



OHIO DECOYS

Like most folks who are challenged with writing about their particular decoy collecting passion, we find it difficult to come up with an eloquent summary of what defines an Ohio decoy. For the sake of this article and seminar, we are focusing on the decoys that have folk art appeal and/or significant history. There will be a focus on the northern edge of the state and will leave waterfowling heritage

of the  
Ohio River  
Valley for

another day. Additionally, with more historical records being digitized and searchable every day, we are excited to clarify the known carvers and club members and explore some new possibilities.

We have an extraordinarily deep reverence for the Ohio hunt clubs and their members who have preserved, first and foremost, the land; an irreplaceable part of North America's waterfowl habitat. Beyond that, they each have preserved remnants of a by-gone era: buildings, punt boats, decoys, photographs, personal correspondence and daily ledgers. Let's take a step back and see how these clubs began.

After the Revolutionary War, Ohio was carved out of the Northwest Territory and further sub-divided with patch-quilt refinement. Most important for decoy collectors is the northeast section referred to as Connecticut's "Western Reserve." By 1800, 45,000 settlers had arrived, predominately from New England. And with successive treaties, Native Americans along the marshes of Lake Erie's southern shore

found themselves on smaller and smaller reserves. In 1803 Ohio was recognized as the 17th state by President Thomas Jefferson. That same year he put in place policies that would further push Native Americans out of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase.

Even though most of the remaining communities assimilated quite thoroughly into the emerging agrarian Ohio frontier culture, there were demands for their permanent removal to lands west of the Mississippi. The population of the new state would soar to nearly a million by 1830 and as a result of the "Indian Removal Act" of that year, the last vestiges of the Native American culture were gone.

Ohio grew phenomenally through transportation; Great Lakes shipping, canals and then railroads. It connected farms, factories and growing cities to the greater world. Newly-tapped natural resources of oil, iron and coal fed the Industrial Revolution in America. Much of the wealth was concentrated along Lake Erie and more specifically along Cleveland's Euclid Avenue.

Mechanical innovation born of the Canal Era was soon used to create additional farmland. The mid-1850's marked the beginning of a concerted forty year effort to build thousands of miles of ditches to drain the 960,000 acres of Northwest Ohio's "Great Black Swamp" for settlers and agriculture. It was seen as a triumph of man over nature. Similar channel straightening and drainage projects would concurrently destroy the 500,000 acre "Grand Kankakee Marsh" to the west. Today, during periods of heavy rain, when the field tiles and open ditches are overwhelmed, the "Great Black Swamp" clearly reminds us of its continued existence. If not for the regular upkeep of the man-made waterways by farmers and county engineers, the swamp would easily reclaim its footprint.







We have arrived at the genesis of Ohio duck hunting club; wealth, transportation, industrialization and a social movement that regarded time in nature as sacred. The sons and daughters of the Western Reserve's most successful merchants, bankers and industrialists came of age during the *American Romantic Era*: 1820 to 1860. The American idea of egalitarianism moved these wealthy young Clevelanders to search for a way to set themselves apart intellectually and spiritually. Many sought an unfettered experience of the natural world. Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) famously built a simple cabin upon the shores of Walden Pond in 1845 in order to experience and write about this nature-based spiritualism.

*"Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps."* - Thoreau

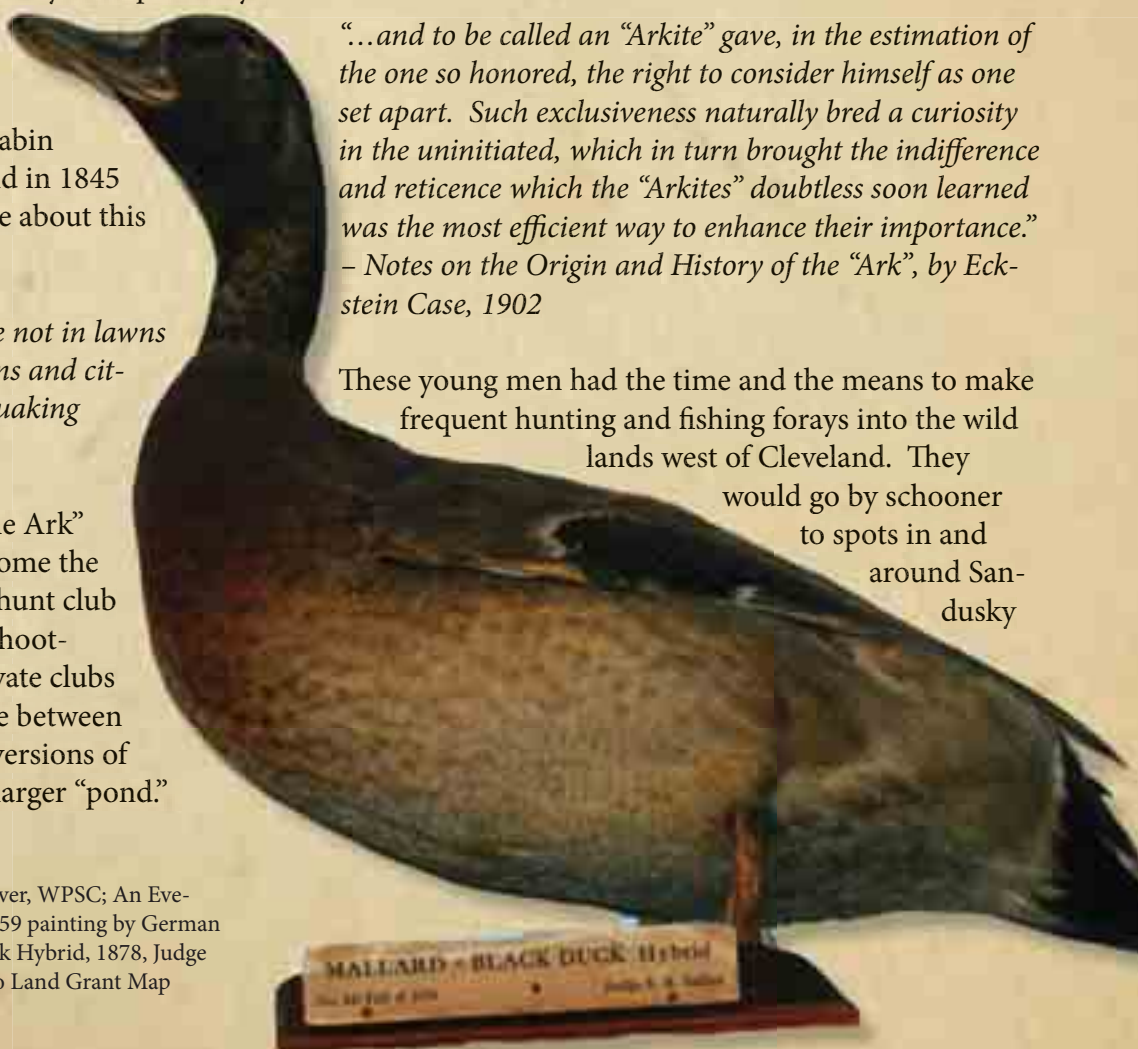
This explains the genesis of "The Ark" and what would eventually become the oldest, continuously operating hunt club in the country: Winous Point Shooting Club. It is one of thirty private clubs that still populate the Erie shore between Toledo and Sandusky... thirty versions of Thoreau's cabin, albeit a much larger "pond."

### ***Winous Point Shooting Club***

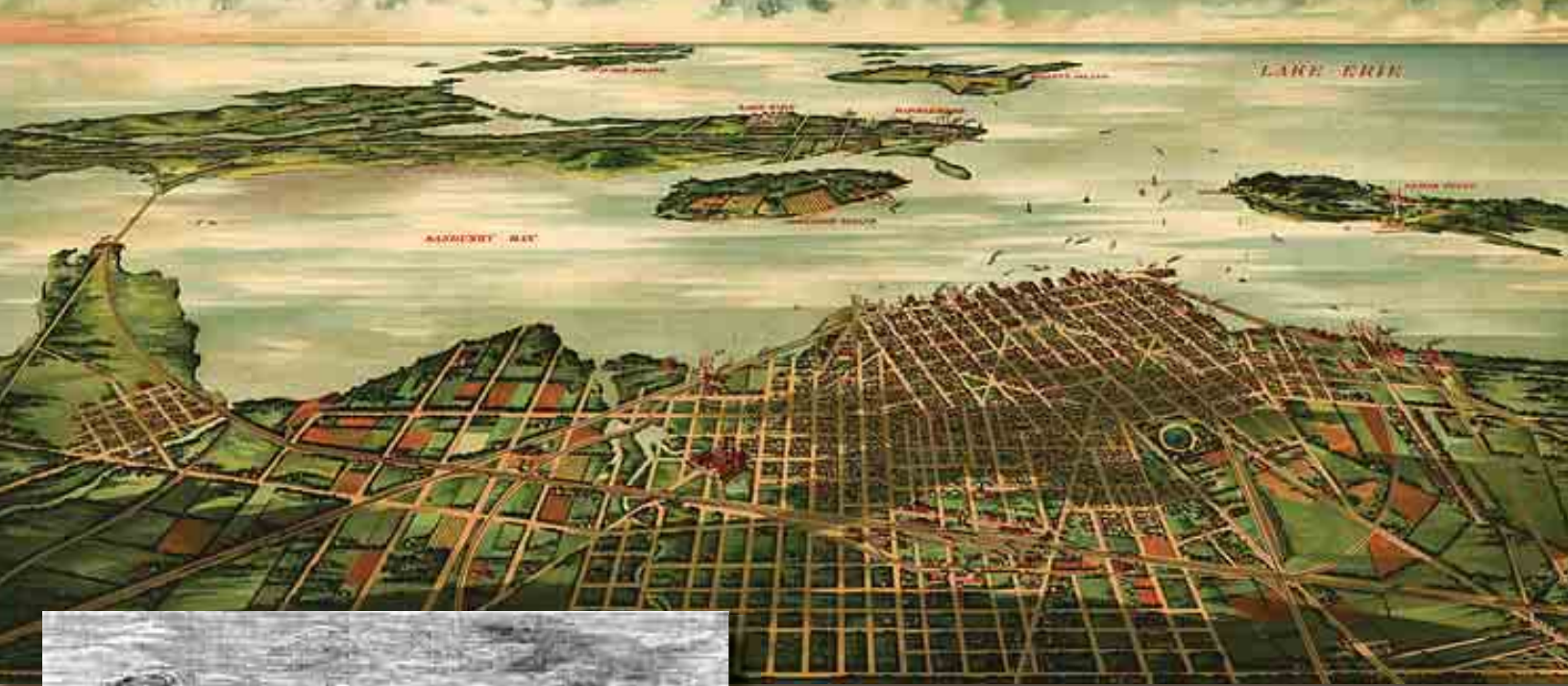
William (b.1818) and Leonard Case (b.1820), sons of a successful Cleveland banker-politician-railroad investor, formed a group of like-minded college-aged men in an inauspicious little cottage to further their study of nature; much of it through taxidermy and literature. It earned the nickname "The Ark" because of the extraordinary number of animal mounts.

