

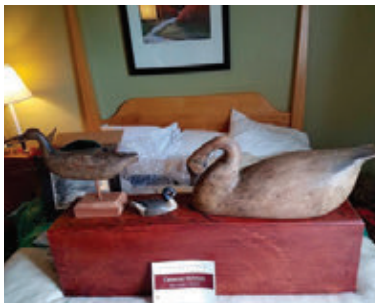
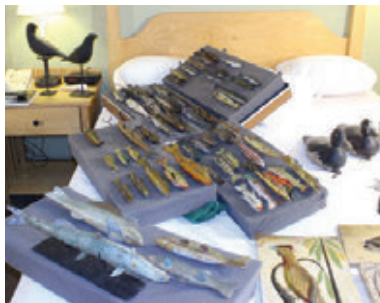


2017 Show A Big Success

The 2017 version of the North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show is in the books and, by all accounts, it was a big hit!

- First, we were blessed with ideal weather. It was in the low 70s early in the week that brought out the shorts, T-shirts and burgers on the bar-b-ques. This was followed by some cooler temperatures and damp weather late in the week which always helps Mega Center traffic by keeping local attendees away from that time-consuming spring yard work.
- Second, attendee counts were up year over year. More room nights were booked at Pheasant Run, with at least another 50 folks booked at nearby motels. More dealer tables were rented in the Mega Center. And there were lots of new faces, and a number of returnees who have been away for a while.
- Third, a broad array of fascinating collectibles displays and exhibits throughout the Mega Center — from miniatures to fish traps — were real crowd pleasers.
- Lastly, there was a lot of positive energy throughout the week with lots of dealers reporting good to great sales. This writer had his best show ever!

If you were at the show, we hope you enjoyed it. If you couldn't make it this year, we hope that the show report on the following pages will make attending next year's show a "must do!" The dates are April 24-28, 2018, and it's not too early to begin making your plans. In the meantime, enjoy!



Discover • Preserve • Celebrate

MIDWEST DECOY COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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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

Thank you for your support. With our show behind us but still fresh in my mind, I'm reminded that we enjoy a wonderfully diverse membership with a variety of interests. This diversity was on full display at the show and made 2017 one of our most successful years. We successfully adapted to the Pheasant Run restructuring and our show has developed a well-rounded depth of quality. Membership, number of room nights and event attendance all grew nicely. In fact, we ran out of space at Pheasant Run on Friday night and had folks in five other nearby locations.

Outreach is working. Our membership grew as we attracted many new members through targeted show promotion, and our newsletter which has generated renewed interest and support. In addition, our marketing strategy has us focusing on wide range of collaborative opportunities to leverage our strengths. Just a few examples:

- Our partnership that has grown with the Call Makers & Collectors Association. The relationship is focused on mutual support and the depth of activity, and attendance at St. Charles has demonstrated visible progress.
- Thanks to Bill Dodge and Jim Goodman we are growing the DU relationship and collaborating to support their efforts with the decoy displays at their headquarters and at the Bass Pro HQ in Memphis.
- Pat Gregory has supported the great work of Delta Waterfowl Up North and that exciting activity is accelerating. Many of the photographs of decoys in action from Delta Marsh efforts are noteworthy and we are committed to generating better visibility for this work.
- Guyette & Deeter is a critical part of our activity and their support is

superb. We changed the Friday event schedule to ease the transition to the MegaCenter. By all accounts the "early bird" members only picking opportunity was a success. Gary and Jon's ideas and support made these changes a win for all.

We know that more collaboration is necessary and we are committed to finding additional opportunities. If any of you who have ideas or want to volunteer just step up, we're always looking for your support.

Looking Forward. The depth and content of the show has broadened. This year it included displays of both vintage and contemporary wildfowl and fish decoys, shot shell boxes, gunning boxes, fish traps, and calls. In addition, carving demonstrations, appraisals, the silent auction, and more have all added broader interest in our club and our show. This is reflected in our increasingly diverse make-up — both geographically and in terms of collecting interests — of our membership. We will continue to look for ways that can help us grow this even further.

At Pheasant Run this year we saw marked improvements in service while opening up more rooms to accommodate our demand. Work is on-going to obtain even more rooms and selling space to support our growth next year and beyond.

And please remember to keep your membership current, make your 2018 reservations and help develop more collectors.

Enjoy a great summer and Happy Collecting!

Rick
Rick Sandstrom

Here's what's in this issue:



| | |
|---|--------------|
| Member Update | 4-5 |
| Room-to-Room Trading | 6 |
| Mega Center Action | 7 |
| Member Display – Miniature Carvings | 8-9 |
| “My Mania for Miniatures” by H. Fleckenstein, Jr. | 10-13 |
| LaCrosse Wisconsin Fish Decoys | 14-15 |
| Vintage Fish Traps | 16 |
| Shotgun Shell Boxes & Lake Poygan Gunning Boxes | 17 |
| Contemporary Corner – McNair Family and more ... | 18-19 |
| Member Profile – Greg Renner | 20-22 |

Member News

2017 Dues



Just a reminder that club dues are due on the first of January each year. While some of our members still pay at the show in April, we are making good progress in collecting dues by the January 1 deadline. However, there are still many members who did not attend the show and have

not paid their 2017 dues.

A letter requesting payment is being sent to delinquent members asking that they remit as soon as possible. We want to make sure that every member continues to enjoy all the benefits that the club offers including the printed membership directory and updates, as well as access to the online Members Only area of our website, which offers the ability to search the member database online, online dues payment, and participation in our very active buy/sell/trade Facebook group. You can make your payment online (after you create an online account) at midwestdecoy.org, or by sending a check for \$25 (\$70 for three years) made out to the MDCA to: Matt Bryant, 17114 Erskine Street, Omaha, NE 68116.

Membership Remains Strong

Since our pre-show newsletter in February, nearly 100 collectors have joined the organization. Their interests vary across the spectrum of sporting collectibles including fish decoys, calls, sporting art, fishing tackle, shell boxes, and much more. And they come from all over North America from Washington to Maryland, from Florida to Ontario. A complete list of these new members can be found on the next page. Please welcome them to the club!

