



NORTH AMERICAN  
**Decoy Collectors**  
ASSOCIATION

**Fall 2020 Newsletter**

# So Looking Forward to 2021!

Phew! 2020 has been quite a year to say the least. A global pandemic. Wildfires. And even Murder Hornets! Most of us can't wait to just reboot and move into the new year.

Despite all of the chaos, for collectors it's worth reflecting on some of the positive things that happened this year. While virtually every sporting collectibles event in North America was cancelled, there were clear signs that the state of the decoy market is on very solid footing. Notably, Guyette & Deeter's sale in May, at the peak of the uncertainty over the virus, was a smashing success despite being its first ever without in-person bidding. Setting 28 world auction records for makers and realizing over \$3 million in total sales, the strength of this sale was a surprise to many and a delight to all who collect. They followed that up with a \$4 million effort in August with eight decoys selling for over \$100,000 and 56 selling for more than \$10,000. This was the 5th highest grossing auction of all time!

Likewise strong showings at the Copley and Auctioneers, Inc. sales during the year also demonstrated the passion that we collectors have for these old relics. We even witnessed

a surprising upsurge in direct sales through Facebook and other online venues this year filling the void created by the lack of in-person shows.

While COVID-19 forced us to cancel the annual show in Chicago, we can't help but get excited, albeit a bit cautiously, about the prospects of being able to gather once again with our fellow collectors for camaraderie and networking next year. We are currently planning to conduct our 55th show at the Westin Lombard Hotel, April 20-24, 2021. You can make your reservations at the Westin now at 888-627-9031. Make sure you tell them you are with the decoy show.

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**North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show**  
**The Westin Lombard, Lombard, Illinois**  
**April 20-24, 2021**

*Discover • Preserve • Celebrate*

# 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](mailto:jseregny@gmail.com) or 586-530-6586 for rates and availability.

[www.midwestdecoy.org](http://www.midwestdecoy.org)



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

2020 has been a real shitstorm here in Iowa. COVID is elusive and we just experienced Derecho 2020 which we are learning was the largest storm with the most damage in a very long time. This reminds me of the special mission military environment when our plans would become obsolete before we could even start to execute the mission. Things are constantly changing and facts are uncertain.

Our association has weathered this environment well. Membership has fallen a bit as many usually renew at the show, but we are regaining those members and the outreach has recruited 35 new members in the past few months. A majority of the 2020 show table reservation members have chosen to hold their positions for next year. The phone traffic has been very active and many had fun at auction viewing gatherings.

Our strategy for the year forward is to upgrade our online tools and content to allow more educational access and networking potential. That will allow better collector knowledge which is critical. This year's show plan provided a wonderful base for the 2021 event and the extra planning time has allowed us to explore different strategies to deal with the new environment. The Westin Lombard facility has a variety of break out rooms that can accommodate a series of educational exhibits in separate rooms, insuring that we can control the number of people in each area. The ballroom has dividers that allow for traffic control and extra spacing for safety. A particular issue is access to food service, but the property's full range of choices provides options based on each individual's personal preference.

I know that it is possible to create a safe environment and that the demand for our event is at an extremely high level. There are two reference points that I keep my eye on for data from which to get some guidance. One is my Mayo team which has been dealing with many COVID patients through all the mutations and to date none of the Mayo staff has been infected at work. Second, a recent study found that infection rates on airplanes where passengers and crew were masked was only .00003 percent. So air travel is safe.

You have all seen that the decoy auction demand has been strong with many bidders very active on many of the offerings. That has allowed many wonderful items to come to market and that is accelerating. In addition, the current media narrative has created a strong response to our country and interest in Americana has jumped up significantly. The reality is that this inspiring American folk art is gaining new appreciation and demand. That is great and long overdue.

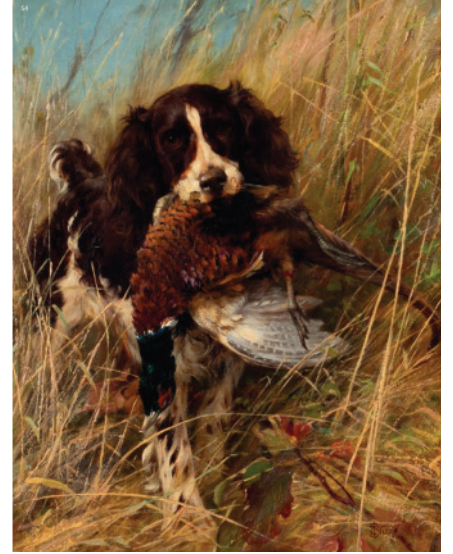
We appreciate all the kind communication and support. Please take time to share your perspective and renew your membership. We all know that we can do more together than individually. Post more of your favorites online and take time to communicate with friends old and new. Take the time to ask what others are looking to acquire as you may be able to arrange a connection. I mentor several new collectors all the time and am always finding them another member with similar interests.

Enjoy a great hunting season for both wildfowl and decoys. Stay safe and enjoy a wonderful and blessed holiday season.