*"...and to be called an "Arkite" gave, in the estimation of the one so honored, the right to consider himself as one set apart. Such exclusiveness naturally bred a curiosity in the uninitiated, which in turn brought the indifference and reticence which the "Arkites" doubtless soon learned was the most efficient way to enhance their importance."*  
– *Notes on the Origin and History of the "Ark"*, by Eckstein Case, 1902

These young men had the time and the means to make frequent hunting and fishing forays into the wild lands west of Cleveland. They would go by schooner to spots in and around Sandusky







Bay. Connections were made with the local gentry and by the late 1840's a core group of men from both cities formed the "Cleveland and Sandusky Duck and Goose Hunting Association" - p. 12, *Winous Point – 150 Years of Waterfowling and Conservation*, Sedgwick & Kroll, 2010.

As market hunters and local settlers put pressure on these tranquil marshes in and around Sandusky Bay, the need to maintain the romantic ideal of isolation led the group to create a charter so that land could be purchased and a basic structure built. The Winous Point Shooting Club (WPSC) in Port Clinton, Ohio was officially born in 1856; The legal charter having been signed by Charles L. Boalt, Judge Sadler, John Beardsley of Sandusky and Huron Counties; and William Case, the sole Cleveland.



The "local" men of Milan and Sandusky may have entered into the deal with the Cleveland hunting comrades to purchase the land at a more competitive price than what might have been afforded to outsiders. Beardsley and Boalt bought the initial 205 acres for \$400. Impressively, today the Winous Point Marsh Conservancy which was formed in 1999 now manages over 5,000 acres.

The clubhouse, on the northern shore of the bay, at the mouth of Mud Creek was built in stark contrast to their opulent homes. The earliest membership consisted of 20 members: four from Cleveland, thirteen from Norwalk, Monroeville, Milan, Painesville and Sandusky, Ohio. The other three were from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Westchester and Sherman, New York. Going forward, membership would be limited to thirty. William Case was the club's first president.

It should be noted that Milan, Norwalk and Monroeville form a triangle with none being more than five miles apart. WPSC is about thirty miles from Norwalk, as the crow flies. In 1856, Milan was at the apex of its canal-era wealth. It was a bustling port town... build-

Clockwise: View of Sandusky, Ohio c.1890; Leonard and William Case photographs c. 1860; Rep. Thomas Beesley and Jay Cooke snipe hunting Cape May County NJ mid-1860s; John Nicoley, President Abraham Lincoln and John Hay 1863; Blue-winged teal pair, unknown maker, George A. Stanley Rig WPSC, c. 1857; Inventor Charles Brush; Rufus Winslow mansion; WPSC early clubhouse photograph; E.B. Sadler c. 1865; Milan, Ohio engraving 1846





ing ships and exporting grain and lumber. It was also a town full of speculators; be it land, railroads or GOLD! E. B. Atherton, one of Winous Point's first members, had led "The Milan Company" to California in April of 1849 at the height of the gold rush.

In an amazing intersection of American history, Thomas Alva Edison's biographer writes of the company's departure: *"One of Mr. Edison's most vivid recollections goes back ...to when as a child three of four years old he saw camped in front of his home six covered wagons, "prairie schooners," and witnessed their departure for California. The great excitement*

*over the gold discoveries was thus felt in Milan, and these wagons, laden with all the worldly possessions of their owners, were watched out of sight on their long journey by this fascinated urchin, whose own discoveries in later years were to tempt many other argonauts into the auriferous realms of electricity."*

The members of Winous Point were an incredibly accomplished and connected set of late 19th century



politicians, inventors, bankers, industrialist and lawyers: John Milton Hay (President Lincoln's personal secretary and later U.S. Secretary of State); Charles Francis Brush (inventor, entrepreneur and philanthropist); William and Leonard Case (second-generation bankers, Cleveland politician, Case Western University, Philanthropists) and Jay Cooke (Banker and financier of the Civil War).

Other early members include Captain Benjamin Stannard, Ephraim A. Brown, Herman M. Chapin, Rufus K. Winslow, David W. Cross,

William Boardman, Harvey H. Brown, John Gardiner, Charles J. Clarke, Jeptha H. Wade, Col. William H. Harris and George A. Stanley. Few are household names today, but every one of them has an amazing life story many of which were published in turn-of-the-century "Who's Who" county, state or industry publications. Reintroducing their stories, does a service to their legacy and their decoys.

Today, for collectors, there is no better singular book than the one previously referenced; Winous Point - 150 Year of Waterfowling and Conservation, authored by





*Doubleday, A.E. Brown, J.H. Porter, A.E. Brown, L.M. Hubly, Com. E.A. Scoville, H.M. Chapin, ? P. Donzell, W.J. Boardman (and club manager), Henry Generous.*  
- 1864.

Sedgwick and Kroll. It is thoroughly researched, beautifully presented and carefully balanced to preserve the privacy of current members, while celebrating the club's heritage.

It is tragic to know that up until 1940, the club used to have an annual bonfire to discard damaged or unwanted wooden decoys. The club now maintains an impressive collection, not necessarily an outrageously valuable one, just rich in diversity and provenance. They were inventoried in 1975 by a group of six Ohio and Michigan collectors led by C. Victor "Vic" Bracher, of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a Remington Arms representative, decoy carver and collector.

### *The Iconic Image*

Fifteen Winous Point members and guests posed in front of the clubhouse for Cleveland daguerreotype artist, Thomas T. Sweeny. Proudly displayed in the forefront are at least seven distinctive decoys. Scattered throughout the scene were punt boats and poles, reed mats, a live decoy duck and various guns. Each man assumed a pose as the plate was exposed, a process that sometimes took a couple minutes. It may have been the traditional "redeployment of the punt boat fleet" on the first day of the season. (WP-150, p.285) The open windows and doors indicate a warm fall day. Within the old frame, the aging mat identifies each man in order of location along with the date "1864":



Unfortunately there is a glaring inconsistency: The club's president, William Case, could not have been there in 1864. He had died from consumption (tuberculosis) in April of 1862.

It is believed that this iconic image, used on the cover of the Winous Point book, was taken in the fall of 1861. Records indicate the first legal day to hunt wildfowl that year would have been September 1st or 2nd. Perhaps it was taken to recreate the essence of the famous "Ark" painting which had been done just three years earlier. William Case's health may have been failing precipitously, thus he is on the porch, without intention of going out onto the marsh. Without modern-day treatments, the disease would have had a course of roughly three years and he was, unknowingly down to the last eight months of his life.

With Fort Sumter having been attacked five months prior, there were guests present who were being afforded a special day among friends before heading off to war: According to Civil War records, Company B of the 2nd Ohio Cavalry consisted "of the flower of the Western Reserve and was the special pride of that sturdy old statesman Ben Wade under whose supervision it was raised. It was made up of enthusiastic intelligent young men fresh from the schools and Colleges ... assembled at Camp Wade on University Heights Cleveland" (The Biographical Cyclopædia and Portrait Gallery with an Historical Sketch of the State of Ohio)



Colonel C. W. (Charles William) Doubleday was its commanding officer. He is not believed to be related to the more famous General Abner Doubleday. None-the-less, Charles was a fascinating character with stories from the California Gold Rush, the Nicaraguan Civil War and southern secessionist conspiracies. Camp Wade was prepared in the late summer and soldiers reported in the first weeks of September to be “uniformed, mounted and partially drilled.” According to the war time diary of one of his soldiers, L. H. Tenney, they were at Camp Wade until the end of November when they moved to Camp Dennison northeast of Cincinnati. (Pictured below)



Colonel Doubleday had the freedom to travel around the area liberally during this time and courted the daughter of a prominent local businessman and Winous member, Leander Mead Hubby who was an “Arkite” and had served as an alderman during William Case’s tenure as Mayor of Cleveland in 1850 and ‘51. After six months on the war front and contention over leadership responsibilities, Doubleday would resign June 16th, 1862. According to discharge paperwork, he “provided a substitute” to serve out his enlistment. He would be married to Sarah Louise Hubby in September of that year.

Another military-minded man present that day was Cd. Edward A. Scovill (an Arkite) who would lead the 128th Ohio Volunteer Infantry guarding Rebel POWs on nearby Johnson’s Island. (Pictured above right) Both Doubleday and Scovill would become members of Winous Point more than a decade after the war.

Two more gentlemen preparing for a day on the marsh were O.N. Skeels and Joseph S. Weaver. At the time they were in the wholesale liquor and grocery business and may have helped set up supply lines for the camp provisions. O.N. Skeels was an “Arkite” and Winous member.

Finally, also in the image is a founding club member, Herman M. Chapin. He was an “Arkite,” very good friends with the Case brothers, had raised money and equipment for the Union and had serious business and political ties to Ben Wade; it was Wade who brought Chapin into Cleveland politics. In August of 1865, Chapin returned from a 100-day enlistment with the 150th Infantry of the Ohio National Guard defending Washington D.C. in the closing days of the war. Three months later he was elected mayor of Cleveland, largely due to Wade. Benjamin Wade was such a powerful national politician of that time that he would have assumed the presidency if Andrew Johnson’s 1868 impeachment had succeeded.

Decades later the *Jeptha H. Wade* family would become one of the most prominent families of Winous Point with uninterrupted membership since 1894. The two Wade families, though probably somehow related, were separated by opposing political leanings: Radical Republican vs. Democrat. Jeptha H. Wade had lived in Milan, Ohio for most of 1849 developing telegraph subscriptions throughout the region. It is possible that he met the local businessmen and bankers who were forming the WPSC. Otherwise, his later success in Cleveland establishing what would become Western Union Telegraph certainly put him within the country’s elite circle of sportsmen.









that competes with the beauty and form of these birds would be the preening pintail hen (see WP book, p.56) that was owned by “Arkite” and founding WPSC member George Abraham Stanley (1818-1883) of Cleveland. Highlights of Vic Bracher’s notes on the bird:

*“A preening decoy with tack eyes and extremely fine free brush painting that outlines the wing feathers and blends into the gray ventral paint. A beautifully proportioned decoy that would be a rare addition to any museum or collection.”*

The remaining Stanley decoys are more practical than this delicate hen. One cannot rule out the possibility that they were all by the same hand; the pintail hen being more of a “presentation” piece. They include teal, mallards and black ducks, one of which is pictured to the left.

