



NORTH AMERICAN
Decoy Collectors
ASSOCIATION

Fall 2021 Newsletter

**“It was just
great to get back
together again!”**



This was the consistent refrain from those who gathered for the “Chicagoland Decoy Show” at the Westin Lombard hotel in Lombard, Illinois in September. After what has seemed like an eternity, NADCA members and fellow collectors finally had an opportunity to reconnect and rekindle their passion for this hobby that we all enjoy so much.

While COVID presented a number of challenges to pulling this event off (see the story of how it all came together on page 7), all who attended came away with a smile. Most dealers reported surprisingly good sales given the circumstances

and were really impressed with the Westin Lombard hotel property. We are all looking forward to when the North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show returns April 26-30, 2022. Hope to see you there.

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NORTH AMERICAN DECOY COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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WHO WE ARE

The **North American 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 North American 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 **North American 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 NADCA newsletter. Contact Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and availability.

www.nadecoycollectors.org



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Our event in Lombard was tremendous learning for all of us. We returned to the roots of our organization. Our event focused on the member/collector with pared down levels of promotion to solicit the public's attendance. The dynamics were certainly challenging as COVID has changed everything. Nothing is normal. We attempted to reach out to gather opinions and perspectives from a large number of members and other sources. There was a significant amount of uncertainty and many were hesitant to travel or attend public events. We saw the environment change from infection rates declining to a rapid escalation in hospitalizations. This trend caused both Federal and State policies to change right up to the week of the show. The callmaker club (CCAA) had planned to attend our event, but then cancelled as the result of a COVID breakout from their event in South Carolina in August. Many held their room reservations until the last weekend before cancelling.

In the end, we elected to hold our event and those who attended were rewarded. It was a tremendous opportunity to see friends, get reconnected and considerable trade was accomplished. The new location and staff performed well, and it is a wonderful upgrade for us. The internet is active, but there is no substitute for handling an item and learning the story associated with it. The result of this show is that we are in great shape to make our April event even better as we gained important experience from dealing with the COVID environment and the new location.

We know that we need to rebuild everything as we have had to cancel the past two year's events. Our web tools and hosting have had some setbacks which have handicapped our

communications capability. We are fixing it and using the opportunity to move forward into a rapidly changing internet environment. The supply chain issues have impacted paper supply and we know that more disruptions will occur. These are things we will deal with and we have proven that we can adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Rest assured we are on a sound footing. Our finances are solid, we have a long term contract with an excellent show location, and the interest in our association is strong. We are retooling our message, the show dynamics and our tools for operating the association. The show week in April is being adjusted to accommodate more content and flexibility. We will share those details soon.

Our efforts to educate must be expanded as we see many new collectors getting engaged. The rapid changes in the internet are allowing us to create better tools for learning and education. There are significant numbers of items coming available that have not been offered in decades. This is an exciting time to learn and acquire.

Please renew your membership and talk to your friends to confirm your plans for our April event. It promises to be noteworthy and should not be missed.

We know that things have changed, but that makes it even more important to connect with one another. Those who attended Lombard in September enjoyed the camaraderie and saw some of the best decoys ever created.

Happy Holiday Season! Stay strong and safe. We will see you in Lombard in April.

Rick

Members Enjoyed the Chicagoland Decoy Show



Dave Spengler & Jon Deeter



Dean & Lynn Dashner



Mike Anway



Erik Spengler



John Bohrer



Gary Zinn



Mike Anderson



Keith Buchert



Phil & Beth Jones



Hank Norman



Pete Siggelko

Member News

Welcome New Members!

The Chicagoland Decoy Show saw a nice group of new members joining the NADCA as well as renewals from collectors who had let their membership lapse for some time as a result of shutdowns and inactivity caused by COVID. The club membership remains strong, and we look forward to further growth as we approach the 55th North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles show in April, 2022. In the meantime, please welcome these new members:



Dr. Mario Barbieri

Westfield, NJ
Mason and shorebird decoys

Jeremy Bergum

Greenfield, WI
Wisconsin decoys: Lake Koshkonong, Gromme, Zoelick, Wilde; Old hunting equipments/ammo boxes

Don Blecha

Morris, IL
Herters decoys

Russell Breitwieser

Naperville, IL

Russ Daughtridge

Elm City, NC
Wildfowler decoys from Old Saybrook, Quogue, and Point Pleasant

James Jankowski

Bellport, NY

Ray Johnson

Perryville, MO

George Juergens

Elkton, MD

Daniel Kotecki

Granville, IL
Illinois River decoys from Lacon to Ottawa; Whittington, Chiado, Destri