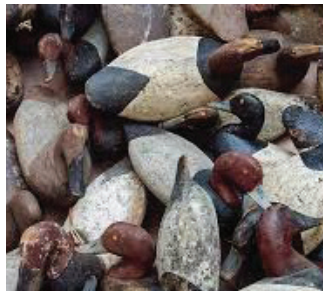
Online Communication Increases

Our current plan is to distribute two of our three annual newsletters via email only. This saves the club the significant cost of printing and mailing these issues. As good stewards of club resources many of our other communications are being sent via email as well. So, it's important that we have a good email address for as many members as possible to ensure that our members stay well-informed about club activities in the most efficient way possible. If you believe that we don't have a good email address for you (if it's not in the Membership Directory or it is incorrect, then we don't have it), please send it along to jseregny@gmail.com and we'll take care of adding it to your record. (Those members who don't have an email account can always access newsletters and other club communications at midwestdecoys.org.)



Let's Hear Your Favorite Collecting Story

We all agree that the "thrill of the hunt" for that next decoy to add to our collection is a big part of the enjoyment of collecting. The stories behind those finds are often treasures in themselves, and we'd love to share your stories with our members in future issues of these club newsletters. So please send us your best stories from your years of collecting. They can be about the ones you've successfully added or about the ones that got away. They can be funny or just surprising. Please email your stories along with pictures (if available) to Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or mail them to Jeff at: 6699 Ferry Road, East Jordan, MI 49727.



IN MEMORIAM



Long-time member and collector of Illinois River decoys **Frank Svoboda, Jr.** passed away on June 10, 2017. In addition to his passion for collecting, Frank was a very active member of the Des Plaines, Iowa business community for many years. For over four decades, he operated Svoboda's clothing store which was started by his grandfather in 1922. He was an active member of the community through his involvement in the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, YMCA, and Lion's Club. An avid outdoorsman, Frank loved to fly fish, bird hunt and downhill ski. We will certainly miss his presence at future shows.

New Members (as of January 15, 2017)

Nick R Amazzalorso
Crown Point, IN
Birds

Paul Annells
North Branch, MN
Illinois River decoys

Wade Atkinson
Rosiclare, IL
Duck Decoys and Pre-1960 Hunting/Fishing Items, Pre-1900 Native American Items

Bob H Badtke
Shiocton, WI
Coot, Masons and Wisconsin decoys

Tom Beaver
Brighton, MI
Owls; Native American

Jack Bragg
Crystal Lake, IL
Sporting collectibles

Randy Braun
Millbrook, IL
Ducks

Darhl Brown
Groveland, IL

Steve Brown
Cross Junction, VA
Atlantic Flyway (mostly Chesapeake Bay)

Joe Butcher
Sun Prairie, WI

David Butler
Syracuse, IN
Decoy Carver

Joe Caldwell
Monticello, IL

Dean Campbell
Fenton, MI
Canadian decoys

Robin E Craig
Midhurst, ON
Ontario, Black Ducks, Toronto

Dick Curnow
Liberty, MO
Winchester/Advertising/Decoys

Jarmen Czuta
Waterford, WI

Drake P Daggett
Appleton, WI
Duck Stamps & Good Patterns

Jud K DeHaan
Kalamazoo, MI
Duck, Geese, Swan and Fish Decoys

Brian K Dickson
Springfield, IL

Jim Didier
West Bend, WI
Mississippi Flyway Decoys, particularly Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois

Jake Dixon
Pontiac, IL

David T Drake
Lake Forest, IL
Mason Decoys in Mint Condition

Gerry Dresen
Cross Plains, WI
Fishing

Peter R Duarte
North Dighton, MA
New England sporting collectibles, Old Saybrook Wildfowler, Tinnies, Downeast Sportsraft

William E Duley, Jr
Chestertown, MD
Maryland Vintage Decoys, Carver

Jack Dunbar
Duluth, MN

Robert Earl
Salt Lake City, UT

Rich Filstrom
St. Charles, IL

Michael D Finnegan
Francesville, IN
Decoys, Hunting, Fishing, Guns

Jerry Fischbach
Becker, MN

Jim Fitch
Tulsa, OK
Bird Calls

John Fithian
Burbank, CA
Decoys/Duck Calls

Dennis Forthofer
Huron, OH
Vintage Miniatures

John D. Frier
Harvard, IL

Gary Gebler
West Hills, CA
Calls

Al Girouda
Clarion Hills, IL
Calls

Jim Gleason
Valparaiso, IN

John Grdina
Munster, IN

Andy Guyot
Pewaukee, WI
Fish Decoys

Pete Hack
New London, IA
Decoys and Sporting Collectibles

Tony Hasto
Antioch, IL
Decoys

Timothy Heath
Portland, OR
Pacific Coast and Illinois River Decoys

Jon Huser
Lisle, IL
Wood Carving

Michael Indeliceto
Sausalito, CA
Pacific Coast

Wilbur Irving
Pekin, IL

Harry Jackson
Marion, MD
Wildfowler Factory, Shorebirds, Long Island

Stan Jan
Mequon, WI
Mason, Wisconsin Decoys

Terry Johnston
Kankakee, IL
Decoys

Mike Kafila
Plymouth, MI
Mason Decoys

Neil E. Kaufman
Louisville, KY

David J Koller
Plano, IL
Shotgun Shell Boxes

Troy Kruse
Ida Grove, IA

Rich Kuczkowski
Lemont, IL
Decoys

Robert Landis
Ottawa, IL
Illinois River Decoys

John Latreille
Cornwall, ON

Kurtis Latreille
Cornwall, ON

Paul Lecat
Northbrook, IL
Fish Decoys

Ronald K Leonard
Nauvoo, IL
Well-Used Illinois River Decoys

Chase Lhamon
Pekin, IL
Decoys, Duck and Goose Calls

Harlow Lockwood
Joliet, IL

Paul Loh
Grand Rapids, MI
Fish Decoys, Bird Carvings

Jack Looney
Independence, MO

Kim Mank
Capron, IL

John G McKenzie
Rockford, IL
Duck decoys

John Meredith
Worton, MD
Maryland Vintage Decoys, Carver

Jim Micus
Downers Grove, IL

Charlie Miller
Hamilton, MN
Calls

Gary B. Miner
Rock Island, IL

Pete Munger
Niagara Falls, Burlington Bay Decoys

John E Nelson
Oswego, IL
Illinois River & Mason Decoys

Craig Osimowicz
Cary, IL
All Old Decoys

Joshua C Oustalet
Iowa, LA
Louisiana Decoys Mainly; Illinois River, Mississippi Flyway, Southern Decoys