### *The Daguerreotype Decoys*

The decoy superimposed on the 1861 clubhouse image (previous spread) is believed to be one of the seven decoys carefully placed in and around the punt boats and were created by an unknown carver. This 15” long, elegant black duck has an original, dry, thin painted surface. The head sits on a slight oval shelf, set back from the breast by about 2”. It has a pronounced brow, translucent glass bead eyes and cheeks that look to be filled with the wild rice of Sandusky Bay. There is a minimally carved transition from head to bill, carved nostrils halfway down and a modest incision suggestion the lower mandible. The carved water groove behind the head falls off to one side more than the other. Deep green/black painted wings. There is a slight ridge along the upper edge beginning halfway between the V and the tail. This ridge is most pronounced on the tail, forming a peak. The underside of the tail is spoon-like, with roughly gouged lines. On the less-weathered underside, you can see the inch long, wispy painted lines suggesting feathers. The bottom has an egg- shaped flat surface with an empty 2” round weight recess. The body is split in equal parts and hollowed. There is no outward evidence of the connecting method of the body halves or the head; very nice workmanship. The bird appears to be substantial, but is light in the hand. The only decoy



It would be great if Stanley’s personal travels and business interests provided insight as to the maker of these fine decoys. At present, it does not. Stanley was born in 1818, the same year as William Case, and probably grew up with the Case brothers, as their fathers were contemporary early lawyers in Cleveland. He made his fortune primarily through “lard oil and candle works.” Pictured is his patent model for a lard cooling mechanism; if not done by his own hand, he obviously knew at least one good woodworker. Finally, Stanley married

late in life to a Detroit woman with the last name Foote. Both his children died early in life and without an heir to carry-on at Winous Point, some of his decoys left the property and others were passed on and branded by other members. As an example, a GAS Mallard drake exists with subsequent J. W. Harris and J. B. Jackson brands.

Two more outstanding mallard drakes coming out of this club: The first is marked in black paint “UKK

– IS” – ownership and carver is unknown. (pictured on opposing page) The two-piece body is heavy, minimally hollowed, if at all. The form of this beaded-eye bird is nearly as graceful as the 1861 Daguerreotype black duck. Its original paint and stylized brush strokes are superb. Black duck, bluebill and redhead by the same hand are known to exist.

John H. Porter co-founded the Charles Davis & Company meat (hog) packing house in Cincinnati. He joined WPSC in 1875 and his son, Bonsall, who was a world renowned geologist, joined in 1886. This large mallard retains its original paint with very nice detailing. The well-constructed head sits sturdily inside of a notched oval shelf. The head is secured with a dowel and nails driven into each side of the neck. It has tack eyes, rimmed with yellow paint. It has a hollow, two piece body, and is light in the hand. A few shot marks, a small rectangular recessed lead weight and a rattle when shaken complete this altogether, impressive Ohio bird.

Next is a trio of canvasbacks. The first is a sinuous bird with a pinched breast and neck. It has tack eyes and fine original paint. The head sits upon a small raised circular pedestal. Its hard chine creates a relatively

flat top that slopes downward to a modest paddle tail. The flattened area on the decoy's bottom has "Chas. J. Clarke" brand burnt into it alongside the lead strip weight. It is a stylish bird. Charles John Clarke (1833 – 1899) of Pittsburgh was 45-years old when he became a member of WPSC in 1878. His father had made a "comfortable fortune" operating Ohio River steamships between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Charles increased his position through work in banking, insurance and railroads. He had retired in 1874. He was also one of the founding members of Pittsburgh's ill-fated South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The picturesque lake that the clubhouse overlooked was created by an aging earthen dam. It gave way in May of 1889 and the resulting wall of water killed 2,209 residents of downstream Johnstown.

The only early member of Winous Point who made his own decoys was apparently Edmund G. Gardiner (1844-1923) of Norwalk, Ohio. He was the son of founding member John Gardiner. His grandson, Charles B. Gardiner, gave Vic Bracher a tour of the family's historic home and workshop where he explained that his grandfather made his own decoys. As described in the 1975 inventory, they are rather "square in (cross) section and somewhat bulky." Most feature a very unique anchor line that is "pulled through a hole in the body behind the head to withdraw the weight into a recess drilled into the breasts; then the line is held in a "V" groove in the tail after it has been wrapped around the neck and/or body" The old paint on the canvasback pictured has a very nice surface. The tack eyes are ringed with yellow.

The final canvasback decoy (pictured top of next page) is branded "CC Bolton." The Bolton family has been an integral part of Winous Point for generations. The initial "C.C.Bolton" could refer to members back to 1896; Charles, Chester and Castle. Prior to that there





was a T. (Thomas?) K. Bolton member listed in 1879. The family has been in Cleveland since 1834. Lawyers, industrialists, bankers and politicians are all among its accomplished ranks. The bird has always been attributed to a local carver by the name of Fred Harris.

Members, punters, carvers... the Harris surname seems to be everywhere. Fred Harris was born in Bucyrus in 1876 and worked as a cook on a dredge which, in 1910, was reinforcing the dikes around a carp pond along the banks of the Portage River in Port Clinton. The proximity to Winous Point is irrefutable and the possibility that he did work on the dikes at the club is reasonable. This solid canvasback has a rectangular neck base, deeply carved bill/head transition, a lower mandible that is carved away, rusty tack eyes and a dowel that angles from the top of the head to the back of the neck. It was probably a sturdy workhorse on the marsh. There is no evidence that he was related to any of the *Harris* members.

Two Harris members can be clearly identified: Stephen Ross Harris (1824-1905) whose membership started in 1870. He was an Ohio-born and Western Reserve educated lawyer, U.S. Congressman and mayor from Bucyrus, Ohio. Second, was New York-born and raised Colonel William Hamilton Harris (1838 – 1895) who became a member of Winous Point in 1875. No direct connection has been made between these two men, though their lives overlapped in family name “Harris”, Bucyrus and Winous Point. Colonel Harris’ life and Civil War service were remarkable. Born to a U.S. Senator from New York in 1838, he graduated with fellow classmate, George A. Custer from West Point in 1861 and immediately thereafter commanded a section of artillery in the Battle of Bull Run. His expertise in ordnance was called upon throughout the bloody war and continued afterwards until 1870. He had married the daughter of a successful Cleveland businessman in 1864 and after his military career, entered into her family’s iron, banking, railroad, steam shovel and dredging business interests with tremendous success. He was elected vice-president of Winous Point in 1881 and president in 1884.

He maintained a very large rig of decoys consisting of canvasbacks and redheads with a typical one pictured at the bottom of the page. Members John Milton Hay and William Harris’ lives were intertwined. Both ended up marrying Cleveland socialites whose fathers were co-owners of several railroads. Harris’ father, Senator Ira Harris, sister, Clara and brother-in-law, Henry Rathbone, were among President and Mary Lincoln’s closest friends. The young couple were the President’s guests at the Ford

Theater in April of 1865.

Rathbone was critically wounded by Booth’s Bowie knife. Both Clara Harris and

John Hay kept vigil throughout the night with Mrs. Lincoln as the President slipped away. Even after physically recovering from his wounds, Rathbone ended up with catastrophic mental injuries culminat-



ing in an attempted murder-suicide in 1883. Clara died protecting her four young children. Rathbone’s suicide attempt failed and he spent the last decades of his life institutionalized. William and his wife raised the Rathbone children in Cleveland and later New York. In spite of the family drama, Harris’ leadership of the *Bucyrus Steam and Shovel Company* revolutionized earth moving, especially in regards to canals and railroads. The company grew at an astounding pace as it supplied machinery to complete rail lines around the world including the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 and canal projects like the draining of the Valley of Mexico City in 1893. He moved the Ohio-based company to larger facilities in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Winous Point clubhouse was undoubtedly the epicenter of the dreamers, entrepreneurs and engineers who dared to dream of even bigger projects like a canal connecting the Pacific and Atlantic via Central America. For John Hay, it was the subject of successive Whitehouse administration under which he served.



It was Ohio-born President Grant who first organized a commission to research the project in 1869. The French usurped the initiative and in 1879 began digging a route through the Panama isthmus belonging to the Republic of Columbia. The manual-labor intensive construction lasted about eight years and was plagued by flooding and successive waves of dysentery and yellow fever claiming the lives of 20,000 men, mostly from Jamaica. The entire enterprise failed and was abandoned by the French in 1888.

When Theodore Roosevelt became president after Ohio-born McKinley's assassination, he asked John Hay to stay on as Secretary of State. One of Roosevelt's first declarations was his intent to construct the canal. Through complex financial, political and military maneuvering a revolution conveniently occurred and the State of Panama won autonomy from Columbia.