*Rick*



# The Decoy Market Remains Strong:



## Some Top Auction Lots in 2020





# Member News

## Name Change Driving Membership Growth

Wow! Our name change, and related free hat promotion, has really generated some interest and new member activity over the past several months. Just since our last newsletter in July, 35 collectors have joined the NADCA during what is typically a quiet period for member acquisition. A full three-quarters of these new members come from outside of the Midwest representing the Northeast, Southeast, South, Far West and Canada, underscoring the breadth of our geographic footprint. And their collecting interests are as varied as where they live. Please welcome these new members and reach out to them to see if any of them share your particular collecting interests. You can find out more about them through the searchable online member directory at [nadecoycollectors.org](http://nadecoycollectors.org).



### Lou Acetti

Sewell, NJ  
*Delaware River decoys; Bob White decoys ; Other contemporary decoys*

### David H Baker

Woodbury, CT  
*Decoys*

### Jim P Brace

Liberty Township, OH  
*Hollow Canadian birds*

### Peter Cilento

East Moriches, NY  
*Long Island duck and shorebird decoys. Decoy books.*

### William Bradley Cox

Jacksonville, FL  
*Canadian decoys, Michigan, Wisconsin, 1,000 Islands, and Maryland decoys*

### Stephen A Cunliffe

Nepean, ON  
*Canadian hollow*

### Mike Dedekind

West Lawn, PA  
*Varied*

### Gary DiMarco

Oxford, NY  
*Vintage Long Island, NY and Connecticut Duck & Shorebird Decoys*

### Griff Evans

Chester, MD  
*Pre-1950 original condition decoys and shorebirds of the eastern Shore of MD and VA*

### Cliff Feldheim

West Sacramento, CA  
*West Coast Decoys, Chesapeake Bay, North Carolina, and pre 1930 working decoys*

### Bradley C Fisk

Davenport, IA  
*Illinois River carvers*

### Rick Fitch

Harleysville, PA  
*Ontario, New Jersey, Delaware River*

### Michael Fleshman

Chillicothe, OH  
*Shorebird & Fish Decoys*

### Michael Gendreau

Winter Park, FL  
*Factory Birds - Mason, Evans, Dodge*

### Robert E Godfrey

Milford, DE  
*Interesting Vintage Decoys*

### David J Herrema

Sonoma, CA  
*Old working decoys*

### Kenneth G Hussey

Brantford, ON  
*Toronto School*

### Mike J Langner

Danville, CA  
*Masons, West Coast*

### Brian D Lavender

Rhinebeck, NY  
*Gunning canvasbacks and black ducks from Delmarva area*

### Allen E Linkchorst

Ewing, NJ  
*Delaware River, NJ brant and decoy history and photos*

### Bryan Maedgen

Houston, TX  
*Masons, Evans, and Hurley Conklin*

### Mike R. Martin

Nashua, NH  
*Dealer & collector of quality original antique and contemporary decoys at A&M Decoys & Folk Art ([aandmdecoysandfolkart.com](http://aandmdecoysandfolkart.com))*

### John W Matthews

Chesley, ON  
*Gunning decoys from the Great Lakes region.*

### Paul J McCollum

Thomasville, GA  
*Masons, NC, VA & Bay decoys*

### Dale W Oller

Raleigh, NC  
*Eastern and Southern vintage black ducks*

### Brad W Peterson

Oakdale, MN  
*Carver of decoratives*

### Joseph A Piel

Mellen, WI  
*Anything Decoy*

### Colton C Roshau

Davenport, IA  
*Mason decoys, vintage shotgun shell boxes/wooden crates, and advertising. (Specialize in Peters Cartridge Company)*

### Tim Schloss

Erie, PA  
*Decoys, sporting art, books*

### Gary C Seitz

Six Mile, SC  
*Decoy Carver*

### Chad Tragakis

Springfield, VA  
*Chesapeake Bay Decoys*

### Harlan L Van Vark

Pella, IA

### Mark Wagner

York, PA  
*Chesapeake Bay decoy makers, Harry Jobes, Pat Vincenti*

### Robert Wall

Black Hawk, CO  
*Upper Susquehanna Flats*

### Gregory D Zartman

Westfield Center, OH  
*Vintage duck and goose decoys*



# Member News

## Members Only Facebook Group Growing Every Day



If you are not among the over 200 members currently participating in the club's Facebook collecting group, you are missing out on an opportunity to share your collection, get help with ID and valuation, and even buy/sell/trade with other members in a secure and safe environment. Unlike some other online collector groups, there's the assurance that you always know with whom you are dealing. To join the group, just set up your personal account at [nadecoycollectors.org](http://nadecoycollectors.org) (if you haven't already done so), and then click on the Facebook logo in the Members Only area. You'll be glad you did.

## Newsletter/Directory Advertising Helps Support Club Activities

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 allows the club to provide a variety of member benefits, including these newsletters and the many amenities provided at the show. It also lets us promote the hobby 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 2021. Anyone interesting 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](mailto:Jseregny@gmail.com) or 586-530-6586 for rates and more information. We offer everything from business card-sized ads to two-page spreads, and rates start as low as \$50.