Steve Phelps
Hiawatha, IA

Mike Pusey
Laurel, DE
Hunting, Fishing Vintage Items, Decoys

Thomas Rednour
Coulterville, IL
Decoys - Mason, Dodge

Grant Ridgway
Jackson, MS

David Roberts
Miramar, FL
Vintage Decoys, Fishing Creels, Canoe Cups

Todd D Rozendaal
Des Moines, IA
Iowa-Made Fishing Tackle; Decoys

Jim Santarsiero
Royal Oak, MD

Dave Santereamo
Merrillville, IN
Shorebirds

Ed Schlumpf
Hartland, WI

Ted Schneider
Hudson, WI

Scott R. Seeley
Waterloo, IA
Mason Decoys

George H Seifert
Rochester Hills, MI

John R Shallcross
Rockford, IL
Decoys

Eric Slattum
Salem, OR
.22 Boxes

Mark H Smith
Leesville, LA
Louisiana Decoys, Shell Boxes, Calls

Dennis Stenseth
Albert Lea, MN
Decoys, Traps

Lou Strozza
Savannah, IL
Decoys

Brian D Sullivan
Pontiac, IL
Mason, Dodge, etc.

Frank Syoen
Clay, MI
Decoys

Jim Tolmie
Oyster Bay, NY
Ruddy Ducks, Ward Bros.

Robert Ward
Picton, ON
Canadian Decoys

Tom Zidlecki
West Allis, WI
Wisconsin Decoys

Room-to-Room Trading Means Good Times, Good Food, Good Company



A huge variety of items for sale



Rick Simpson catches a moment to relax



Phil Jones ready for action



Chef Lee Schultz



Enjoying the good weather

The first part of show week isn't just about buying and selling. It's every bit as much about rekindling old friendships and making new ones in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

While room-to-room trading doesn't "officially" start until Tuesday of show week, a good number of folks get a jump on the week by arriving Sunday and Monday, with the first arrival on Saturday (you know who you are G.E.!). Sure, the old adage "the early bird catches the worm" comes to mind as many hope to get first crack at that perfect addition to their collection. However, Sunday and Monday gives early arrivals a great opportunity to get around to visit with other like-minded collectors and dealers to tell stories, discuss new finds, and to even share an adult beverage or two.

These first couple of days have become a nice, relaxed preamble to the activity which starts humming Tuesday and continues into Thursday. This year, with the warm weather we had to start the week, Rick Simpson and Lee Schultz had the grill going constantly as members relaxed on the patio outside of their room while enjoying the ample supply of food and refreshments. The club took this idea a step further by having Pheasant Run provide breakfast and lunch in the Golf Wing annexes beginning on Tuesday. This allowed members to save a couple of bucks and stay near their rooms so they didn't miss a potential sale.

Many attendees commented that the energy in the halls this year was much improved over the past couple of years and many reported strong sales. We saw several good pieces change hands early in the week including a nice Maine Eider, a classic Ben Schmidt Goose, and a folky Leroy Howell "flower" fish decoy to name a few.

Fulfilling the Club's Educational Mission

During room-to-room activity on Thursday morning, MDCA member Greg Renner gathered a group of Missouri factory decoy enthusiasts for a seminar designed to discuss and share knowledge about decoys from the "Show-Me" state. While it was a great learning experience for all as the group discussed the evolution of decoys from the Hays, Benz and Gundelfinger factories, it's clear that there is still a lot to be learned about these fascinating yet underappreciated decoys. Check out the Profile on Greg Renner in this issue to learn more about this important work.



The Mega Center Features New Elements



“Early Bird” Event

For this first time this year, the exhibit hall opened at 10a.m. for a members only “early bird” event. This provided the opportunity to shop the show prior to the public opening at 2p.m. Guyette & Deeter graciously agreed to move the start of the auction on Friday back to 11a.m. from their traditional 10a.m. start, giving our members a full hour in the Mega Center without having to worry about missing a particular auction item they may have had their eye on. Additionally, G&D provided a TV monitor at their tables that streamed the auction live to ensure that the folks in the Mega Center knew what lot was being sold at any given time.

Continuous Silent Auctions

We also ramped up our silent auction program this year with continuous auctions throughout the two-day event. There were some terrific items brought in, including a group of antique fly rods in superb condition, that brought nearly \$1000 for the consignor and made one of our members very happy with his purchase. It’s important to note that the club receives a donation equaling 10% of the total proceeds from these auctions which helps to fund ongoing club activities.



Public attendance this year was strong relative to the past few years. Saturday was particularly good with year-over-year attendance up by 25%. This was no doubt partly helped by the damp, cool weather, but also supported by a heavy dose of advertising in the local papers that ran every day during the week preceding the weekend show.

This year’s show continued our commitment to preserving the history of American folk art through display of the finest examples of sporting collectibles in a number of different categories. **Read about these on the pages that follow.**

Little Carvings Get Big Response

While collecting decoys and other artifacts that were actually used as tools in the pursuit of waterfowl, game, or fish is at the heart of this crazy passion we all share, there is another equally rich area of collecting that was featured in this year's Member Display — **Miniature carvings by the most highly regarded decoy makers from the Midwest.**

The pieces in this display included a range of carvings — from decoys that mimicked their larger brethren to all sorts of pieces that were made for the carvers' friends and family, or to be sold commercially to supplement their income. Items in the display included nearly every species of ducks, geese, pheasants, and fish by a virtual "who's who" of Midwest carvers. Among these were Charles Perdew and Charles Walker from Illinois; Ben Schmidt and Tom Schroeder from Michigan; Enoch Reindahl and Warren Dettman from Wisconsin; Charles Roth from Minnesota; John Sharon from Ohio; and Bob Kerr from Ontario.