Richard Lowe

Alexandria, MN
Shotgun shell boxes

David Mueller

Carmel, IN
Illinois River and Michigan decoys

Todd Riley

Boscobel, WI
Vintage decoys

Robert Roloff

Elgin, WI
Antique fishing lures, poles, equipment

Ray Varnum

Smithton, IL
Illinois River decoys

Our Financial Status Remains Strong

NADCA Treasurer Bill Dodge reports that club remains on very solid footing. Despite concerns over the pandemic and calendar conflicts, attendance at the Chicagoland Decoy Show was strong. Our cash position has increased by over \$11,000 since our last April show in 2019 in part through new member acquisition, renewals, and table fees. This positions the club well as we enter the planning period for the annual show in April, 2022.

Advertising Helps Support Club Publications

Each year we offer the opportunity to advertise in our Pre-Show Newsletter issue which is mailed to over 6000 active collectors throughout North America. This allows dealers, auction houses and related organizations to reach a large, passionate audience with their message. It also works hard to create enthusiasm for our show and the hobby in general. We also offer advertising opportunities in our annual Member Directory, which our members consult continuously throughout the year. The revenue generated from advertising significantly reduces the club's outlay for these pieces, and at the same time lets us promote the hobby to a wide audience in a way that is good for all of us.



We couldn't do it without the ongoing support of our loyal partners. We'll be sending out an email shortly to a variety of constituents asking for their support in 2022. Anyone interested in the opportunity to reach over 6000 collectors through the Pre-Show Newsletter, or in advertising to the entire membership through the Member Directory, please contact Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and more information. We offer everything from business card sized ad to two-page spreads, and rates start as low as \$50.

Member Dues Payable January 1, 2022



As you know, NADCA memberships are calendar year based. Unless you are already paid up for 2022, your dues for next year are payable by January 1, 2022. Dues go a long way toward helping us put on the April show and ensuring that your membership has value. If you have questions about the status of your dues, contact Matt at matt.bryant@wilsonco.com.

Chicagoland Decoy Show Report

The first Chicagoland Decoy Show was, by all measures, a success. While less ambitious and certainly smaller than our annual show in April, it gave our members a much anticipated opportunity to rekindle long-time relationships and engage in buy, sell, trade activity.

The “official” start date was Thursday, September 16, but dealers started showing up on Monday and by Wednesday over 35 rooms were filled with sporting collectibles for sale. On Thursday night, upwards of 75 rooms in the hotel were filled with show attendees and dealers, who offered a broad array of items including fish and waterfowl decoys, lures, creels, rustic carvings, calls, sporting art, and much more. A good deal of commerce took place and, in the context of surging pandemic, most dealers seemed pleased with the action. All were thrilled to be back together sharing one another’s passion.

Thursday evening dealers met in the hotel’s ballroom to locate their tables and to take care of the business of registering, signing waivers, and getting wrist bands which would allow them access into ballroom for the next two days. Many then walked over to dinner at Harry Caray’s restaurant in

the hotel or ventured out to any one of number of other nearby eateries.

On Friday morning, dealers were lined up early outside of the ballroom just champing at the bit to get set up for the 10am opening. Once inside, they were welcomed with a free buffet breakfast provided by the club which seemed to be much appreciated given the early hour. At opening, there was a good sized group of potential buyers on hand waiting to get in to get first crack at the items for sale. Given the paucity of shows over the past two years, dealer inventories were very strong and featured many terrific items. In addition, Guyette & Deeter, Copley, and Auctioneers, Inc. were all on hand displaying some wonderful pieces that were to be available in their upcoming sales.

Saturday’s 9am start was once again met with a group of buyers anxious to see what they might find inside. The total gate for the event was over



Donna Tonelli catches up with Tom & Valerie Bosworth from Hawaii

150, which given the recent spike in COVID, was probably more than anyone could expect. Even so, many dealers were able to move some of their wares. By the 2pm close, all were ready to pack up after what was described by most as truly enjoyable time.



Dealers brought a wide variety of items to sell.



Auction houses displayed wonderful items in their upcoming sales

By all accounts, the Westin and their staff did a terrific job. The rooms were good sized, well-appointed and clean. The ballroom was spacious and well-lit. A lunch offering was set up just outside of the ballroom each day making it convenient for dealers to grab a bite without being away from their tables for too long. In addition to Harry Caray's restaurant and its spacious bar, other hotel amenities enjoyed by the membership included a large swimming pool, exercise facility, a comfortable lobby, and a quick stop breakfast area with a full Starbucks offering. All agreed that this property is a significant upgrade for the club and will serve us well in the future.