In 1903, Winous member, United States Secretary of State John Hay was pivotal in the negotiations which finally led to the United States' undertaking of the dangerous (ultimately another 5,000 lives) and costly project. Hay was convinced that the United States was in a position to succeed because of his duck hunting comrade William Harris and the Bucyrus Company. Harris died in 1895 and would never see the ultimate success of the Bucyrus Company as it provided 75% of the steam shovels used on the 48-mile project. The Panama Canal opened in 1914 and today, the Bucyrus Company is a celebrated part of the global earth-moving powerhouse Caterpillar. A literary tribute, perhaps from Hay, was sent from Winous Point to Harris' classmates at West Point when they eulogized him in 1896:

*"An affectionate nature, great liberality, high culture, literary taste and acquirements, refinement from traveling, gentle manners, a good temper and all without vanity. These qualities of his heart always seemed to me to be due, in a large measure, to his communion with nature, of which he was a close student, and it was a great pleasure to be with him in an open boat upon the waters of our hunting preserves and listen to the lessons which, without pretending to do so, he was unconsciously teaching... We have lost in his death a light and sweetness in our hunting season intercourse which cannot be easily replaced."*



The final four decoys from Winous Point are all by unknown carvers and probably date back to the 1870's:





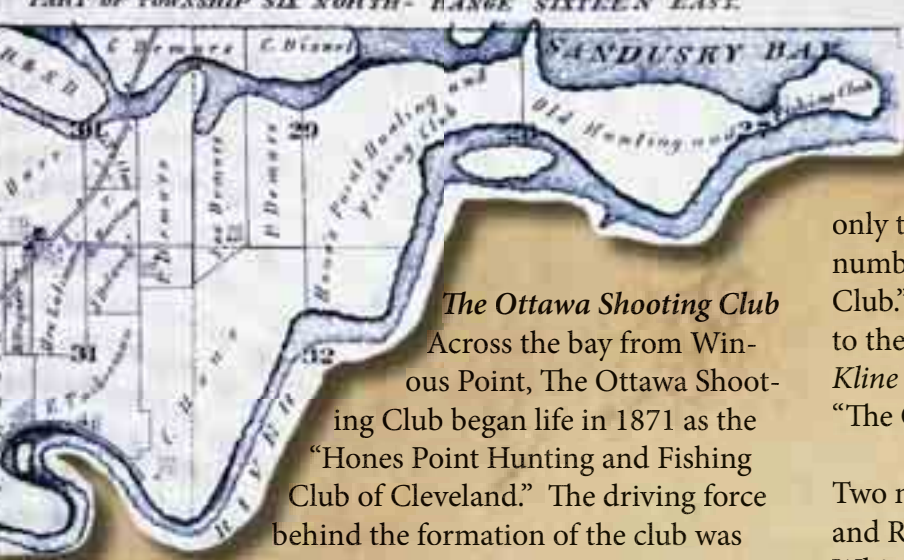


The mellow black duck pictured to the left is best viewed in daylight to reveal the stately painted lines that run down its top, suggesting feathers. The two-piece hollow construction is unique. The bottom makes up two thirds of its side profile. The top is more like a lid. Beneath the deep original paint, one can see the faint circles of the nine nail heads holding top to bottom. The crown is flat without much cheek and nothing but paint delineating the bill. The head sits almost flush to the body with a soft cornered rectangular footprint. It has a V groove behind the head. The bottom has a minimal flat surface with an inch and a half recessed round lead weight. There are three small notches under the tail that may have served to identify them in the club.

The next pinched-neck mallard drake seems to have a sense of humor and may be a rare example of an old modified decoy for a sink box wing. The lumber on the bottom is more recently exposed compared to the rest of the well-aged bird. It has a circular weight with a "W" carved into the lead and another repeated on the underside of the tail. His tack eyed head is very nicely carved and the neck flows like a skirt onto the slightly raised shelf. Loose strokes of paint mark out the wing patches and tail feathers.

This is a charming hollow blue-winged teal hen, with dry original paint that appears tortoise shell-like. The craftsman who painted this was careful to blend the wing patch where it went from blue to white. The head sits high upon a one inch round pedestal. It is proportioned nicely with tack eye. The cheeks dive under the bill and very faint knife marks remain in that area. On the underside one can see the small nails holding together the body. It is weighted with an eighth inch thick, business card size sheet of lead secured with six nails.

The bluebill drake has great appeal. The shape is quite unique. Flat top and sides with just enough wood carved away to make it work. The drake has boldly patterned paint, with lots of details. Yet it keeps to a muted palette of black, gray and white, all of which have been mellowed for over 100 years. It has beaded eyes on a low head. The cheeks are carved under the bills with no mandible or nostrils. Faintly written on the bottom of this decoy are the initials "MAS." This does correspond with an early member by the name of M.A. Stearns in 1881. Because it seems to be a more contemporary remark than old, working identifier, it will remain an unknown until proven otherwise.



### ***The Ottawa Shooting Club***

Across the bay from Winous Point, The Ottawa Shooting Club began life in 1871 as the “Hones Point Hunting and Fishing Club of Cleveland.” The driving force behind the formation of the club was German-born, Louis Smithnight (b. 1834).

He arrived in Cleveland in 1850 and clerked for a wholesale grocer for seven years before departing in 1858 on a quest for gold in the American west. With little to show for the effort, he returned to Cleveland and found success in the patent medicine and drugstore business.

He had been among the first to enlist when President Lincoln called the north to arms. He moved up the ranks to Captain of the Cleveland Light Artillery and then led the 20th Ohio Battery mustered into service in October of 1862. Smithnight became famous as the man who captured the first Confederate cannon in the war. After three years, a fall from a horse ended his active combat. Through his continued involvement in the Ohio National Guard, he was eventually referred to as “Colonel Smithnight.” He returned to his drugstore business and recuperated his health. In the spring of 1868 he led the first of many hunting and fishing trips with fellow veterans and businessmen to a favorite camp spot on the southwestern edge of the bay.

In 1871, an association of seventy-one men formed the club, with Smithnight as its first president. Its first officers included G. M. Barber, VP; O. B. Perdue, Secr.; D. H. Keys, Treasurer; J. Laisy, Surgeon; D. Price, Quartermaster. It was renamed “The Ottawa Hunting and Fishing Club” in 1879 and eventually owned roughly 3,000 acres.

*-History of Sandusky County, Ohio: With Portraits and Biographies of Prominent Citizens and Pioneers, H.Z. Williams & Bro., 1882.*

The map to the left comes from an 1874 Sandusky County atlas and shows the Christopher Hones property adjacent to not only the recently formed hunt club, but also parcel number 27 referred to as the “Old Hunting and Fishing Club.” Further examination of the adjoining township to the south suggests that *E.B. Sadler* (WPSC) and a *B. Kline* (Barnhart Kline) were likely landowners... thus “The Old Club probably refers to Winous Point.

Two notable early names in the club were the White and Riddle families. The Thomas H. and Walter B. White fortune was built upon White Sewing Machines and later the White Automobile company. The Riddle Company dates back to 1831 as award-winning carriage makers in Ravenna,



Ohio. The Riddles specialized in horse-drawn hearses and ambulances. They transitioned into the motorized era mostly through a partnership with the White family who built their chassis. Club member Thomas J. Riddle, born in 1847, had learned wood carving and ornate carriage making in his early teens and eventually oversaw a shop full of artisans.

A fire in 1890 destroyed the clubhouse along with twenty year’s worth of early club documents. Undoubtedly, this accounts for the rarity of decoys associated with the club.

Club member Frank Bowen Many (b. 1860) *Energine Refining & Manufacturing Co. and the Canton-Cleveland Brick Co.* gave readers a glimpse into opening day at the Ottawa Club in a fall, 1900 issue of *Forest and Stream*. (Vol. 55, p.447-448) “On Friday night we drew cuts for position.” Smithnight was respectfully given first choice and opted for the “upper end of Big Pond.” The other members included Rollin C. White, *Sewing Machines, Ball Bearings and Real Estate* (1837-1920) , John J. Flick, *Dressed Beef Packer*(1843-1914), James O’Hara Denny, *Pittsburgh Capitalist*, O’Hara Gas Works, Charles P. Ranney, *Commercial Pursuits*, Isacc Reynolds, Valley Railway General Manager, Arthur Odell, *Cleveland Banking/Abstractor*.



*"We were called at 3:00 o'clock and had breakfast at 3:30 and took the naptha launch down the Sandusky River, dropping each man and his punter as we passed his location.... I stayed back in the bushes a couple hundred feet from the pond until about daylight, when the ducks arose in two great flocks (at least a thousand) at the sounds of shots fired in the lower marshes a couple of miles below me.... In about the first ten minutes I had nine ducks on the water dead... I only sat out four decoys, mallards, and had my punter set up the dead ducks which are fine decoys."* by the end of the day the author had bagged 57 mallards, three pintails, one widgeon and one spoonbill. Combined, the members shot 337 birds that opening day.

The rare decoys that have survived from this club include the blue and green-winged teal drakes (below) with the "BB" brand for club member Bernard Blee (1847-1907) date ca. 1870. Bernard Blee was born into

a large Irish family in 1842. The family was in the grocery business in East Cleveland. Known as "Barney", he followed an older brother, Robert, into the railroad business becoming a conductor by 1880. His brother became mayor of Cleveland in 1893 after successfully branching out into insurance and banking. He had a comfortable residence on Euclid Avenue. Unfortunately, very little has surfaced about Barney, the owner of the decoys. The birds were subsequently painted with the initials RHN which may have been Rider Herman Neff. They are small, flat birds in original paint, with tack eyes and are best described as being of the "Philadelphia School." The maker may be unknown, but work from this hand is well-known to Ohio collectors. In our "2007 Ohio Decoy Calendar" there was a green winged-teal on the cover that was a rigmate to the drakes. There are black ducks with Blee's brand. The same carver also did pintails, as evidenced by one





that was eventually branded by John Alexander Hadden, Sr. (1886-1979). He was a Harvard educated lawyer, veteran and active in the Republican Party. A common theme among these decoys is the highly stylized "R" carved in the bottoms of them.

There were seven "R" family names in the 1871 membership. The aforementioned, Thomas Riddle is a front-runner in likely sources for these decoys because of his personal history in fine-woodworking and the availability of professional wood carvers and painters in his carriage shops in Ravenna, Ohio.

#### ***DeMars Point Hunting and Fishing Club***

This club is located outside of Port Clinton and was first incorporated in August of 1882 (as noted on page 11 of the club history and Ohio Secretary of State records, 1882, p.131) by Fremont business and professional men. Officially it was re-incorporated in March of 1883 as a *Fremont* establishment and it is this date that the club officially recognizes.

Denoting its place along the Sandusky River, Fremont was referred to as "Lower Sandusky" up until 1849. The clubhouse is located about ten miles northeast of Fremont on land that had originally been settled by a French-Canadian "squatter" family by the name DeMars. It is situated on Mud Creek, only miles from the Winous and Ottawa Clubs. Generations of the DeMar family have been dedicated punters for all the area clubs.

Among its fifty founding members was Jay Alvin Higbee (1845-1901), its first president. He had served as a Corporal in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He and his father had run a successful milling operation between Bellevue and Monroeville and had entered into the "wheat" business in Fremont. Shortly after the club formed, Higbee struggled with financial and legal setbacks. This is mentioned to

provide a possible explanation of the dueling incorporation dates and to account for his total absence thereafter in the club. He died just seven years later at the Soldier's Home in Sandusky.

Other charter members included Charles Thompson (Herbrand Co.), William Hocke (The Tell House Hotel), Edwin B. Smith (Attorney), Horace Stephen Buckland (Attorney), William B. Kridler Jr. (Insurance), Christian Stausmyer (Drug & Jewelry Store), Andrew Moos (Saloon Keeper) and John Linde Greene (Attorney.)