All in all, the display was a big hit with attendees. These pieces were certainly appreciated for their great folk art appeal but were also an education for many who had not previously been fully exposed to the miniature collecting category. Many thanks to members who loaned pieces for this display, and a special thanks to Board member Dave Kneebone for his tireless effort in pulling this fascinating display together.

Otto Garden, Canton, IL, ca. 1930s



Walter Lowry, LaCrosse, WI, ca. 1940s



*Unknown Maker,
Michigan,
ca. 1920s*



*William Hertie, Toledo, OH,
ca. 1930s*

*Bob Kerr, Ontario, Canada,
ca. 1960s*



*John Sharon, Toledo,
OH, ca. 1950s*



*Bill Finkle, Saginaw Bay, MI,
ca. 1900s*





Ben Schmidt, Centerline, MI,
ca. 1940s



Minan Brabaw, Algonac, MI,
ca. 1950s



Nick Purdo, Detroit, MI,
ca. 1950s



Jim McLinney, Ohio, ca. 1960s



Charles Walker, Peoria, IL,
ca. 1930s



Charles Roth, Minneapolis, MN,
ca. 1960s



Charles Perdew
(Edna Paint), Henry,
IL, ca. 1920s



Ben Schmidt,
Centerline, MI,
ca. 1940s



Unknown Maker, ca. 1920s

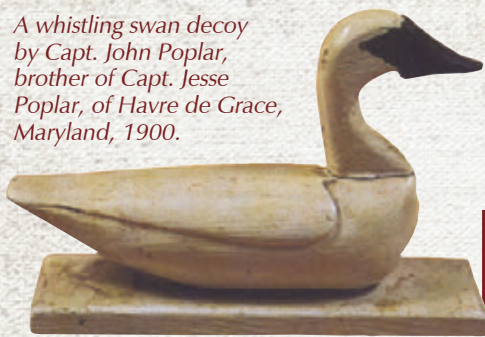


Gus Nelow, Omrow, WI,
ca. 1950s



Enoch Reindahl,
Stoughton, WI,
ca. 1940-50.

A whistling swan decoy by Capt. John Poplar, brother of Capt. Jesse Poplar, of Havre de Grace, Maryland, 1900.



by Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr.

MY MANIA FOR MINIATURES

It was a bluebird afternoon. Not the kind of day we had hoped for after driving three hours through the icy morning darkness, across the bay bridge and down the shore to get to our blind.

We were duck hunting less than half a mile from the house on Love Point where my family lived when I was born and where some of my fondest early memories of duck shooting occurred. Back then, Dad hunted out of a stake blind directly offshore from Love Point at the northern tip of Kent Island. His setup was located at the mouth of the Chester River in the Chesapeake Bay, a prime shooting ground for canvasbacks.

In those days, however, my father shot ducks mostly to provide sustenance for our table. Not much thought, let alone concern, was given to the illegal "moonlight shooting" of a couple of fat corn-fed black ducks that would be supper the following evening. I remember it all, poignantly, with love for the good old days.

Now, almost 15 years later, and just down the same country road from the home that my Dad built, we were rigged out once again at Love Point. When the ducks took heed of the still air and calm waters that day and stopped moving, I decided to walk east along the eroded shoreline of the Chester River. While clambering over fallen trees whose branches were clogged with debris, I spied two weary decoys tangled in the clutter. Very pleased with the find, I dug the old wooden birds out, slung them over my shoulder with their still attached

anchor lines and started the milelong trek back.

I knew Charles, my brother and gunning partner that day, whom I'd left dozing in the sunny blind, would be delighted with a few more blocks to add to our rig. As I made my way back along the shore, I contemplated the heavy decoys bouncing off my chest with a curious interest. By the time I reached the point off which our plastic and composition decoys were spread, my mild interest had developed into something deeper. For the rest of that afternoon, fascination with the thought of the makers' names and the gunning history of those newfound treasures started to possess me. At that very point I began my forty-year odyssey into the world of decoy collecting.

While living in Harford County, whose shores are caressed by the famed Susquehanna Flats and River, I frequently made my way to Havre de Grace to fish those very waters for the bass and shad that thrived there. I soon learned that the colonial waterfront town, nestled on the shores of the confluence of those two great bodies of water, was home to

many 19th and 20th century decoy makers. Their wooden creations were everywhere.

I dove into my newly discovered interest with an enthusiasm and passion unequaled before in my life ... and my gathering began. I wanted to learn as much of the history as I could about the birds I was accumulating and found it was instructive to talk to as many of the old-timers and present-day decoy makers as I could locate. I met Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson, and Captain Harry Jobes, all of whom were still producing wooden decoys for hunting. They were always willing to talk to me, and their stories of the duck hunting and past decoy makers of Havre de Grace were enthralling.

In addition to their racks of just finished decoys, the nooks and crannies of their sawdust-filled shops were cluttered with old wooden stool stacked on out-of-the-way shelves. While there, I was able to handle a

A "fat-iaw" scaup by L. T. Ward of Crisfield, Maryland. Metal casting; 1948.



A baldpate by the Tyler family of Crisfield, Maryland, circa 1950.



The author's pair of miniature scaup decoys carved by Paul Gibson of Havre de Grace, Maryland, circa 1946.

lot of early decoys made by their predecessors, the Hollys, Barnes, Grahams, Dyes and other makers of the Susquehanna Flats region. I could discuss the details and characteristics of the older decoys with those men who knew and worked in their early years with the oldtimers who made them. I was truly “deep-hooked” and could not get enough of the decoy stories.

Soon my trips to Havre de Grace were more frequent than once a week and I seldom made it out on those waters to fish anymore. I became obsessed, digging into sheds and out-buildings eagerly searching for more wooden birds and factual information about their makers. My collecting had begun in earnest. At home, a room in the basement was rapidly filling with decoys I had picked up in my travels.

