

New Show
Location
and Dates
for 2020!

Midwest Decoy Collectors Association NEWSLETTER Fall 2019



We're Moving!

The 2020 Show will have a new, improved home. After 35 years in St. Charles, we are moving to the beautiful Westin Lombard hotel located just off I-88 a little under 20 miles east of St. Charles in Lombard, Illinois. The show dates will be a bit later than in the past. We'll be there Tuesday, May 5 through Saturday, May 9. With Room-to-Room Trading on Tuesday through Thursday; the Guyette & Deeter Auction on Thursday and Friday, and our dealer show in the hotel exhibit space on Friday and Saturday.

This is a 12-year old property that has hosted a number of collector groups and can easily handle all of our needs with two great restaurants in the hotel, and many more across the street in the Yorktown premier shopping center. It has ample

parking, more spacious sleeping rooms, and vastly better exhibit space right in the hotel all for a cost that is comparable to what we have enjoyed in the past. We'll get you more details as the show nears but we are really thrilled about what you will see is a huge upgrade for us.

Plans are coming together to make the show one of our best ever. And it's not too early to start making your plans to attend. In fact, there is a 2020 Table Registration Form on the last page of this newsletter to help get you started.

In the meantime, we hope this issue of the MDCA Newsletter will both help pass the time until the fun begins again, and add to your continuing enjoyment of this great hobby we all share.

In this issue you'll find:

- › President's Corner: Thoughts from Rick Sandstrom
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- › Member Update: Membership Remains Healthy
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- › Auctioneers, Inc.: A Small, Midwest Auction House Hits Its Stride
- › 2020 Table Registration Form



Discover • Preserve • Celebrate

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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

First, thank you for all of the wonderful support and kind words. I am pleased to share that the almost nine months of requiring a feeding tube are behind us. It was a long haul from January to September, but that challenge is past. We are returning to a more normal schedule and it feels wonderful.

Second, I'm really enthused about our move to the Westin Lombard in 2020. This is a place that has it all with dining, fitness center, nearby spa, shopping and countless restaurants next door at the Yorktown Center. Think about bringing your spouse this year. There's just so much to do and enjoy. I also note that the slightly later dates improves our chances for ideal weather during the show. Recall that "freak" snow storm we had last year on Saturday! I'm certain that you will see this new property as an upgrade across the board.

Some interesting trends are emerging. The MDCA continues to gain new members and we are also pleased to see old friends return. There is an interesting change occurring as many past members are now able to return to more active collecting and a new generation collector is emerging. It makes for an exciting time for collecting because we have fresh eyes looking for things and many long time collections are now becoming available.

Older collectors have kept their favorites for long periods of time and now they are beginning to free things up for new owners. This is occurring for several reasons. One is the flight to warm weather locations and the desire to simplify the transition. Another is that interesting things are becoming increasingly available and many are using this as an opportunity to refresh the flock. In addition, availability of discretionary assets is helping some pursue long desired regional pieces.

We are also excited to see the availability of a broad range of contemporary talent which has created a high demand for special

commissions. Everyone has fun when a customer is signed up before the carver even starts a new work.

2020 Show planning is well under way.

Each year we look at everything that is done and analyze all the feedback to look for opportunity to adjust and improve. We have made many changes that reflect that effort. For example, many were concerned about having enough time to actually see all the rooms especially since many have different people in them each day of the week. We added complementary chili and pork sliders in the hallways and a crab cake salad to the bar menu in the lobby to help save time and provide convenience in navigating the rooms.

Show displays always get great feedback and the number and variety of these will grow in 2020. The seminar content is receiving support from the country's leading experts so it should be stronger than ever. Our efforts to collaborate with the call makers benefits from each year of success as we learn from each other and adjust for more growth. Last year we introduced the President's display and your enthusiastic support means this effort will be even better next year. We have a very nice surprise working.