The most famous founding member of the club was the 19th President of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893). (pictured left) He was born in Delaware, Ohio, educated in law at Harvard, located in Lower Sandusky (Fremont) for four years before establishing a successful law practice in Cincinnati. He felt a strong calling to serve the Union cause at the outbreak of the Civil War. He was a fast-rising leader in the 23rd Ohio Infantry and within the Republican Party. He was wounded four times including a severe injury during the Battle of South Mountain in 1862. By the end of the war he had attained the rank of Major General. Remarkably, he won his first of three terms in Congress while still in active

service and without campaigning. He was Governor of the State of Ohio for three terms as well. He narrowly won the presidential election in 1876 and vowed that he would serve only a single term, freeing him up to make cabinet appointments and decisions in office which were decidedly independent in nature. He had only been out of the White House for two years when the DeMar's Club was founded. In 1884 he served as secretary/treasurer and the club has many handwritten meeting minutes by Hayes.

An 1885 inventory of the club's assets included 83 decoy ducks. One of the few that survived and found its way onto the collector market is a stately goose, by an unknown carver which was owned by Christian G. Stausmyer (1847 – 1920.) The decoy (right) mea-



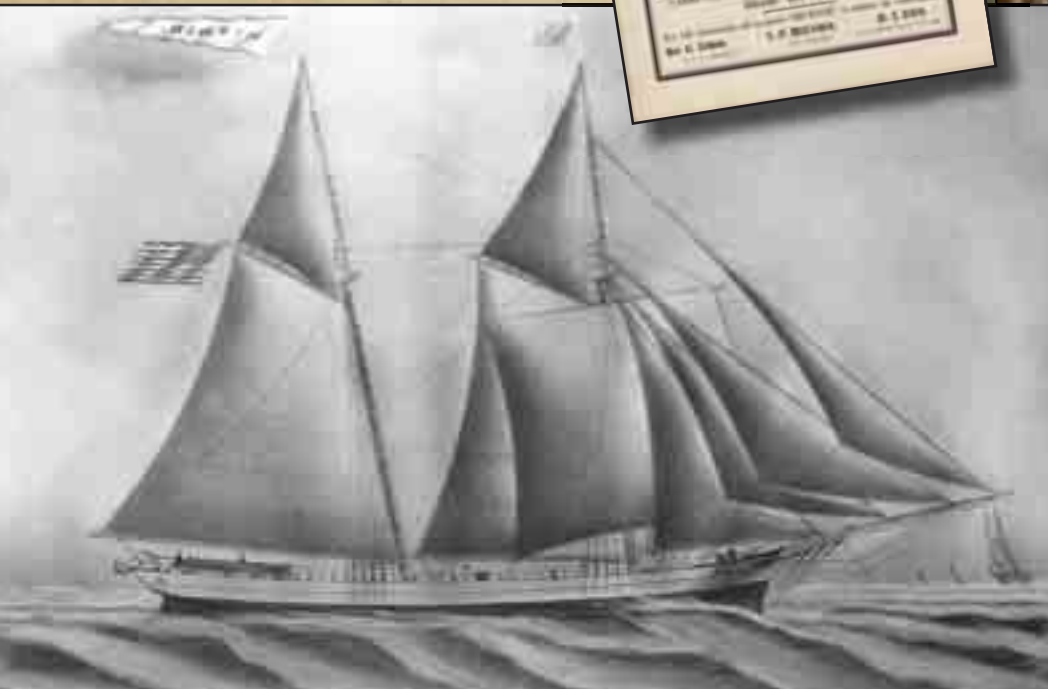
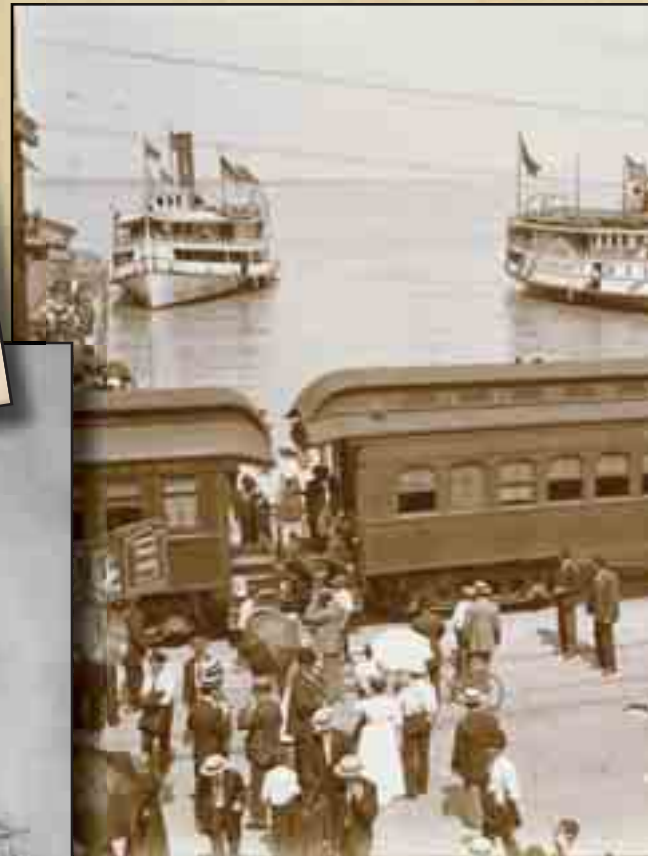


asures 24" from bill to tail, 10" wide and has a distinctive angular neck. Its breast is moderately pinched and has a two-piece, hollow constructed body. The black glass bead eyes were ringed with paint. It is a combination of original and old working repaints. Mr. Stausmyer had this bird branded "CGS" three times on the bottom and once on the underside of the bill.

Stausmyer was a native of rural Sandusky County but moved to Fremont in 1872. He owned and operated the Strausmyer Drug & Jewelry Store. (History of Sandusky p. 915) He took "an extended tour through Germany, England and France in 1878 and attended the Paris Exposition." When he returned he married the daughter of a pharmacist he had trained under in nearby Elmore, Ohio. He represented the Democratic Party on the city council by 1909 and twice led the city as mayor. He was in that office when the city suffered a devastating flood in 1913. He and his wife were close friends of President Hayes' son (Webb) and daughter-in-law.



*Founding member Horace Stephen Buckland and an unknown carver black duck from his rig.*



The "Hyphen" schooner built in 1861 in Milan, Ohio; "The Big Four" Railway brochure; New York Central Rail Station on Sandusky's waterfront.



### *Toussaint Shooting Club*

The "Tous Saint" Shooting Club was incorporated in 1885 by a group of Cleveland businessmen. The story of their twice-a-year schooner voyages to the mouth of Snipe Creek (and the Toussaint River) harkens back to the Winous Point founding story 29 years prior.

The name of the modest river has been attributed to several different explorers and missionaries. One dated 1725 with Fathers Gabriel and Isaac and the other a Frenchman by the name Etien Brule who came to North America with the Champlain expedition. In that account he was the first white man to visit the shores of Lake Erie around present day Toledo and on Nov. 1, 1615, he "put ashore at the mouth of a slow moving stream" which he named Tous Saint (All Saints) in honor of its day of discovery.

The Toussaint is located about halfway between Sandusky and Toledo and would have been within the Great Black Swamp. The club encompasses 1,350 acres. The federal government made the club an offer "they couldn't refuse" in order to expand nearby ordinance and rifle training facility; Camp Perry. Because access to the lakefront clubhouse had been cut-off by the

land sale, the building was successfully moved nearly two miles over the frozen marsh in the winter of 1919.

Among the seven men who signed the incorporating documents for the Toussaint Club was 63-year old, Rufus K. Winslow, the Great Lakes shipping magnate who was also a founding member of Winous Point. His daughter had married John R. Chadwick (1855-1926) who was also among the incorporating men. Not much has been found on Chadwick aside from him owning some interests in the Winslow shipping business.



The other five men were Sylvester J. Miller (b.1828) who was listed as an "Oil Agent" in the census of 1870. His wealth had grown tremendously in oil and varnish manufacturing by the time he built his mansion on Euclid Avenue in 1881. Dudley Baldwin Jr. (1851-1915) spent his life in the iron and steel business. His father had made a fortune in early Cleveland banking and railroads and had been a contemporary of D. W. Cross (WPSC). Jacob Atlee Beidler (1852-1912) of Willoughby, Ohio was president of the Rhodes & Beidler Coal Co and Vice President of the Cleveland, Painesville and Eastern Railway Company. He was second generation in the coal business. He later established a dairy farm outside of Willoughby, Ohio in 1881 and bred champion Holstein-Friesians and was president of the Belle Vernon-Mapes Dairy. A Republican, he represented Ohio in congress from 1901 to 1907.

Norman A. Gilbert was born in Iowa in 1846. He served in the Civil War for three years and was a prisoner of the Confederacy. He was admitted to the bar in 1867 and established himself in Marysville, Ohio. He moved to Cleveland in 1871 and was practicing law in Cleveland at the time the club was formed. He was a Republican and member of the city council. According to his autobiography, he was exceedingly dedicated to the development of Cleveland public schools. He retired to rural Bristolville, Ohio and died in 1911. Finally, a "J. A. Smith", who may or may not be General Jared Augustine Smith (1840-1910). General Smith was a well-traveled sportsman and Civil War veteran and an extraordinary hydraulic engineer with strong ties to Cleveland and Lake Erie's shoreline, rivers, harbors and lighthouses.

Most early members were from Cleveland but also one from New Philadelphia, one from Cambridge and one from Steubenville. A list of pre-1900 members include: T. S. Farley ('86), Eugene H. Perdue ('86), William James Rattle ('86), William Perry Horton ('87), Horace A. Bishop ('87), J. M. Gorham ('87), K. D. Bishop ('87), Hugh Huntington ('87), John Huntington ('87), Benjamin S. Cogswell ('90), Dallas Elliott ('93), A. W. Brown ('93), A. Beyer ('94), Thomas C. Goss ('94), Sylvester M. Neville ('97), J. J. Gill ('97), and George C. Steele ('99).

For decoy collectors, the name David B. Day (1864-1947) is synonymous with the Toussaint Club. He was an 1888 University of Michigan Law School graduate

and practiced in Canton, Ohio. He became a member of the club in 1905. He was very good friends with fellow Cantonites, W. R. Timkens (Timken Ball Bearing Co.) and Herbert W. Hoover, Sr. (Hoover Vacuums.) Many of his birds have survived along with his impressive hunting journal which was featured in the club history. He had a reputation as the best duck caller known. His writing is quite enjoyable including accounts of a few of the club's dogs having a bad habit of retrieving wooden decoys instead of downed ducks.