One day in a house on Alliance Street, I was offered a couple of little decoys, their paint mellow with age, mounted on little wooden stands. These miniature carvings were something new to me. Up to that point in my collecting endeavor I had been interested only in the old hunting decoys that had become a part of my love of the outdoors and duck hunting. They were a link to the childhood memories of hunting with my father and brother over a rig of wooden decoys made by Dad and Phil Kemp, his gunning partner.

The miniature birds were interesting and there was, on the bottom of each of the walnut stands on which they were mounted, a typed slip of paper with the name Robert F. McGaw and the date, May 15, 1942. That name clicked in my memory. Earlier, on one of my visits to Madison Mitchell’s shop, I took along a canvasback decoy that I found in an antique shop in Dorchester County. It had an unusual “dog bone” shape ballast weight on the bottom, and Madison immediately identified it as a Bob McGaw decoy.



Two views of the author's miniature brant decoy carved by Bob McGaw of Havre de Grace, Maryland. Paper on bottom is dated May 15, 1942.



“Dead Hang,” a decorative display of Canada geese by George Ross Starr of Duxbury, Massachusetts, 1950s



These small birds were exact duplicates of McGaw’s full-sized hunting decoys, down to their style, carving details, and paint. They intrigued me. I bought a pair of canvasbacks, great birds to hunt and my favorite decoys. Left behind, for lack of an extra five dollars that I didn’t have to spare that day, was what I thought was a Canada goose miniature on the china cupboard shelf. Each of the three birds had the same information typed on the slip of paper on the bottom and I realized they belonged together. I promised the old gentleman I would be back another day for the goose.

A couple of weeks later I was back with the money for the miniature goose and gathered it up to join the canvasbacks. Upon retrieving it from the dark cupboard and looking closely at it, I realized that it was a miniature brant decoy, not a Canada goose. The former owner had no idea as to its species and really didn’t care. Neither did I at the time—goose or brant didn’t make a difference. I was just happy to have it.

Today, after collecting miniatures for almost 40 years, I now know it is still one of only two known miniature brant

carved by McGaw. The other resides on a shelf in the low country 18th century Charleston house of a prominent South Carolina decoy collector.

Bob McGaw made many hundreds of miniature decoys. They were carried all over the country during the 1940s and early 1950s by servicemen stationed at the nearby Edgewood Arsenal and Aberdeen Proving Ground; the servicemen purchased them from McGaw as souvenirs during the war and in postwar years.

That little discovery deepened my interest and started me on a casual search for other small birds.

I soon added another early miniature decoy to my collection. It was discovered close to home in the tiny village of Benson, just down the road from where I lived in Fallston, Maryland.

Ike Archer owned the Esso station on the corner of Harford and Bel Air Roads, and next door he had a small sports-man’s shop that carried hunting and fishing equipment ... although the shop was filled with more artifacts and sporting collectibles of an earlier era than with new gear. This suited me just fine, making it all the more interesting to visit, and besides, Ike



A rare gannet decoy, maker unknown, Virginia, 1900.

An outstanding miniature mallard by Harry V. Shrouds of Tuckerton, New Jersey, circa 1890.

An outstanding miniature mallard by Harry V. Shrouds of Tuckerton, New Jersey, circa 1890.

was a great storyteller of times gone by. His anecdotes were rich with memories of hunting and fishing jaunts when he was young.

On one visit to his shop I bought two old wooden birds lying on the floor for 50 cents each. Another time I picked up an iron sinkbox decoy, later discovered to be a James T. Holly pattern wing duck cast in the late 19th century at the Principia Furnace Iron Works on Furnace Bay just off the Flats.

During my first few visits I hadn't noticed the little canvasback on a shelf filled with old shotgun shell boxes, duck calls, and various iron decoy weights. With my new interest in miniatures, however, I soon spotted it and asked Ike about it. The bird was a fine little Susquehanna Flats-style decoy with a one-quarter-inch lead pad affixed to the bottom.

Ike didn't have any idea who made it, but he knew that it was old and figured it had been used on someone's desk as a paperweight.

That provided a perfectly logical explanation for the lead pad covering the bottom. Ike presented me with the miniature decoy paperweight as a gift. Years later I learned it was made by

Henry Davis of Perryville, Maryland, around the turn of the last century and was an exact replica of his full-sized hunting decoys.

On a visit to Paul Gibson's shop, I spied a pair of little scaup decoys on wooden stands that were similar to the McGaw miniatures I had purchased on Alliance Street. They were in a wall cupboard hanging upstairs in his paint shop. Paul said he had made them many years ago, and when I mentioned the McGaws I had acquired, he told me that he had copied McGaw's to make his miniatures. Though the stands were alike, Paul's birds were, of course, faithful duplicates of his large hunting decoys.

Each time I visited with Paul Gibson, who was a wonderfully helpful old gentleman, I asked about the miniature scaup upstairs in the paint shop and Paul allowed as how they were still there. Years of collecting miniatures and visiting Paul Gibson passed. One day I mentioned that I had been unable to find any of his small decoys to add to my collection. He climbed those worn old wooden stairs with me behind, took the pair out of the cupboard and handed them

to me with the kindest words. He said he figured that I would probably appreciate those birds more than anyone he knew and he was giving them to me.

Paul had some old Holly family miniatures in his house that were extraordinarily beautiful carvings, and he told me of a neighbor close by who had a pair of Charles Nelson Barnard miniature canvasbacks. A couple of years earlier I had purchased, at an auction, a magnificent hen canvasback with an elegant long-necked high head in fine original paint, but I had been unable to find out who made the decoy. When I saw the Barnard miniatures, I knew immediately who had made my favorite decoy.

Discovering important information like that in those early days of collecting set me on fire with excitement. I quickly realized that these miniature decoratives could be a valuable key to identifying the makers of the hunting decoys that I loved. My casual quest for miniatures soon became a frenzied pursuit.

I was determined to find and collect as many of the "little decoys" as I was able, convinced that they would help

me discover more information about the hunting decoys in my collection.