It time to renew your membership and make your reservations. Talk to your friends and coordinate your plans so that you can communicate your needs and allow us to develop a strong support plan. Many of you stop along the route to see other collections and see your friends. It is not too early to work those contacts.

Our fall transition in the Midwest has been bit different this year with all the water and weather variation, but that makes for exciting hunting patterns. It is a good test as there are lots of ducks but water everywhere which gives the ducks extra flexibility.

Happy Collecting and Happy Holidays!

Rick

The 2020 Show Sneak Preview

NORTH AMERICAN Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show May 5-9, 2020

The Westin Lombard
— LOMBARD, IL —

For the first time the show will be held at The Westin Lombard hotel in the Village of Lombard, Illinois. The property features upgraded rooms for room-to-room trading, and ample, well-lighted meeting and convention space for the auction and our dealer show. It will provide perfect space for the displays and exhibits that are always among the most popular events at the show each year. This year should be no different with even more to see and experience than ever before. Once again, your Board is assembling an interesting and educational collection of activities that is bound to have great appeal to every show attendee regardless of their particular area of interest. Here's just a quick glimpse at a few of the planned events.

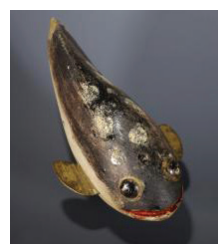
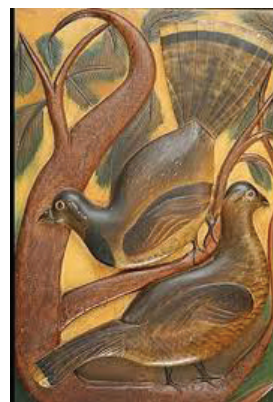
Member Display: Massachusetts Decoys Take Center Stage



The 2020 Member Display will feature the bountiful examples of work from makers in Massachusetts. Attendees can expect to see work by a virtual who's who of decoy carvers. Crowell, Lincoln, Safford, Osgood, Boyd, Holmes, Hart, Chadwick and more. This one will be special. Be sure not to miss it.

Fish Decoy Display: Oscar Peterson's Work to be Celebrated

Oscar Peterson, without doubt the most prolific fish decoy and folk art maker from Michigan, and his work will be on full display at next year's show. Peterson's unique fish decoys, bird plaques, carved vases and more are sure to delight show attendees.



Featured Contemporary Carver: Jerry Cranwill

In 2020, we are thrilled to have as our featured contemporary carver Jerry Cranwill of Manito, Illinois. His unique style has long been a favorite of collectors across the country. Jerry's work will be on full display in the Ballroom on Friday and Saturday of show week. We look forward to another great exhibit.



Book Now!

It's not too early to make plans for next year's show!

- For room reservations call the Westin Lombard at (888) 627-9031.
- For selling tables, print out the Table Reservation Form on the last page of this newsletter and send it with payment to Matt Bryant at the address provided.

Member Decoy Contest: Blue-Winged Teal



The year's contest will feature Blue-Winged Teal decoys. A new wrinkle is that we will conduct two separate contests — one for vintage decoys and one for contemporary decoys. So be sure to start figuring out which Blue-Winged

Teal you will enter – you can enter one decoy in both categories if you choose. This should be a great competition and is sure to generate a lot of excitement.



Member Update



Club Membership Remains Strong and Vital

The MDCA has welcomed 63 new members since the first of the year and, bucking the trend of many other collecting organizations, our total membership count even increased slightly year over year. While many of our members focus on duck decoys, our membership continues to diversify as new members bring a variety of different collecting interests and avocations including calls, sporting art, fishing tackle, shell boxes, fish decoys, and decoy carving. The strength of the organization lies in this diversity of interests and is reflected in the variety of displays that have become so popular at the annual show.

While the second half of the year is always relatively quiet in terms of new member acquisition, we did have two new members join during the summer. Please welcome them to our community.