One of the most famous rig of decoys that came out of the club in the 1970's, were the Hanke



and Hoover rigs by Elmer Crowell. According to Delph's New England Decoys, page 107 Hanke was an early owner of the Boston Red Sox. No

one with the shooting club made that assertion, it was added to the bird's provenance later. With current technology, this identification must be re-evaluated. There is nothing in the baseball club's recorded history that references any "Hanke." Future research should probably follow two other clues... According to Joe Tonelli, the club Crowells were exclusive to Hoover and Hanke.

Perhaps a connection, beyond their membership, can be made between those men: Canton, business or politics?

Another possible lead, taking into account wealth, social connectivity and age, might be Dr. Milton Theodore (M. T.) Hanke from Chicago, Illinois. He collaborated with the Chicago Dental Research Club for some of his ground-breaking discoveries including the chemistry of dental caries published in 1933. The Toussaint Club has been the home of at least three accomplished dentist/researchers/inventors; Dr. Herbert F. Harvey (1850- 1929) and Dr. William Perry Horton (1823-1923) and his son, Dr. William P. Horton (1853-1909).

*Though there will always be a great deal of mystery surrounding early Ohio decoys, the state has plenty of well-known carvers.*

**Ned John Hauser** (1826-1900) has been cited as the father of Ohio decoy carving. Though certainly the earliest known and quite remarkable in form, he did not necessarily exert a great influence on other carvers in the area. As an example, Hartung and Hauser co-existed in the same city and probably in and around the same marshland, especially with them both being of German-descent and two of Hauser's boys, John and Willie (William) were the same age as the Hartung brothers. But the decoys have little in common. The source for much of Hauser's biography is a collection of mostly German language personal papers housed with the Western Reserve Historical Society.

*"John Hauser (1826-1900) was a German immigrant to Sandusky, Ohio, who worked with the Sandusky, Mansfield & Newark Railroad as a master painter. He also served with the 145th Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the American Civil War..."* The collection of papers apparently end about the same time that he left the railroad and tried his hand at running a saloon in town according to the 1880 census. His obituary from 1900 is one of the few places that his name is spelled out as Ned John Hauser.



*In Decoys - A North American Survey* by Kangas, 1983, Hauser's carving period was estimated to be 1850 to 1880,

being interrupted briefly during the Civil War and again late in life with failing health. The Canvas-back Drake, with "HEB" carved on the bottom is a striking example of his extraordinary workmanship; two equal part hollow construction, carved eyes, vertical dowels, lead sheet weights, rounded breasts and a distinctive Roman nose.

**William "Bill" T. Enright** (1913-1979) Toledo, OH This well-documented hunter/carver has been featured twice in Decoy Magazine (Jan/Feb 2007 & 2008) and examples of his work have appeared in a number of books. He was one of the experts called upon to help Vic Bracher identify the decoys at Winous Point Shooting Club. He was a salesman in Toledo, but supplemented his income and hunting with the serious



manufacturing of decoys in his basement for three decades. Enright hunted throughout the region and visited many of the clubs on Lake Erie to repair and repaint their decoys. He also enjoyed hunting with friends in the Cincinnati/Ohio River vicinity. His decoys are proudly blue-collar; they were crafted to be effective tools for the hunter.

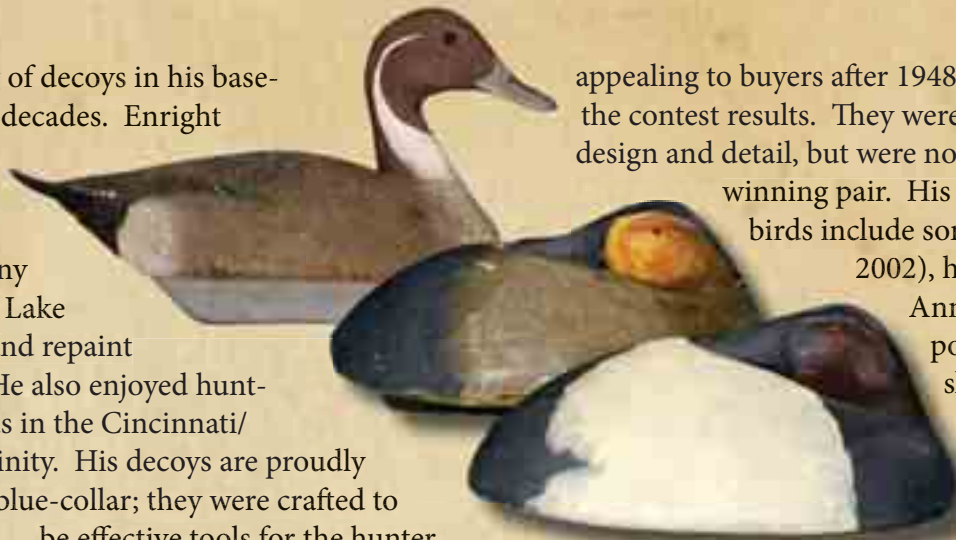
This approach was reinforced after he won a 1948 National Decoy Maker's Contest in New York City with his pintails. He

appealing to buyers after 1948 if he signed them with the contest results. They were certainly of the same design and detail, but were not necessarily THE winning pair. His out-of-the-ordinary birds include some miniatures (Engers 2002), his solid wood Queen Anne's Hunt Club (Walpole Island, Canada) sleeping canvasback and his cork calling black duck pictured below.

**Captain Adam Hartung** (1860-1909) Sandusky, Ohio. Hartung was a Sandusky Fire Captain who carved a large rig of decoys for himself and friends. It is assumed that like many of his fellow firefighters with various hobbies, he passed the time between fire alarms with carving and painting decoys.

A more thorough look at his work can be found in the Nov/Dec 2012 issue of Decoy Magazine. His decoys are easily recognizable with their trademark rumps. His work included canvasbacks, black ducks, redheads and blue bills. (Pictured on the following page.) There are also several pairs of over-sized mallards from his rig. Collectors had the opportunity in early 2012 at the Great Lake Show in Westlake, Ohio to bid on decoys that came to auction directly from the Hartung family. Captain Hartung suffered a serious injury while responding to a fire in the fall of 1908 and died a few months later in March of 1909.

dismissed many of the other competition birds as being unsuited for the rigors of the gunny sack and marsh. Enright worked primarily in cork with pine heads. His decoys were very uniform, varying only slightly throughout his lifetime. With his business background, he found his pintails very







**Frank James Noe** (1881–1960) Columbus, Ohio was featured in a Decoy Magazine article Nov/Dec 1992. Much of the very detailed information came from another famous central Ohio carver, “Buckeye” Joe Wooster who was a personal friend. A couple of important additions to the previously published biography are his early years as general carpenter and his primary vocation as a barber.

Noe was born into a large working class family in 1881. He spent the majority of his life in a neighborhood northeast of downtown Columbus, just across present day I-71 from the Ohio State Expo Center (Fairgrounds). He married Teresa Kiesewetter in about 1906 and had a son and a daughter.

In 1914 he was mentioned in a Sunday Columbus Dispatch article about his unique side occupation of “designer of flies and deceiver of fish.” According to his 1918 draft WWI draft card and 1920 census, Noe’s primary income was from house carpentry. By 1930, he had opened a barbershop in the front room of the family home at 1434 Cleveland Avenue with a nearby Bonham Avenue address by 1945. The Hale/Kennedy article drew attention to the interurban light rail that ran between Columbus and Newark with an important stop at an amusement park at “Buckeye Lake”, a canal-era, man-made reservoir which was converted into a 4,000 acre park in 1894. The railway, which ran until 1956, turned this former swamp into a duck hunting paradise for central Ohio sportsmen like Noe. Using his carpentry skills, he became a prolific decoy and call carver. His outstanding tiger maple calls (pictured on last page) that are highly sought after by call collectors. His decoys have cork bodies with folky, angular heads.

He experimented with a many different materials through the years including a thin, lead-lined steel sheet which covered the bottom board. These sheets may have been scrap material he obtained from the Belmont Casket Co. on the north side of downtown Columbus. R. E. Amstutz, a fellow Buckeye Lake duck hunter worked for the company, retiring as its treasurer. Many mallards, black ducks and bluebills have survived. Pictured below is a very rare ruddy duck.

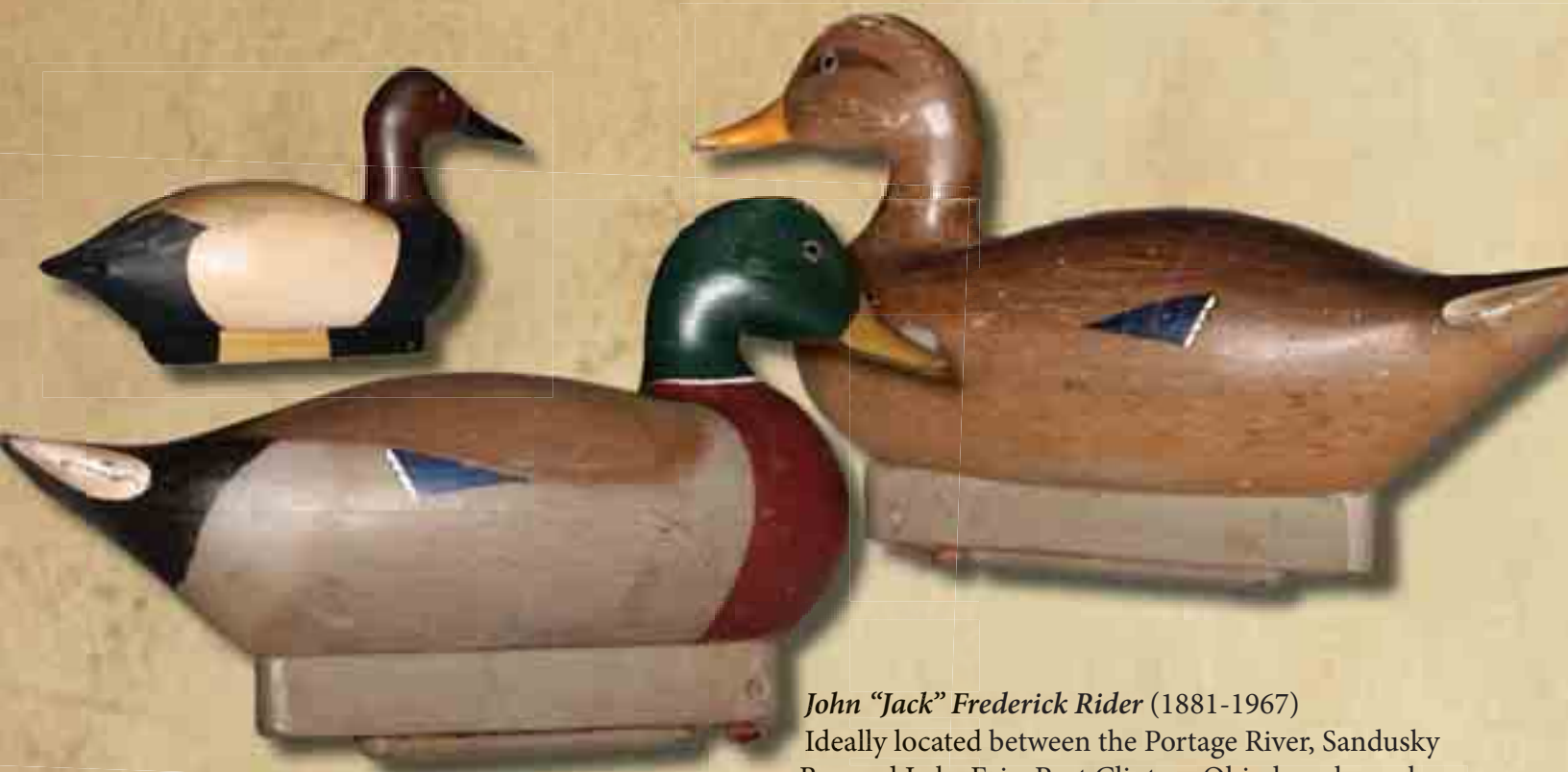
Noe died in January of 1960 in Licking County, Ohio, which would have put him on the north shore of Buckeye Lake. Historic property records are difficult to search around the lake because most of the properties were leased or rented, not owned. City directories continue to have him living and working in Columbus as late as 1945.