One day my mother contacted me with news of a hunting rig she had learned of in Edgewood, Maryland. At the time Mom was an antique dealer with a shop in Fallston in Harford County. An older woman had come into the shop, saw a few of the decoys that I had for sale there, and mentioned that her late husband's grandfather's decoys were piled in her garage. She asked if my mother would be interested in buying them.

Needless to say, I made it over to see the lady in the next couple of days. Stacked in her garage was a wonderful old hunting rig of about 200 decoys, filthy with dirt, and with their anchor lines and weights still wrapped around their necks. In the pile were decoys by many of the early makers-Ben Dye, John Graham, Will Heverin, Scott Jackson, Daddy Holly, and Sam Barnes.

Among the others were three rare "Cleveland Canvasback" decoys, originally described and pictured in Joel Barber's 1934 book, *Wildfowl Decoys*. They were the first I had ever seen. What really excited me, though, were three very early, stately Susquehanna Flats swan decoys sitting over in the corner. During the visit that afternoon I purchased the swan decoys.

As they were being loaded into my truck, the former owner said she had a small swan decoy in the house. I told her I'd like very much to see it, and she went into the house and came out with a miniature swan and a canvasback. I didn't recognize either of the birds and asked if she knew anything about them. She said her husband had placed a note on the shelf under the decoys that identified Capt. Jesse Poplar, a former well known accomplished duck shooter from Havre de Grace as the maker. .. her late husband's grandfather had been a friend and gunning partner of Poplar's and the little birds were given as a gift to him sometime in the 1880s.

The grandfather's name was Albert Denbow, and most of the hunting decoys I bought that day had an

"A.D." carved in the bottom for identification. I always thought a full-sized hunting decoy by Capt. Jesse Poplar or Albert Denbow would turn up, but in 40 years of collecting, I've never been able to identify one by either man. However, both little birds still sit proudly in my collection on a shelf in the living room.

I was beginning to realize that many and maybe all of the prominent decoy makers carved miniature replicas. Traveling in search of decoys and information on the men who made them, I found little ducks made by the famous decoy men in many of the major hunting regions. On Chincoteague Island I found dozens of different little carvings, including ones made by Ira Hudson, Miles Hancock, and Douglas Jester. In New Jersey, Harry V. Shourds carved mimatures on the coast while his contemporary, John Blair, Jr., did likewise on the Delaware River.

Many collectors knew that Elmer Crowell of East Harwich, Massachusetts, one of the most prolific of all miniature carvers, made many hundreds of small-sized songbirds and upland gamebirds in addition to his numerous waterfowl. Frank Adams of Martha's Vineyard, as well as Joe Lincoln of Accord and Russ Burr of Hingham, were less well known Massachusetts makers of miniature ducks and geese.

It was apparent that most of the old important decoy makers made miniatures as decorative display pieces

for their families in addition to their full-sized hunting stool. Evidently when they found a few free hours or when things were slow during the off-season, they would try their hand at producing small replicas of their full-sized gunning birds.

These early miniature decoys were the progenitors of today's contemporary decorative carvings. They were produced as pieces of sculpted wooden art to decorate the homes of the very men who unknowingly were creating, in their full-sized working "tools," the works of art gracing collectors' shelves today.

Today these little decoys have become well known to collectors, and the interest in acquiring them has gained momentum. The collecting of miniatures adds a new and different dimension to decoy collecting. They are interesting, attractive, and because they obviously were created for display rather than actual use in the rigorous sport of waterfowling-they are almost always found in nice original paint and condition.

They are easily displayed in a much smaller space than is required for the larger birds and they are certainly, at least for the most part, less expensive to purchase. With all of these factors taken into consideration, it seems likely that collecting miniature decoys will continue as one of the fastest growing aspects of our waterfowl artifacts hobby in future years.

The author's pair of miniature scoup decoys carved by Paul Gibson of Havre de Grace, Maryland, circa 1946.



LaCrosse Fish Decoy Display Goes Swimmingly



While in past years the focus of our fish decoy displays has been on the production from an individual state, this year's display featured fish from one specific area – LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Seasoned fish decoy collectors recognize the unique characteristics of decoys by makers from this rich spear fishing area. Interestingly, many fish decoys found in this area are destined to remain “unknowns” since there were so many makers who created these unique pieces strictly for their own use to provide sustenance for their families during the tough Wisconsin winters. Regardless, the pieces in this display demonstrated the remarkable creativity and ingenuity of these hardy anglers.

The display featured more than fish, telling the broader story of spear fishing in the LaCrosse area by including jigs, spears and several wonderful photos representing the early days of Wisconsin spearing.

Once again, thanks to Board member Jim Weirzba for coordinating this display and to those members who loaned pieces from their collections to help tell the story.



Anthony Bergans Silver Spotted



Clarence Zuelke Bass



Frank Papenfuss Bass



Fritz Krim Trout



Gerald Toomey Brown Trout



Walter Lowry Sucker



Unknown Maker Sunfish



Joseph Gorhes Perch



Unknown Bass



Unknown Maker Bass



Unknown Maker Northern Pike



Unknown Maker Panfish/Bass



Unknown Maker Perch



Unknown Maker Trout



Unknown Frog



Anthony Bergans Spotted Fish



Anthony Bergans Top Weighted Fish



Charles Sokolik, French Island



Fritz Kim Bass



Unknown Maker Bass



Unknown Maker Green Scaled Fish



Unknown Maker Northern Pike



Unknown Maker Northern Pike



Unknown Maker Panfish_Bass



Unknown Maker Sunfish



Unknown Maker Trout



Unknown Maker Walleye

Photos courtesy of Donna Tonelli

Fish Traps Highlight Early American Ingenuity



Bill Blauser explains the unique design of a rare fish trap

For the first time, attendees were treated to a display of very rare fish traps, many from the mid and late 1800s. With the advent of fishing regulations with regards to the size of fish that could be killed and kept, the production these traps was virtually non-existent after the first quarter of the 20th century. In fact, it is illegal now to use them in most of the U.S.

