the White Elephant', Wallace hunted his private 640-acre hunting and fishing grounds on the marsh and spent hours writing surrounded by the marsh's beauty.

"Progress" comes to the Marsh

But this was all about to change as land speculators began encroaching on the marsh. As early as 1848 the state attempted to drain parts of the marsh with little effect as the ditching was done by hand and shovel. Henry H. Robbins, who fought in the courts for years to create drainage districts to drain thousands of marshland he owned, implemented the first practical dredging operation utilizing the newly developed steam driven dredging machines in 1858. Soon others realized the advantage of dredging the marsh to uncover the fertile ground below. The dredging operations snowballed and the Singleton Ditch, the Eagle Creek Ditch, the Big Brown Ditch, and others soon followed. Lateral ditches were dug crisscrossing the marsh.

At the Illinois-Indiana border near Momence, Illinois there was a large limestone ledge exposed. In the 1880's, land speculator Lemuel Milk

and his workers cut through the limestone "hog-back" to release the flood waters into the Kankakee, making short work of draining Beaver Lake, which was a full seven miles long, five miles wide, and six to nine feet deep. This was the last part of the Kankakee Marsh to be drained. Burton Burroughs described the disaster that followed: "There were thousands of big, soft, fussy goslings bereft of their natural element-water." "The sight was pitiful," says A. L. Barker, a boy who witnessed it all. "They walked, rolled, dragged themselves painfully to the few depressions in the marsh where water still remained and crowded these places to suffocation." Few were strong enough to survive.

By 1922 the 'reclaiming' of the Grand Kankakee Marsh was complete. The beautiful meandering Kankakee River with three large lakes slowly flowing and twisting over 240 miles through Indiana was now a straight, narrow channel stretching 90 miles long known as the Marbles Power Ditch. Once in Illinois the Kankakee River still continued to flow along its natural pathway.



Baum's Bridge, 1907 (Kankakee Valley Historical Society)

Today, most of the former Indiana marsh is farmland. Hunters still come to the few areas of the marsh that remain but this once famous hunters' paradise is but a shadow of its former glory. Less than 10 % of the original Kankakee Marsh remains, while efforts today by the Kankakee Valley Historical Society, the Izaak Walton League and others work to restore parts of the marsh for the wildlife and the public's enjoyment.



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Callmakers Flock to St. Charles

Once again this year the Callmakers and Collectors Association of American (CCAA) gathered for their annual get-together at Pheasant Run. Attendees were located together on the fourth floor of tower and this fun-loving group had a great time renewing old friendships, telling stories and trading calls throughout the week. On Thursday they conducted a lively auction in conjunction with some evening revelry. And on Friday morning they held their annual meeting and call contest. Many of their members exhibited in the Mega Center both Friday and Saturday. The CCAA is dedicated to promoting interest in and knowledge of the history of callmaking in America. We encourage you to check them out online at CCAACalls.org.

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Collector looking to identify his decoys gets an answer and more!

The free identification and appraisal area of the show in the Mega Center is always a busy place. This year an area collector brought in a pair of Illinois River Mallards in hopes that someone could help connect them to a specific maker's name. Being stumped, the appraiser on duty sought help from Illinois collector Matt Downs who was standing nearby talking to an older gentleman. When asked if he might know who made the decoys, Matt responded, "Yes. He did!" pointing to the man he was talking to – 90 year old Artie "Bennett" Behmetuik, a long-time carver and frequent attendee at the show. Artie confirmed that he remembered making the decoys in 1968.

Needless to say, the owner who brought them in was delighted to learn who made them and thrilled to meet the man himself. Here they are together enjoying this happy coincidence.

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