### **Reg Vicary**

(1903 - 1983) Rossford, Ohio. The collector who first bought these decoys from the family in the mid-1980’s had only a quick oral history from an older sister-in-law: “carved and hunted over by Reg Vickery of Rossford, Ohio.” Vickery is the name of a small town just three miles south of Sandusky Bay and for three decades seemed to be the most likely spelling even though no census records could be found.

After contacting possible descendents in the Rossford area and discovering his name in a primary source associated with a hunt club, we can confidently identify his proper name and life details for the first time. Reginald Wilfred Vicary was born in England and came with his family first to Canada, then, in 1924 to the Toledo suburb of Rossford, Ohio. He worked as a machinist and operator in the auto glass manufacturing industry. In 1941 he was a member of the Ross





***John "Jack" Frederick Rider (1881-1967)***

Ideally located between the Portage River, Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie, Port Clinton, Ohio has always been known for its perch and walleye-rich waters. Rider was born in 1881 when the city had just over 2,000 inhabitants. Like most boys in the area, he grew up hunting and fishing and attended school only through the 8th grade.

In 1900, the tall, dark-haired young man briefly worked as a farm hand for the Humphrey family. In 1904 he married Bertha Lindsley, whose mother was a Humphrey, and had two sons, Hugh and Vernon.

Rod and Gun Club. Although he was not yet an official citizen, he enlisted and served in the Army in November of 1942. He married later in life, after the war, was widowed and married again in 1961. He had no children by either marriage. Vicary decoys are distinctive; with an erect posture, smooth surface and precise paint. They are large (18" tail to bill) solid-bodied canvasback and mallard pairs. (Pictured above) The canvasback drake has matte glass eyes, a dark brown red head, the cheeks are cut under the edge of the bill, carved nostrils and mandible; The fine pinstriped lines forming the wings, guided Vicary as he added subtle shades both dark and light for contrast.

*"The Ross Rod and Gun Club of Rossford is doing its bit to furnish good hunting... The club recently released 120 Missouri cotton-tail rabbits in Wood County and four members of the club, Reg Vicary, Louie Hanselman, Joe Goblinec and Mike Knurek purchased and released 25 jack rabbits from Oklahoma... Jack Bruss, just about the best maker of duck decoys in this area, has gone in for carving flying ducks out of old telegraph poles... Jack has just completed a fine wooden mallard, life size, wings outspread and all and expects to present it to the Ross Rod and Gun Club as a bit of decoration for the clubroom.*

- Toledo Blade February 10, 1941





He lived his entire adult life in a modest home on Jefferson Street but also owned a 100-acre marsh a few miles out of town. Jack operated the municipal water plant for 50 years. His first wife died in 1928. He remarried Caroline Winter about four years later and had one son, Frank. Jack's middle son, Vernon, lived next door with his wife.

The father and son duo spent many hours on the family marsh hunting. Wonderful black and white photos not only show the bounty of their hunts, but also the Rider decoys which they hunted over. In contrast to his hunting decoys which date back to his early adulthood, Jack Rider's miniature decoy story started in 1950 at the age of 69.

According to a 1965 article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Jack was disappointed by the quality of a miniature decoy he had purchased through mail-order out of a sportsman's magazine. So, he put a block of pine into his garage workshop's vice and after a couple of hours, had a "fair reproduction" of a mallard body. His first few miniature decoys were given to hunting buddies in the area, but soon he was operating a serious garage-based decoy business, selling miniatures as "far away as Massachusetts, Illinois and New York." He was completely self-taught and used

Audubon's "Water Bird Guide" for models and painting reference. He created most every species of duck which migrated through the area along with crows, gulls and a great horned owl which is considered by many to be his singular greatest work. Pictured below is a watch gander and a rare pair of his wigeons. His

decoys are truly pieces of mid-century folk art and his colorful miniatures are downright joyful.

In 1967, after Jack's death at the age of 85, Vernon preserved his father's carving patterns, tools, decoys and numerous

calls. Years later he almost single-handedly introduced his father's work to the decoy collecting world by setting up a table at the Ohio and Pointe Mouillee shows. When Vernon died in 1983 the family decoys, along with all the tools and patterns were sold at a large auction. Decoy collectors, Brett Staschke and the late Bryan Fidler did a tremendous job of researching and preserving Rider decoy history and a complete review of his decoys is in the works.

### **Conrad Jacob Klopping (1894-1985)**

Toledo, Ohio. Conrad Klopping was born in Toledo, attended public school through the 8th grade and then went to work in the family business. His father (A.C.) was an accomplished tinkerer; he received a patent on a heating stove; the inner mechanisms of a sleeper-sofa and a on a lever grip. Early on the family ventured into a bicycle repair shop but the core of the business was tinsmithing the installation of furnaces, stoves and roof flashing. By 1932 the family business successfully grew into a large, full-fledged design and manufacturer of custom stamped metal products located just east of the University of Toledo.

Conrad, the decoy carver, remained single and lived in the family home on Michigan Avenue in a Toledo working class neighborhood, just six blocks away from the Maumee River. In 1946 the family sold the





business and at the age 52, he was able to retire comfortably, living out his days quietly in the family home and in a summer residence on Edgewater Drive, just over the state line in Point Place, Michigan. According to his great nephew, he hunted all his life and spent many years going on great duck hunts up into Michigan with his father and older brother, Milton (1887-1973). He endeared himself to the neighborhood kids in Point Place with endless hours of the card game Canasta.

The large rig of decoys Conrad made for the family are immediately recognizable with their extremely low, wide bodies. As noted on page 118 in the Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations book by Kangas, 2011, Klopping decoys have two head styles; "resting low heads and alert high heads." As expected from a tool and die maker, his branding is bold and uniform.

Joseph "Buckeye Joe" P. Wooster (1934-2008) of Ashley, Ohio is worthy of the label "enigma." Born in Columbus in 1934, he was a soldier; a trained artist; was renowned as a mischievous but dedicated outdoorsman; was an unbeatably good marksman; and finally, a haphazard perfectionist. No description would be complete without acknowledging his trademark long gray beard and bell-shaped calabash pipe. Wooster started carving decoys from cork as a young boy, hunting along the Scioto River. While recuperating from his Korean War knee injury in the early 1950s, he started sketching ducks and patterns for decoys and further honed his skills with formal art training at the Columbus College of Art & Design. A decade later he left his job as an industrial artist to pursue duck carving full time.

He was a staple at decoy shows, winning major competitions from 1969 to at least 1978, and was recognized during his lifetime as one of the world's best carvers. With his talent, Wooster was able to replicate the essence of a duck without being a slave to every feathery detail. Even with this simplicity, he was torn between hunting and decorative decoys. The decoratives were winning contests and providing income for his family, yet he always wanted to remain authentic to the needs of the hunter. His admiration for the relatively crude Noe



cork decoys in his well-used hunting rig speaks to the value he placed on function over form. Buckeye Joe died at the Ohio Veteran's Home in 2008. A wonderfully carved and painted merganser is below.

*"Joe was a master decoy carver and wildlife artist. An author, storyteller and consummate duck hunter, Joe's love of nature spurred his passion for decoy carving. Joe's creative and distinctive style of carving has placed him among the most renowned national and international artists worldwide. His carvings have been displayed in numerous museums across the country including the Smithsonian Museum of Art."*

– Obituary 2008





Ending with Buckeye Joe Wooster is fitting. He was so passionate about decoys because they represented a splendid collision of nature, hunting, art and interesting people. He mentored some of this generation's best competitive carvers and supported the collector's efforts to preserve and celebrate decoys from the past. There is much work yet to be done; much more to be discovered.

The list of known Ohio carvers, especially from the early part of the 20th century is quite long: Bracher, Bruss, Clemons, Crookes, Davis, Gensman, Going, Gulau, Hurrell, McInnis, Meyer, Redding, Restle, Schell, Sharon, Steiger, Stotz and Yundt. Some produced hundreds of decoys and others only large personal rigs. Some are complete mysteries like the outstanding "Pepper" canvasbacks (above) with mortise and tenon inserted bills, discovered in Rocky River, Ohio.

What is certain is that birds from all these Ohio carvers and clubs will migrate through the rooms and auctions in years to come. It is our hope that collectors will more readily identify them, thus preserving and celebrating the fascinating lives behind them. Beyond the decoys and clubs, we wanted to highlight the contribution of manufacturers and artists to the rich legacy that is Ohio waterfowl-ing.