This was a great education for most of us since this is area of collectibles is not well understood by most. This eye-opening display was brought to us by Bill Blauser, author of the seminal book on the subject, "Spring-Loaded Fish Hooks, Traps, & Lures Identification and Value Guide," and the country's leading expert on these unusual pieces.

Bill was kind enough to provide attendees with an expert tutorial on these unique artifacts and their history. He was quick to point out that the earliest patents issued to fishing tackle in the country were mechanical spring activated fish hooks. Several the items in the display included copies of those early patents. All who examined the devices Bill brought were quick to admire the often complex mechanisms and the swiftness with which they would do in their prey. These pieces were designed for maximum efficiency and lethality.

Many thanks to Bill for bringing his collection to St. Charles. It provided a real education for many so many of us.



The Wicked Fish Trap, ca. 1915



Several early spring loaded traps



Pre-1900 Job Johnson traps



Ring Sax Pike Trap, ca. 1900



1847 Babcock Spring Hook



Shogun Shell Box Display Featured Many Colorful

Member Rudy Ronning was kind enough to share his extensive collection of Shotgun Shell Boxes with this year's show attendees. This display demonstrated the great variety and eye-catching design that are inherent in this collectible category. His pieces included one and two piece boxes in various gauges representing a wide range of ammunition manufacturers including Peters, Winchester, Western, Remington Arms and others.

The colorful graphics were a vision to behold and demonstrate the extent to which the makers would go in order to attract the eye of a potential buyer shopping in a retail outlet. Each box shouts "choose me" while also providing the functional facts of the ammunition housed inside.

Thanks to Rudy for bringing these great pieces. It certainly added to the enjoyment of all who stopped by the display.



Rudy Ronning shares his collection at the show.



Fred Pinkerton, Oshkosh



Herman Reinke, Winneconne



Unknown maker, Oshkosh



T. J. Hoffmaster, Oshkosh



Bill Zimmerman, Oshkosh

Lake Poygan Gunning Boxes Back for More

Director Emeritus Roger Ludwig once again assembled a terrific group of shooting boxes that are unique to this great Wisconsin waterfowling area. These utilitarian boxes represent American ingenuity at its best with some amazing folk art thrown in for good measure. Each box in the display featured unique design and function that suited the hunter's particular needs. And all included a rack to hold the hunter's gun to keep it out of the water in the bottom of the boat, or worse yet from falling into the drink.

Thanks again to Roger for pulling these fine examples together for all attendees to enjoy.

Contemporary CORNER

McNair Family Talent and Carving Demonstrations Wow the Crowd



Ian demonstrates his carving skills



Mark's work attracts an appreciative audience

Mark McNair, and his sons Ian and Colin, are without question the most talented group of family members creating decoys and other folk art carvings anywhere today. We were thrilled to feature all of their work at the show this year. It certainly demonstrated that the apple (or should we say "apples" plural) doesn't fall far from the tree in the McNair household. Mark has certainly long been recognized as being among the very best contemporary decoy makers of our time. However, Ian and

Colin's work can clearly hold its own against anyone's. Their work certainly pays homage to their dad's style but both add their own unique character which makes it that much more appealing.

While the examples that they brought to exhibit drew admiration from the show attendees, it was the decoy making carving demonstrations by Mark and Ian that captivated a large audience that gathered to see these masters at work. Both used traditional tools including a small hatchet to bring blocks of cedar to



life. As wood chips were flying, the makers explained to the attentive crowd what they were trying to accomplish with each well-directed swing of the ax. Before anyone in the audience knew it, the sculptural form of a wooden duck developed before their eyes. The fascination on their faces, young and old, was a sight to behold.

Toward the end of the show, an aspiring young carver, perhaps 12 years old, approached Mark looking for a critique of an unpainted decoy he had made. We are not sure what wisdom Mark shared with this young man, but after spending nearly a half hour with him explaining the finer points of decoy making, the boy left looking like he couldn't wait to get back to his work bench to begin applying what he had just learned. We can't thank the McNair's enough for sharing their great talent.

Other Contemporary Makers Show Their "Stuff"



Pat Gregory demonstrates his carving technique

Today's decoy makers continue to demonstrate that the skill and artistry captured in vintage pieces will endure well into the future. A number of highly skilled makers displayed the results of countless hours work at their benches. These included Gene Everett, Pat Gregory, Ben Heineman, Tom Humberstone, Preston Lowe, Pat Meneely, Steve Quiram, Bill Thumm, Geoff Vine, Marty Hanson, Jim Schmiedlin (entered by Debbie), Duane Turnock, Roy Legaux, and Jason Legaux.



In addition, a number of these artists were gracious enough to share their impressive talents with attendees. Geoff Vine, Pat Gregory and Gene Everett conducted carving demonstrations throughout the weekend, while Roy Legaux, Sr. impressed the crowd with his painting skills.

Left: Geoff Vine works on a diver head



Roy Legaux, Sr. shows off his painting talents



Contemporary makers display their beautiful work

MEMBER
PROFILE:

Dr. Greg Renner

Missouri Collector Epitomizes Attitude of the “Show Me” State



*Classic Gundelfinger Grand
Prix Canvasback pair*



*Late factory Gundelfinger
Bluebill and Redhead*



There are many stories and legends behind Missouri’s well-known sobriquet. Regardless of its origin, “Show Me” has come to describe the character of many Missourians – not gullible, conservative, unwilling to believe without adequate evidence, and naturally inquisitive. It is not surprising then that Dr. Greg Renner is passionate about uncovering and expanding knowledge about decoys made in Jefferson City, Missouri. This is just a “stone’s throw” from Columbia, Missouri, where he has trained and worked for 42 years as an Otolaryngologist, specializing in Head & Neck Surgical Oncology and Reconstructive Facial Plastic Surgery.

The “collecting bug” strikes early

Greg’s eventual interest in collecting decoys and his desire to know everything he could about them were formed at an early age growing up in the southern part of Illinois, near St. Louis. At the age of 12, he developed interest in collecting coins, stamps, arrowheads, and fossils. Over time, this interest expanded into a variety of other things, generally with an outdoor or sporting theme.