Kenneth G Gouker

Payson, AZ

Carving – decoys and birds

Scott Whittington

Springfield, IL

Factory and early Heck Whittington decoys

Club Facebook Group is Fun For All

Club members continue to flock to our “Members Only” Facebook group. We are up to 175 club members who share photos of their decoys, get expert help with identification and value, and buy and sell items in a secure environment where they know with whom they are dealing. If you are not already participating, it’s easy. You can find us at “Midwest Decoy Collectors Association (Members Only)” on Facebook. Ask to join and after approval you’ll be ready to join the fun!



Share Your Collecting Stories

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 we get from collecting. The stories behind those exciting finds are often treasures in themselves, and we’d love to be able to share those stories with our members in future issues of the club newsletter. So please send us your best tales 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 you can mail them to Jeff at: 6699 Ferry Road, East Jordan, MI 49727.

Directory/Newsletter Advertising Helps Support Club Activities

As you are probably aware, we began offering the opportunity to advertise in our Pre-Show newsletter issue several years ago. Since that issue is mailed to over 6000 proven active collectors throughout North America, it lets advertisers reach a large, passionate audience with their message and also works hard to create enthusiasm for our show and the hobby in general. At the same time, we also continue to offer advertising opportunities in our annual Member Directory, which our members consult throughout the year.

The revenue generated from advertising allows the club to provide the benefits that members enjoy including these newsletters as well as the many amenities provided at the show. And again, it lets us promote the hobby in a way that is good for all of us.

We couldn’t do it without the support of a variety of loyal partners who advertise with us including dealers, members looking to sell or buy, auction houses, and other related organizations. We’ll be sending out an email shortly to past advertisers in both publications to ask for their continued support in 2020. For those of you who have not advertised with us in the past but would like to take advantage of the opportunity to reach over 6000 collectors in addition to supporting your club, please contact Jeff Seregny at Jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and more information. We offer everything from business card sized ads to full pages.





TALES FROM THE TRAIL

Maple Syrup

AND THE SAGINAW BAY

BY RICK SANDSTROM



There are probably as many reasons to collect as there are collectors. For many of us the challenge of the hunt is worth the journey all by itself and the decoy is the extra gem on the top.

I was able to travel the world for over three decades working with people who owned and operated their own airplanes. It always took me to places that were off the main track and unique. Sebewaing, Michigan became a special favorite during my travels. For decades I was able to stay at Rummel's Tree Haven Bed & Breakfast owned and operated by Irma and Carl Rummel and would find all kinds of excuses to extend my visits. There was a large maple tree growing right through one of the decks in front of the house and the Rummels would make their own maple syrup in their garage. The smell of cooking the syrup and Irma's award winning breakfasts were a big hit for guests. Duck hunters who stayed there would at times eat breakfast twice, once before the morning hunt and once after they came back in for storytelling.

Carl and I would often wander off looking for old decoys. I loved canvasbacks and over time was able to assemble a group of 88 different Michigan cans. One day we headed toward Wild Fowl Bay near Bay City to follow-up on some tips. We ended up exploring an old boat house that had been damaged in a fire. It had an old duck boat and all the typical duck hunting stuff. In digging through the rubble we discovered a decoy lurking under several burned boards. It emerged from the debris as an old warrior that had survived. It was charred, part of the bill was burned away, and the neck was cracked in two places.

It turned out to be a Ben Schmidt coot that was still rigged and is pure character.

This decoy is special to me. It sits right in my office where I see it all the time. The memory of the find, the smell of fresh maple syrup and the wonderful talks with the Rummels are all part of the mystic of this old warrior to me. This old coot, its story and the wonderful feelings it evokes don't ever stop.