### **Edmund Henry Osthaus** (1858-1928)

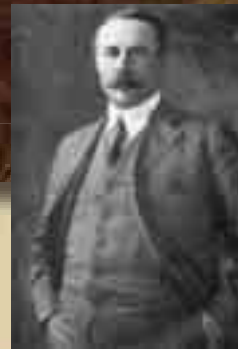
Born in Germany in 1859, Edmund Osthaus studied painting at the Royal Academy in Dusseldorf. In 1883, Osthaus came to the United States and settled in Toledo. Soon thereafter, Osthaus was

hired as the principal of the Toledo Academy of Fine Arts. After seven years, Osthaus resigned from his position, deciding to paint full-time. Osthaus had a passion for hunting and fishing, which became the subjects of a majority of his works. Above all, he was most prolific in the subject of hunting dogs. He became especially known for his detailed and life-like portraits of the dogs at work and at play. Osthaus's passion for dogs compelled him to follow various dog shows and sporting events; his dog portraits include field trial champion pointers and setters. He created a series of advertising postcards, prints and calendar pictures for DuPont. The Toledo Club maintains an impressive collection of some of his best, large scale oils.

**William Henry Machen** (1832-1911) was born in Arnhem, Holland. In 1847 his family sailed for America. After wintering in Cleveland, they moved onto a 100-acre farm near Toledo in the spring of 1858. The farm

setting gave William ample subjects for his paintings—landscapes, game birds, animals, rivers and streams. He also painted portraits, religious subjects, still life, and local scenery. Most of his work was oil, but also water color, pencil sketches, and some pen and ink. He and his wife Mary had eight children.

He exhibited his work at the Pennsylvania Academy, the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and the Detroit Museum of Art. In 1882 William and his family moved to Detroit where he taught art at Detroit College (later University of Detroit) and Sacred Heart Convent at Grosse Pointe. He continued his prolific art work, including portraits, religious subjects, and a variety of others. The artist and







his family remained in Detroit for 12 years. He eventually moved to Washington, D.C. in 1894. There he continued his painting, completing many portraits, still life, and scenes of nature. In his lifetime William Machen completed more than 2700 oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and sketches. He maintained a single register of his works which is now preserved in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

#### *Ohio Powder and Ammunition Companies*

Austin Powder Company is one of the oldest manufacturing enterprise in Cleveland. Begun in 1833 by the 5 Austin brothers to produce explosives used in blast-

ing rock to build the canals, the firm opened plants in Akron and Cleveland. Two of the brothers left to establish another company in southwest Ohio. -Taken from Cleveland: The Making of a City, Rose, 1950.

The first powder-mill in the Xenia, Ohio area was established in 1846 by Alvin and Lorenzo Austin and Benjamin Carlton.

The site of their plant being near an old scythe factory on the Little Miami river between Xenia and Yellow Springs, the site of the present mills. The Austin brothers continued the business until 1852, when Joseph W. King bought an interest in the plant, the firm name being changed to **Austin, King & Company**.



In 1855 King became the sole owner and at once incorporated the **Miami Powder Company**. In 1864, during the Civil War, the factory supplied black powder to the Union Army. King sold the Miami Powder Company in 1878 and established another plant at King's Station, in Warren county, Ohio, organizing a new company known as **King's Great Western Powder Company**. Following a major explosion in 1925, which destroyed most of the structures, the Miami Powder was closed.

#### **Peters Cartridge Company**

Joseph Warren King's son-in-law Gershom Moore Peters began working King's powder mill in 1881 and became president of the powder company when King died in 1885. Peters formed the Peters Cartridge Company at Kings Mills in 1887. Machinery was manufacturing four-thousand cartridges per hour by 1889. Remington Arms purchased the Peters Cartridge Company in 1934.

#### **Chamberlin Cartridge Company**

- Cleveland/Findlay

A duck hunt in the fall of 1883 proved to be a very significant day for hunters in America. Frank Chamberlin invited J. Palmer O'Neil,





president of the Pittsburgh Firearms Co., to shoot ducks on a marsh near Chamberlin's home in Cleveland, Ohio. The quality of the shells provided by Chamberlin impressed O'Neil. When he learned the ammunition had been loaded on a machine Chamberlin invented, his eyes lit up with dollar signs. Up to that time, all shells were loaded by hand with components supplied almost exclusively by the Union Metallic Cartridge Co. and the Winchester Repeating Arms Co., both Connecticut companies. Mass-produced shotgun shells were unheard of, and Mr. O'Neil quickly recognized the tremendous profits in store-bought, loaded shells. Chamberlin was the first ammunition company to mark shotgun shells for a particular bird or animal. Today these four old Chamberlin boxes are worth approximately \$4,000 each.

By 1900 Chamberlin was mostly out of the ammunition business, but his company's affiliate, the Cleveland Target Co., played a major role in supplying traps and targets to gun clubs throughout America. The company's early years saw their entire line of traps and targets manufactured at their Cleveland ammunition site. As Blue Rock targets increased in popularity, land was purchased in Findlay, Ohio for a new factory. Traps were profitable items for Chamberlin. The Expert and Extension models were made at Findlay, while larger models continued to be manufactured at the Cleveland plant until 1921. In August 1933, Chamberlin sold their target and trap business to the Remington Arms Co. Blue Rock targets are still made at the Findlay plant. —Research by Bob Hinman

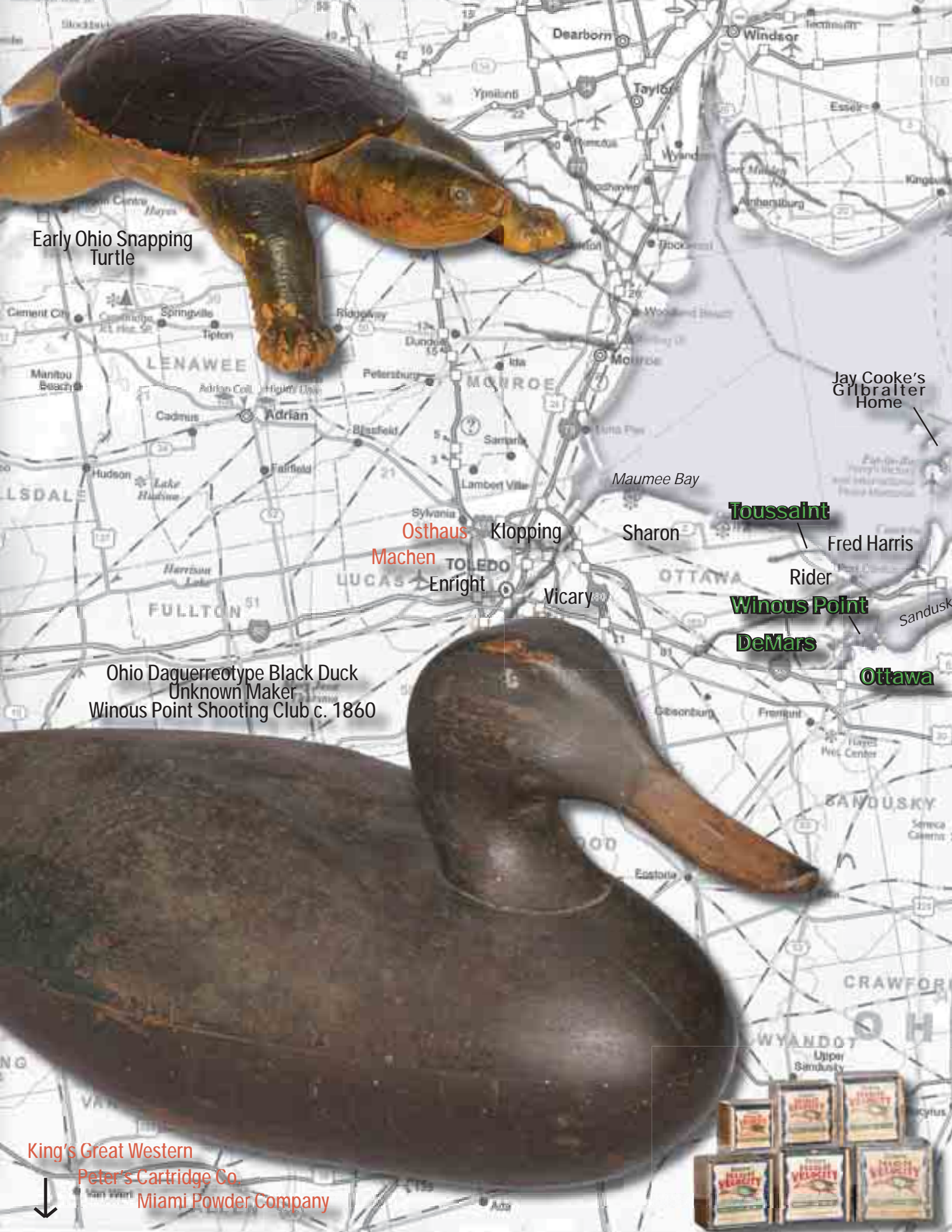
#### Kinney and Harlow Duck Call

This extraordinary duck call was produced by the combined efforts of C.L.V. Kinney and William F. Harlow of Newark, Ohio. They were co-workers in the same company and good friends. It is covered entirely in leather except for the brass portion of the shell. Stamped into the end of the shell are the words: Kinney and Harlow, Newark, Ohio. It has a glass eye and is 6" in length. It has a Reelfoot Lake-style sound mechanism. — Taken from *Collecting Antique Bird Decoys and Duck Calls: An Identification and Price Guide*, Luckey/Lewis, 2003

Other calls by Ohio carvers include one by Joe Wooster, engraved with "JW" and a beautiful tiger maple call by Noe.







Early Ohio Snapping Turtle

Jay Cooke's Gibralter Home

Toussaint

Fred Harris

Rider

Winous Point

DeMars

Ottawa

Ohio Daguerreotype Black Duck  
Unknown Maker  
Winous Point Shooting Club c. 1860

King's Great Western  
Peter's Cartridge Co.  
Miami Powder Company





Ohio Fish Plaque Marked  
George H. Myers



Austin Powder  
Company

Cleveland Powder  
Company

Chamberlin

Ohio Display at the  
Ward Museum

Portage River  
by Dischinger  
of Elmore, Ohio  
1914



Unknown Ohio Bufflehead  
c1890s



Wooster ↓ Noe



Seminar by  
**Jeff & Joyce Hay**  
[jeffjoycehay@charter.net](mailto:jeffjoycehay@charter.net)  
**269-414-9172**

**50<sup>th</sup> Annual North American  
Vintage Decoy & Sporting  
Collectibles Show**  
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Collectors Association**  
St. Charles, Illinois - April 2015