Greg has always held a fascination with animals. In his early youth he kept various lizards and snakes, and for many years he raised pigeons, chickens and ducks as 4-H projects. In showing his birds, he became fascinated by the different appearance and behaviors of the various species exhibited.

Benz Greenwing Teal



Classic Benz Grand Prix Mallards



Benz Superior (top) and Grand Prix Mallards



As an adult, Greg has continued to collect various pieces that interested him, most having some connection to nature, art, and/or history. For a time he collected carved wooden bears, which he still values greatly. These include pieces from Russia, Northern Japan, Norway, and the “Black Forest” (which he is quick to point out are actually from the Brienz region of Switzerland, and not from the actual Black Forest of Germany).

It was these formative experiences that fueled Greg’s later passion to better understand the making and true origin of the decoys he would later collect.

Migrating to Decoys

Greg grew up with a tradition of hunting, spending time with his dad in pursuit of rabbits, quail and doves. His great uncle was an avid hunter as well and had moose heads and other game mounts hung about his fishing cabin. Greg found it intriguing to be able to surround oneself with such things and have them continually available for study and enjoyment. It was this great uncle who gave Greg his first decoys – a pair of paper mache mallards and a pair of Canada geese. It was not until many years later, however, when he would become so hooked on decoys.

The tipping point for Greg’s interest in carved, painted wooden duck decoys came around 2005 when he first came upon a group of decoys that were reported to have been made in nearby Jefferson City, Missouri. After buying several of these, he began to learn more about the three Jefferson City factories and the many different decoys that each made between 1920 and 1945. Ironically, the later Benz decoy factory building sat immediately adjacent to the antique mall from which Greg had made his first collectible decoy purchase.

A Fascination with History

From there Greg’s inquisitive “Show-Me” nature shifted into high gear, and he immersed himself into learning more and more about the actual origin, the manufacture, and the rich history of these unique decoys. He reached out to other Missouri decoy collectors such as Peter Marsh, Randy Crawford, and Paul Haudrich, who showed him their collections and generously shared more information on Jefferson City decoys and other decoys from Missouri and Illinois. He purchased Ken Trayer’s “North American Factory Decoys” book, which greatly expanded his knowledge about factory decoys, but also raised some questions for him.



Variant forms of Benz Superior model Mallards

He began to attend the various decoy shows held in Missouri and Illinois to learn even more.

Greg had the good fortune of gaining access to the extensive collected notes of the late historian, author, and Missouri decoy collector, James Goodrich, who had been the Director of the Missouri State Historical Society. Its main office is currently on the University of Missouri campus, very near to the University Hospital where Greg still works part time now. Through this source, Greg has learned a great deal about the three Jefferson City factories and the people who developed and managed them.

The Collection

Over time Greg’s decoy collecting has evolved into three distinct areas, all to which he feels some personal local connection: decoys made locally in Jefferson City, Missouri, decoys made elsewhere in the state of Missouri, and

Early factory Hays Grand Prix Mallard



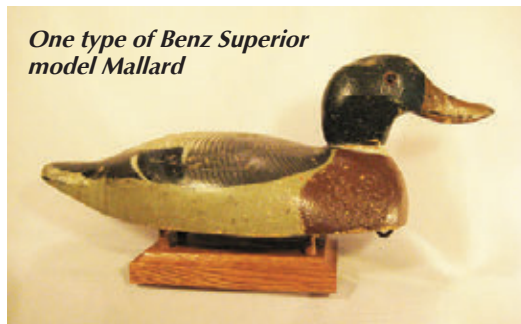
Late factory Hays Grand Prix Mallard



*Later production
Gundelfinger
Wigeons*



*One type of Benz Superior
model Mallard*



*Gundelfinger Superior
(top) and Grand Prix
Mallards*



*Mason Premier (top)
and early factory Hays
Grand Prix Mallards*



*Pair of Gundelfinger
Grand Prix Canvasbacks*



*Gundelfinger
Superior (top)
and Grand Prix
Redheads*



*Late factory
Gundelfinger
Redhead pair*



decoys made by both the individual carvers and factories in Illinois, where he had spent his childhood. Greg says that, "It has become much more interesting to develop a focus to my collecting that allows me to become much more expert in the genre that I am pursuing. This focus has allowed me to continually improve my understanding of the special history of each decoy I own."

Uncovering and Preserving Knowledge for the Future

Like all of us, Greg finds great personal satisfaction in his decoy collection. At the same time, he knows that there is still much that is not well understood about the Jefferson City decoys. He says, "It has become my mission to now help further the general knowledge about the three Jefferson City decoy factories, as their true histories and the actual decoys they produced over time seem to be very poorly understood. These three factories went through a surprisingly

complex evolution, and there is still a fair bit of history that is yet to be discovered and recognized about each of them."

To that end, Greg has recently formed a Jefferson City Decoy Study Group, which met for the first time at the MDCA show at St. Charles in April. The participants included ten collectors, all with varied meaningful expertise in Missouri decoys. Noted authors Ken Trayer and Gene Kangas were on hand as were collectors Jim Young, Jim Goodman, Frank Fiske, Peter Marsh, and Missourians Randy Crawford, Paul Haudrich, and Steve Johnston. The group met for a two-hour working seminar where they reviewed and shared their collective knowledge about the history and production of decoys by the J. M. Hays, Gundelfinger, and Benz Wood Products Companies. Plans are being made for the group to continue to meet again in the future with intent to further clarify the true history and evolutionary production of these Missouri decoy makers.

As collectors, we all owe Greg a debt of gratitude for his perseverance and commitment to this endeavor. Anyone with some personal knowledge of or interest in the Jefferson City or other Missouri decoy makers is welcome and encouraged to participate in future gatherings of this group. Greg can be reached at gregrenner51@gmail.com.



Start Planning for 2018 Show!
**Vintage Decoy &
Sporting Collectibles Show**
April 24-28, 2018

Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL

It's not too early to begin planning for next year's show. It'll be here before you know it and you won't want to miss all the fun. So, call Pheasant Run at (630) 584-6300 to reserve your room and go to **midwestdecoy.org** to download a table reservation form for the Mega Center event.

Hope to see you there!