Several contemporary carvers showcased their talent



Collecting is a family affair

The Story Behind the Chicagoland Decoy Show and How it Happened

The idea for a show in the fall timeframe was first suggested by NADCA President Rick Sandstrom shortly after we were once again forced to cancel our annual show in April, 2021. It was clear that there was huge pent-up demand among the collecting community. The Westin hotel had reported receiving over 400 phone calls inquiring about the April show prior to its cancellation.

Finding a Date

The initial challenge was finding available dates that made sense for us. Less than six months out, we weren't very optimistic. COVID had forced the cancellation of so many events from weddings, graduations to commercial shows and exhibits in 2020 and 2021, that there were record numbers of others vying for "make-up" dates in the fall as well. However, with a stroke of luck and the hotel's interest in finally beginning to work with us, we were able to secure the mid-September dates.

"Keep it Simple"

With this hurdle behind us, the Board began the task of figuring out what the show would look like, all in the context of a pandemic that was completely unpredictable along with changing local requirements related to large gatherings. Should the show include both room-to-room trading and a ballroom event? What about displays and seminars? What could we actually pull off in such a short period of time? And most important, what did we need to consider to ensure a safe environment for all attendees. In the end, we decided that "keep it simple" was the operating principle that would give us the

best chance of making the event a success.

Formulating the Plan

From there it was all hands on deck. The ballroom table layout was designed to maximize space between tables allowing ample room for buyers to work the show. An initial plan for selling rooms was blocked out based on our experience and dealer preferences at past shows. To firm this up, email blasts were sent to the membership to alert them to the show plans, urging them to make table and room reservations as soon as possible so that we could begin to give the hotel estimates of our requirements and to more definitively construct the selling room plan. To promote the new show to collectors, a postcard announcing the show was mailed to 6,200 collectors throughout North America. And announcements were posted in various collector Facebook groups providing show details and contact information.

COVID Surges

By early August we had a pretty good idea of who was coming. Dealers had committed for tables and most of the room reservations were in. We actually added rooms to our block to accommodate growing demand. However, by mid-August, COVID had made a turn for the worse. Illinois was considering a number of measures that would have a significant effect on the show, up to and including cancellation. Added to that, the callmakers club (CCAA) cancelled their planned attendance due to a COVID breakout as the result of an early August club gathering

in South Carolina. The Board met frequently during this time, making decisions based on the most up-to-date information.

By the first week in September, COVID had continued to surge and Illinois issued a mask mandate for all indoor public gatherings. It was obvious that we had to comply with the Illinois mandate, and there was pressure on us to protect the organization by having attendees sign waivers recognizing the risk inherent attending such an event in the current environment. We quickly sent an email blast to inform the membership of our decision and associated requirements, and posted on social media to reach potential attendees. Room cancellations followed as members reassessed their personal risk and willingness to comply with the new requirements.

"Go/No Go" Decision

The Board met again to consider the current situation and implications for the show. While there was certainly some vigorous debate, the final "go" decision was made just 10 days before the show was to start. Many collectors clearly still had interest and we had done everything possible to ensure the health and safety of all attendees.

There was still a bunch of work to do in a very short period of time. Finalizing table layouts. Writing and producing waivers. Sourcing and buying wrist bands. Producing registration booklets. Arranging security. Setting up food for dealers, and much more. In the end, it all got done and a good time was had by all.

2022 Show Preview



With the pandemic seemingly having less and less impact on our daily lives, your Board is already busy planning the 2022 North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show to be held in Chicago, April 26-30, 2022. The recent successful event at the Westin Lombard makes us more excited than ever about our new venue. In addition to room-to-room trading and a tabled ballroom event, our current plan is to execute all of the activities we had previously scheduled for this year's show:

- Displays including waterfowl and bird carvings by Elmer Crowell, fish decoys by Oscar Peterson, Lake Poygan Shooting Boxes, Shot Shell Boxes, and a special President's Display
- Seminars covering the lives and work of both Elmer Crowell and Oscar Peterson
- Member Vintage and Contemporary decoy contest featuring Blue-Winged Teal
- Contemporary Carver display
- Guyette & Deeter auction
- Carving demonstrations
- Silent auctions and much more.

Please note that if you had already reserved tables for either the 2020 or 2021 show and didn't have tables in September, we will apply your payment to your tables for 2022. Contact Matt Bryant at matt.bryant@wilsonco.com or at 785-201-2923 if you have any questions about table registration.



It's not too early to book your room and to reserve your tables.