MEMBER PROFILE:

Brian Short:

CANADIAN COLLECTOR RELISHING LIFE NEAR THE DELTA MARSH



*Brian and
"Widgeon" with
Reeves family decoys*

This past April at the North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Goods Show in St. Charles, IL, the "Member Display" featured the fascinating history of and connection between decoys from Heron Lake in Minnesota and the Delta Marsh in Manitoba, Canada. This was supported by an educational seminar that focused on the Delta Marsh and some of Pat Gregory's favorite hunts there. To continue the theme, we could think of no better subject of this newsletter issue's Member Profile than Brian Short, who currently lives near the Marsh in the small town of Stonewall, Manitoba.

Brian grew up in a small town in the Blue Mountains area north of Toronto, Ontario where he learned to hunt and fish at an early age. He got his first 16 gauge shotgun for Christmas when he was just 12 years old and developed a passion for hunting partridge, grouse, ducks and even the occasional groundhog on his uncles' farms. And the great numbers of speckled trout drew him to the small streams near his boyhood home, fueling what would become a lifetime love affair with angling.

A "Natural" Interest

At the same time, life in rural Ontario fostered a deep interest in antiques as Brian attended many farm and estate auctions where he was constantly picking up "old stuff," including furniture, toys and other farm related items. This would eventually pave the way for his first foray into collecting as an adult in the mid-70s when a co-worker introduced him to sports cards (hockey, football, baseball, etc.) and it immediately piqued Brian's interest. In fact, over the years he had amassed a significant collection that he eventually

passed on to his son who still enjoys them today.

It was this combination of love of the outdoors and a passion for old things that resulted in what Brian sees as a "natural" interest in collecting decoys and other hunting and fishing collectibles. The catalyst for this was a move to Stonewall, Manitoba from Toronto to further his career as Representative for the Machinists Union in the mid-90s. Of course, the bonus was being able to take advantage of the bountiful hunting and fishing opportunities this area provided. With his passion for the outdoors rekindled, Brian decided to explore hunting and fishing collectibles. It was then that he bought his first decoy – a well-used Drake Mallard in original paint attributed to an elderly man in Selkirk who had made it for his personal use. This was just the beginning.

Unfortunately, living in Manitoba does not afford many opportunities to learn about decoys by going to shows and interacting with other like-minded folks. So Brian began by reading as much as he could on subject, in addition to accessing

show and collecting organization information. He bought every decoy collecting book he could find covering the full range of decoys including both factory and hand-made and those by both Canadian and U.S. makers. His collection today reflects this broad range of interests.

Connection to the Delta Marsh Run Deep

It's no coincidence that much of Brian's collection revolves around the decoys used in the marshes near his home. Not only does this rich area feed his desire to hunt and fish, but it has allowed him to understand the history of waterfowling there and the men who shaped it. Several years ago, Brian had an opportunity to meet Terry Ward Neufeld, daughter of the well-known decoy maker Torry Ward from Portage la Prairie. While this initially resulted in adding another classic Duncan Ducharme canvasback to his collection, he most enjoyed becoming friends with Terry and the opportunities to sit with Terry and hear stories about the life and work of Torry and his family. During these chats Brian learned more



A wide range of sporting collectibles

Don't miss Brian's story on the Ward family in the November-December issue of Hunting and Fishing Collectibles Magazine based on his discussions with Russell Ward and his son at his camp in St. Marks on the eastern edge of the Delta Marsh.) Brian has also penned articles for The Rig, the newsletter of the Canadian Decoy and Outdoor Collectibles Association, on the passing of Peter Ward and on the workings of a good friend and accomplished knife maker Charlie Niedermeyer of Pine Falls, Manitoba.

about the early development of the Delta Waterfowl Research Station and about the work that Terry's father and uncles had done there.

Terry eventually introduced Brian to Torry's brother, Russell, who shared many more stories about life at the research center. A specific event that completely amazed Brian was that of Russell's story of making trips from Delta to Montana with his brother Peter to bring Whistler Swans back to Delta in the 1950's. The Whistler Swan research at Delta was instrumental and ground-breaking in the study of their breeding in captivity and in bringing them back from the brink of extinction.



Peter Ward completing his last painting

Brian was also fortunate enough to meet Torry's older brother Peter who worked for General Mills' founder and conservationist James Bell. Of course, Bell helped finance and provided the intellectual vigor, tenacity and imagination for what would become North America's most prestigious waterfowl scientific research facility. Peter was an accomplished painter and Brian called him after reading about an exhibition of his paintings at a local art show in Portage la Prairie. The two agreed to meet at Peter's beachside home and Brian remembers fondly listening to wonderful stories about the habitat of the Delta Marsh and the early activities at the research center.

While there, Brian was particularly taken with one of Peter's paintings of canvasbacks flying over a marsh and was able to buy it on the spot. Brian also greatly admired a painting of two Ross's Geese that Peter was still working on. He loved the beauty of this piece even in its unfinished state. Several years later after Peter's death, Brian would learn from Terry Ward that Peter never got to finish that work. He also learned that the painting of the canvasbacks he bought turned out to be the last work that Peter completed before his death. It will always hold a special place in Brian's heart and collection.

In addition to his emersion into the history of the Delta Marsh, Brian has taken advantage of the opportunity to learn even more about the habitat and waterfowling history of the area through the Oak Hammock Interpretive Centre, a joint project of Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Province of Manitoba. Not far from his home in Stonewall, the center offers eco-friendly trails through the marsh as well as a myriad of educational programs to "connect people with the wetlands." Brian has enjoyed chatting with members of a carving guild that operates out of the center and watching them work. Brian's wife Janice has even taken several decoy carving classes there.

The Collection

While heavily influenced by his life in Manitoba, Brian's full collection is nothing if not eclectic and substantial. Over 800 decoys representing a broad range of collecting regions are currently displayed in every corner of his home. These are accompanied by a wide array of other hunting and fishing related collectibles including



Native carvings dug up by Torry Ward at the Delta Marsh

powder tins, calls, shell boxes, native spears, old creels, wooden lures, reels, posters, signs and taxidermy waterfowl and animals. He recently acquired a pair of carvings that Torry Ward dug out of the mud near the Delta Marsh in the early 70's that Brian bought from his daughter Terry. They contain the carved faces of children and for years were called the "native dolls" by the family. They are believed to have been left there by the Sioux who migrated to that area from Minnesota in the 1800s. Brian is working with a professor of Native American history at the University of Minnesota to learn more about this fascinating find.

While Brian has concentrated more on Canadian decoys over the past several years, the collection includes examples from virtually every region and by every major maker. Most are in original paint, but many are birds that simply caught Brian's discerning eye because of their character and wonderful lines. Many come through auctions and his connections with other collectors but he still hunts at estate and farm auctions to find items that appeal to him.



Widgeon watches over a group of Brian's Ducharme family decoys



Ontario favorites by Warin, Wells, Chambers (plus an unknown pintail) all with various St. Clair Flats Shooting Club member brands

The collection includes a large assortment of Torry Ward and family carvings as well as a number of Ducharme family decoys. He personally prefers the earlier more traditional decoys of the Ducharmes before the influence of James Bell and the Heron Lake style. However, he does have a Heron Lake bird that pays homage to the connection between the two. Through his relationship with the Ward family, he learned that the Ward's painted a majority of the Ducharme birds for James Bell. Brian once took a Duncan Ducharme Can to Peter Ward and Peter confirmed that not only had he painted it but he had even fashioned and applied the keel!

The large balance of his Canadian decoys is a who's who of the country's makers. These include the Ontario makers such as George Warin, John Wells, Nichol family, Ray Pomeroy, Mo Braham, Adam Yearwood, Bob Dixon, Charlie Buchanan, Billy Ellis, Ernie Fox, Chambers, Peter Pringle and many, many more. He had long lusted after a good example of a Kingston Penitentiary decoy and was fortunate to get offered 3 by a contact that he made through eBay that were reported to have come directly from a guard at the prison.