For room reservations, call Kenia Izquierdo at 630-719-8083 or Marriott Reservations at 888-627-9031. Be sure to mention that you are with the "Decoy Show" to get the reduced rate. Or click on this link to make reservations online.

[Book your group rate for 57th North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show 2022](#)

For table reservations, contact Matt Bryant at matthew.bryant@wilsonco.com or 785-201-2923.

MEMBER PROFILE:

Matt Bryant

A LEGACY OF COLLECTING

NORTH AMERICAN
Decoy Collectors
ASSOCIATION

For Kansas native Matt Bryant, collecting is truly in his genes. His father Alan Bryant started collecting in the 1970s and began taking Matt along on his collecting trips at a very early age. This ignited an interest in collecting that has blossomed into a life-long passion that he hopes to pass on to his kids.



Getting Started

Matt's early forays with his dad were like attending an advanced class in collecting. Since finding things in Kansas was difficult, Matt learned early on the importance of casting a wide net. This included traveling well outside of his home state, developing relationships with pickers, networking with other collectors, buying collector books and auction catalogs, and advertising in local papers and national collecting magazines. Matt would join his dad, along with his long-time friend, hunting companion and NADCA member Lynn Woodworth, on their many trips to antiques shows and flea markets throughout the Midwest in search of pocketknives, decoys, lures, advertising, and anything else that piqued their interest. Even his mom, then a high school teacher, supported the habit by letting Matt skip school for a week every April to go off with his dad and Lynn on picking trips to Wisconsin, ending up at the annual Pheasant Run show in St. Charles, IL.

*Matt with Lloyd Tyler Widgeon,
Crisfield, MD, ca. 1930s*



Dye Family Redhead, Maryland, ca. 1880s; Wufflein Cast Iron Target, Philadelphia, ca. 1890s; Ike O'Neal Brant, Ocracoke, NC, ca. 1920s

As early as the sixth grade, Matt was already collecting a variety of items. Even on a pre-teen's limited budget, he managed to find lures, paper decoys, pocketknives, and even barbershop collectibles that he could afford. These early opportunities came through adventures with his dad that included going to NFLCC shows, gun and knife shows, and other like kind events. He attended his first of a continuous string of National Decoy Shows at Pheasant Run when he was just eleven years old. It wasn't long before collectors would start to

bring paper decoys to the show for him to add to his collection.

The Education Continues

By the time Matt was in high school, he had graduated from paper to wood decoys. As a budding collector, he focused on Mason decoys which he believed offered a "safe" entry point because of their wider availability and a solid track record on values. His dad and Lynn would counsel him on what to look for in terms of paint and form, and how to



Hudsonian Curlew, Jamaica Bay, NY, ca. 1880s



Extremely Rare Passenger Pigeon Gun Powder Tin, Austin Powder, Akron, OH, ca. 1850s

spot repairs and other issues that might impact the value. Accompanying the two men provided Matt with the opportunity to visit with many collectors from all over the country and to handle great pieces in the process. He recalls visiting Ron Gard in Dallas and seeing his phenomenal collection -- decoys by the likes of Elmer Crowell and the Ward Brothers, cigar store Indians, and a wide range of other folk art. Visits with Harold and Tom Haertel opened his eyes to an ever-wider variety of antiques,



"Dart" Shorebirds, Virginia or Long Island

before they sold off much of their collection in the 80s. He even ventured as far as Albuquerque to visit Jim Young and his impressive collection. All of these experiences provided the foundation for the collection that Matt has assembled thus far.

The Collection

As Matt's experience and budget have grown over the years, his collecting interests have evolved as well. He has moved away from the more familiar to a focus on unique items with great form as well as those that have some connection to his early days in Kansas. As such, his collection includes a broad variety of items including hunting and skinning knives, gun powder tins, folk art carvings, advertising, glass target balls, fish carvings, and decoys.

Matt's collection of knives and folk art underscores Matt's interest in more "under the radar," lesser known items. His hunting and skin-



Tins/Boxes and 1906 Peters Cartridge Co. Arkansas City Gun Club Shooting Trophy



Elmer Crowell Weathervane, ca. 1920s



L. Nevill Knives, ca. 1930s



Folsom Prisoner Folk Art, ca. 1930s



POW Folk Art by Russian Prisoner, 1943



Fish Decoy/Lure Display



Henry Ruggles Mallard & Bluebill, Henry, IL, ca. 1880s



Early "Backyard" Mason Redhead. Detroit, ca. 1890s

ning knife collection is focused on pieces by a craftsman by the name of "L. Nevill." Probably made in the early 1900s, not much is known about Nevill or where he is from, although many of his pieces have surfaced in the Midwest. Few of his knives are known to exist which makes Matt's group all that much more impressive.