Brian says that, while it is always tough to pick a favorite, decoys by the Reeves family of Port Rowan and the Long Point Company have to be at the top of his list. He has a particular fondness for a Phineas Reeves Red-head in his collection and admires the canvas covered work by his son Charles. He has a favorite picture of himself with their faithful Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever (fittingly named Widgeon) and a few Reeves Family decoys. Widgeon has even posed as the "security" for part of the collection in a picture in *Hunting and Fishing Collectibles Magazine*.

Brian's interest in Canadian decoys certainly goes well beyond Ontario. He particularly admires the highly detailed carving by Quebec maker Orel LeBeouf and the unique style and paint treatment of British Columbia's Marshall Aubrey Kent. He recently acquired a very rare Brant by this maker from a fellow near Winnipeg who claims that it is one of only three made.

Consistent with his broad range of interests, Brian has amassed quite a range of birds from south to the Canadian border as well. He has a number of good Mason decoys and "a few" Pratts's along with a variety of other factory production.

Individual makers in the collection include Charles Perdew, Ira Hudson, Madison Mitchell, Joseph Lincoln, Lloyd Tyler, Bob McGaw, Frank Schmidt and others. He also recently added a 1936 model Ward Brother Drake Canvasback of which he is particularly enamored.



Brian with his favorite US decoy - an old Ira Hudson Brant

Like many of us, Brian also has a number of pieces made by contemporary makers. Among his favorites is a decoy made by Jode Hillman's daughter Alison who was 12 at the time. Jode had already made a rig of black ducks for Brian after which he learned that Alison was also carving and winning ribbons for her work. He asked Jode if his daughter would be willing to make him a black duck. After a bit of cajoling, she agreed, and Brian proudly added the bird to go with the Hillman "flock."

Collecting Experiences Bring Real Enjoyment

Brian believes that part of the enjoyment of collecting comes from the experience of finding new and rare items. He recalls being at a farm auction in Manitoba where he bid on and won a cardboard box with a few old calls in it. Having asked the seller if he had anything else lying around, Brian was led into a nearby barn and shown an old, beat up decoy sitting on a beam with whitewash on it. Brian immediately recognized it and told the owner that it was the work of "Little Joe" Ducharme. The owner said that it had been given to his father by the carver as part payment for some work he had done for him but knew nothing else about it. Brian asked the owner if he could buy it. The owner was so astonished that Brian knew the maker that he simply gave the bird to him. While the decoy is so rough that even the species is uncertain, this decoy remains one of Brian's favorites because of the story behind it.

Another memorable acquisition

came as a result of meeting Doug Gibbings at several local estate auctions. Once better acquainted, Brian learned that Gibbings was a carver and he invited Brian to his home to see his work. There Brian saw a cigar store Indian and was immediately smitten. He knew he just had to have it. Unfortunately, Gibbings said it was not for sale. Over the following weeks and months, Brian pestered him to sell but Doug resisted, insisting that, "My wife would kill me if I ever sold it. But if I ever do, you'll get the first shot." After a couple years of nagging, Gibbings contacted Brian to tell him he was ready to part with the Indian. They agreed on a price and it now sits in a special place in Brian's home. He and Doug remain good friends to this day.

Location, Location, Location?

Brian Short is living proof that if you put your mind to it, location won't hinder one's ability to collect and enjoy all of the associated benefits. He has amassed a diverse



Part of powder tin collection

collection of decoys and other sporting collectibles from all over North America without needing to venture very far from his home in rural Manitoba. In the process, he has forged a number of relationships that will last a lifetime and has had enriching experiences that he will never forget. Like many others he is quick to add that his decoy collecting experiences have been made so memorable by the willingness of those he has met to share information, knowledge and history of these works of art. You can reach Brian at jchase@mymts.net.



Cigar store Indian carved by Doug Gibbings



Hillman family black ducks with daughter Alison's in the middle



Part of call collection with William Clarke Can

Summer Auctions Bode Well for Collecting

We all know that available inventory is a key driver of auction results. While auction grosses were slightly down from a stellar year in 2018, this summer's sales certainly held their own. We saw some good strength across the board, with some particularly exciting items hitting the auction block.



Copley Fine Art Auctions realized \$3 million in sales across a broad range of decoys and sporting art. Without doubt the stars of that sale were the three Harmon "Dust Jacket" Plovers by Elmer Crowell which brought a combined \$1.14 million. Among the other top selling lots was a Long Open-Bill Calling Decorative Yellowlegs also by Crowell which sold for \$174,000.

Guyette & Deeter's summer sale grossed nearly \$2.5 million featuring an important pintail by Crowell that sold for \$265,500. A pintail drake and hen from the Kankakee Marsh sold for \$153,400 and \$82,600 respectively, while a carved eagle banner by John Bellamy sold for \$126,260.



The **Decoys Unlimited** sale grossed just over \$600,000 and was highlighted by the sale of the late addition pair of Mason Premier Red-Breasted Mergansers that topped out at \$50,400.



Just a week later **Auctioneers, Inc.** hosted their Premier Sporting Collectibles Show and auction where they

grossed over \$260,000, a single auction record for the growing firm. Top lots included a pair of Ivar Fernlund Bluebills, a Stevens Redhead and a pair of Bert Graves Mallards that all sold for \$3,835.



Important for all us so passionate about collecting, the auction houses continue to say that they are seeing new bidders coming to market.

"We were quite pleased with the auction. What impressed me the most...was the participation by new bidders on decoys and paintings under \$5,000. When I looked at the buyers' list after the auction, I did not recognize half of the participants. This really bodes well for the future; with high-quality sporting art still affordable to those just entering the field, I am quite optimistic."

— COPLEY'S STEVE O'BRIEN, POST-SHOW PRESS RELEASE



Auctioneers, Inc.: Midwest Auction House Finds Its Niche

Historically, the number of auction companies specializing in decoys and related sporting collectibles has been limited to a precious few due to limited inventory and subject matter expertise. However, with more and more decoys coming to market, one Michigan auction company has taken advantage of this and created a niche for itself that continues to spawn growth. Grant and Megan Cole, owners of Auctioneers, Inc, tucked away in the small northern lower peninsula town of Benzonia, have worked tirelessly to morph their modest, general merchandise auction business into a significant specialist in the sporting collectibles category, providing consignors with a perfect place to offer items that are generally valued at less than \$5000.

Following in his father's footsteps, Grant joined the family-owned auction business at an early age. After gradu-

ating from high school in 2003, he attended the Reppert School of Auctioneering and earned his Certified Auctioneers Institute (CAI) certification in 2008. But it wasn't until 2012 that Grant was bitten by the sporting collectibles bug.

The Beginning

It all started in 2012 with the consignment of the John and Midge Jones collection from nearby Traverse City, Michigan. In addition to dealing with general merchandise, the sale of the Jones collection carried them for a couple of years. While this sale was certainly a success, the Cole's realized that they had much to learn about this fascinating new category of business in order to be successful.

Grant started by reading every decoy book he could find and subscribed to *Decoy Magazine* and *Hunting & Fishing*

Collectibles magazine. He insists that the most valuable facet of his education came from having the opportunity to handle great pieces at decoy shows and from spending time talking with collectors. While he is extremely grateful for the advice and support he has received from countless numbers of collectors and mentors along the way, he points to several contributors who have been particularly important in his company's growth in the sporting collectibles category.

Ken Stein of Traverse City has been one of his biggest supporters since the very beginning, helping Grant with decoy identification and values. Ken was the first collector to encourage the Cole's to start attending decoy shows and introduced him to many collectors who have added significantly to his education and, importantly, entrusted him with their items to sell.