A group of folk art crafted by criminals in prisons and POW camps is fascinating. This includes a wonderful Indian on horseback carved by two prisoners serving time in Folsom Prison (CA) for holding up a gas station in the 1930s. Unique POW carvings include a hunting dog with a duck in its mouth



Rare Dodge Swan, Detroit, ca. 1880s

made for a German soldier by a Russian prisoner in 1943, and a bathing beauty made by George Nesbit at Camp #5 in Houma, LA in 1945.

Connecting to his birthplace of Arkansas City, Kansas is an important aspect of Matt's collection. It features a trout made by Orville Smock of Arkansas City and a Peters Cartridge Company Shooting Trophy awarded at the Arkansas City Gun Club in 1906.

He also has a pintail, yellow-legs and a standing mallard by Wayne Willis of nearby Wichita, all circa 1940s. He continues to search for more items by this local maker.

Waterfowl decoys do make up a significant part of Matt's treasures and represent makers from coast to coast. Among his favorites are an early and extremely rare J.N. Dodge factory hollow swan with applied wings. This piece came



(Top) Half-size John Graham (attrib.) Can, MD, ca. 1970s; (bottom) Ibis Gun Club Cans, ca. 1880s

out of the Boscobel House\Museum in Garrison, New York and deaccessioned at auction, catalogued as an unknown. Matt immediately recognized its full-bodied Dodge form and just had to have it. It enjoys a special spot in his home.

He is equally fond of a pair of Canvasback drakes, ca. 1880s, branded "Ibis Gun Club" in

California. The birds also carry the brand of a Dr. Toland, a gold miner and surgeon who helped establish universities in California in the 19th century.

Given his Midwestern roots, Matt also has assembled an impressive group of decoys from the region as well. He is attracted to the work of Henry Ruggles, one of the earliest decoy carvers in the Illinois River Valley who influenced a generation of carvers, including Charles Perdew. While these birds are very tough to find, his collection features several Ruggles birds. He is always on the lookout to add more to this group.

Matt's eyes light up as he recounts the story of finding a rig of Elliston decoys through eBay. He initially took a gamble and bought one bird that, while overpainted entirely in black, he believed was an Elliston by its form. Once he got the decoy, he thought he could



Elliston Teal after taking down black overpaint

see some original paint underneath the overpaint. In dealing with the seller, he discovered that he had more similarly painted birds – 10 decoys in all including pintails and more teal. He partnered with Lynn Woodworth to buy them all and with a ton of elbow grease and restoration help from Lynn and Russ Allen, was able to bring most of them back to life. The seller told him that they were last used in the 1990s and insisted that the black really stood out on the water. Today, Matt laughs at the image of someone hunting over a rig of all black Elliston decoys!

His large grouping of East coast decoys includes a half-size canvas-back by John Graham (MD), a Dye family redhead (MD), and Elmer Crowell goose weathervane (MA) from the 1920s. He's very excited about recently adding an Ike

O'Neal Brant (NC) that came out of the Mackey collection.

While he has sold off most of his factory decoys, he still has a very early "Backyard" Mason red-head drake from the 1880s. He bought this as part of a rig of five early Mason birds – 2 redheads, 2 bluebills and a mallard branded, all branded "Bearer" – and all overpainted completely in black. He was able to take the paint down to reveal very strong original paint underneath. Matt wrote an article for Hunting & Fishing Collectibles magazine sharing the story of this find and the subsequent effort to bring them back to their original form.

A variety of shorebird carvings are sprinkled throughout Matt's considerable collection as well. This includes a grouping of what he refers to as "darts" given their

unique form. He believes it to be eastern shore of Virginia, or from Long Island, possibly made by Native Americans. It also features a very early Hudsonian Curlew from Jamaica Bay, NY with a single piece neck, head and bill.

A Commitment to the Hobby

Despite being in the middle of a successful engineering career and rearing three children, Matt has long been a big contributor to our hobby. He has written or contributed to several articles on decoys that have helped further our collective knowledge and enjoyment. And, of course, he gives tirelessly of his time to the NADCA as a Board member and Table Chair for the annual show, which leverages his analytical skills to successfully deal with the complexity of the exhibit room layout in the context of on-going changes. A special thanks to Matt for all that he does. He can be reached at matthew.bryant@wilsonco.com.



Wayne Willis Carvings, Wichita, KS, ca. 1940s