Illinois dealers/collectors Dave and Jeannette Kneebone have also supported the Cole's from the start, teaching Grant about decoys, in particular those made by Illinois carvers. Grant also appreciates the time that Michigan collector/restorer Patrick Kane took to teach him about paint and how to use a blacklight to determine originality. Grant is quick to add, "I truly believe that I have learned something from each and every collector I've met over the past few years and I can't thank them enough for their support and encouragement."

The Cole's joined the Midwest Decoy Collectors Association in 2014 and attended their first ever decoy show that year in St. Charles. Grant recalls, "That first day walking the halls of Pheasant Run is the day that changed my life forever. I stopped in every room to introduce myself and hand out business cards. I can still remember calling my wife and telling her that somehow and somehow we were going to specialize in sporting collectibles. I really fell in love with decoys, their history and the collectors. The more I dealt in decoys and sporting collectibles it really became clear that this was my passion and how I wanted to make my career."

Hard Work Pays Off

The growth in their business since 2012 has been significant and

rewarding. During the early years in the business they were pleased to have a 300-lot auction grossing \$40-\$60,000 in sales. From 2014-2015, they experienced steady growth in sales as awareness of their business increased. They were very fortunate to have some great items to sell in those early years that built a foundation for future business.

When they finally decided to specialize in 2016, their commitment was complete. They invested everything they had into their dream and went "all in" on sporting collectibles. They rebranded the company, built a new website and bought professional camera equipment to better showcase their consigned items. They also began advertising on a national level to reach every potential collector they possibly could. They finished 2016 at \$175,000 in sales for the year. 2017 and 2018 their gross sales for the company grew an average of 70%. They are delighted to report that 2019 has been their best year yet and are just over \$600,000 in sales year-to-date.

Going Forward

Grant credits "hard work, faith, dedication, determination and a passion for sporting collectibles" as the drivers for their success thus far. However, the Cole's continue to invest in future growth, focusing on things

that will improve the buying and selling experience for their customers. To insure that they stay abreast of the latest technology innovations in the auction industry they attend auction conventions and seminars. They offer multiple online bidding websites simultaneously to broadly promote their consignors' items, as well as offering phone and absentee bidding to maximize bidding opportunities for buyers. In the past three years, they have attended 45 shows in nine states across US and in Canada and plan to continue this important outreach into the future.

Their near term goal is to continue to improve the quality and variety of items that they offer and to achieve one million in gross sales through two Premiere Auctions and four Online Only Auctions per year. Their next Premier Sporting Collectible Auction & Show is March 7-8 in Cadillac, MI. The Cole's hope that their work will attract new collectors to the market and that they will continue to do their part to share and preserve the history and passion for sporting collectibles.

You can reach Grant Cole at grant2sell@gmail.com.





MIDWEST
Decoy Collectors
ASSOCIATION

Please send this completed form
and your payment to:

Matt Bryant

17114 Erskine Street

Omaha, NE 68116

(785) 201-2923

matt.bryant@wilsonco.com

Make check payable to:

Midwest Decoy Collectors Association

2020 BALLROOM EVENT EXHIBITOR TABLE REGISTRATION FORM

Primary table holder:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone #: _____

_____ Dues are paid up through 2020 (Y/N)

Person sharing table:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Dues are paid up through 2020 (Y/N)

PLEASE NOTE: All exhibitors must be MDCA members in good standing. If not already paid for 2020, you can pay your dues online at midwestdecoy.org or by including your dues along with your table payment. **If someone is sharing your table**, they must either be a family member, or be a MDCA member in good standing. They can join online at midwestdecoy.org or by including their dues payment and member profile information along with this form.

Checks should be made payable to the MDCA.

_____ # of Table(s) @ \$75 each (\$100 each if after March 15) \$ _____

Dues @ \$25 for one year or \$70 for 3 years \$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT INCLUDED \$ _____

Special requests:

We will make every effort to keep dealers who want to be placed next to each other together.

Please indicate your preferences below.

Discover • Preserve • Celebrate