## New NADCA Hats Available

Most show goers know that we always offer hats and other club wearables for sale at the annual show. In the absence of a show this year, we are offering our new North American Decoy Collectors Association hats by mail to our members for only \$20.

And the shipping is free! Just send a check for \$20 made out to the "NADCA to Jeff Seregny at 5 Lenox Lane, Hilton Head Island, SC 29926, and we'll send your new hat off to you right away.



## Member Dues

As you know, NADCA memberships are calendar year based. Unless you are already paid up for 2021, your dues for next year are payable by January 1, 2021. Membership Chair Matt Bryant will be sending out dues notifications shortly to all members whose memberships expire at the end of this year. Please respond promptly as it is part of what allows us to put on the show, develop



these newsletters and provide other benefits of membership. If you have questions about the status of your dues, you can check your online account or contact Matt at [matt.bryant@wilsonco.com](mailto:matt.bryant@wilsonco.com).

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# Member News



## The 2021 Show

At this point, your Board is planning for the 2021 Show to be held in Chicago, April 20-24, 2021, and we continue to be really excited about our new venue at the Westin Lombard hotel. Our current plan is to execute what we had scheduled for this year's show:

- Displays including wildfowl 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.

Of course, given the ongoing environment of uncertainty regarding the impact of the pandemic, we will have to remain flexible. The Board will continue to explore alternative formats that will still allow us to all enjoy this great hobby together. We will keep the membership informed as we move forward.

Please note that if you had already reserved tables for the 2020 show, we will apply your payment to your tables for 2021. You can be assured that if you reserved tables this year, your reservation stands for next year's show. Contact Matt Bryant at [matt.bryant@wilsonco.com](mailto:matt.bryant@wilsonco.com) or at 785-201-2923 if you have any questions about table registration.





MEMBER PROFILE:  
**Jan Reeder:**

FOR THIS NORTHWEST COLLECTOR  
DECOYS ARE A NATURAL EXTENSION  
OF LOVE FOR THE ARTS



NORTH AMERICAN  
**Decoy Collectors**  
ASSOCIATION



Jan with her "Favorite" Decoy/ Elmer Crowell Oversized Mallard,  
East Harwich, MA, ca. 1920

Ranked by *Southern Living Magazine* as the second best "beach town for retirement," the charming fishing village of Gig Harbor on the Puget Sound in Washington State may seem like a surprising home for a collection of spectacular vintage decoys. However, for NADCA member Jan Reeder it's a natural extension of her passion for art and all things oozing with history. There is a variety of collectibles, including Asian dishes, wooden buckets, fishing creels, old chairs, antique metals, candle holders and old sea chests, beautifully intermingled with her decoys displayed throughout her home, creating beautiful vignettes that bring all of the pieces to life.

Since moving with her family to Washington from Wisconsin on the shores of Lake Superior at the age of 10, Jan has enjoyed a deep connection to the history and culture, and has been an active promoter of the arts in



Washington. She devoted several years working to keep art curriculum in the schools. She has also served on the boards of local area arts and culture related groups including the Pierce County Arts Commission, and Centrum, a concert venue and gathering place for artists and creative thinkers from around the world. She has found collecting decoys to be another avenue through which she can connect to these interests.

## Discovering Decoys

Jan's initial attraction to old collectible decoys happened in an unexpected way. In 1993, while travelling through Pennsylvania with a girlfriend, they stopped in an antique store to have a look around. She was collecting antique accessories at the time and was hoping to add a piece or two. However, while sifting through the shop, a few old decoys off in a corner grabbed her attention. Her friend urged her to buy them and Jan's fascination with old pieces meant she just had to act. She bought three birds – a merganser and a couple of Canadian lures. This would be the beginning of a wonderful and long-lasting relationship.



*(l-r) Dille Plover, Harry V. Shourds Robin Snipe, George Boyd Yellowlegs, Seabrook, NH, ca. 1910*



*Blair school Pintail Drake, ca. 1860-70*



*Ira Hudson Merganser, Chincoteague, VA, ca. 1930s*



*D. Roesch Green-Winged Teal Pair, Atlantic City, NJ, ca. 1900*

Jan's collection grew slowly in the early years. She readily admits that in the beginning "all of the birds looked alike." She used the time to immerse herself in becoming as knowledgeable about old decoys as she could. Jan says she just loves to learn and experience new things, describing herself as an education "junkie." She has jumped head-long into learning about a variety of subjects over the years including far-flung endeavors such as boat restoration, playing the ukulele, and recently wild mushroom picking. She even earned a business degree at age of 60 "just for fun." She has also enjoyed learning about other cultures via extensive

travel throughout the world. She fondly recalls one of her favorite trips to Mongolia where she lived in the native accommodations called "Gers" (similar to a "yurt") for almost two weeks. She has channeled this thirst for learning into her growing passion for decoys as well. She subscribed to Decoy Magazine and Hunting & Fishing Collectibles, and read and re-read every collecting book she could get her hands on. She also credits attending auctions, shows and working "room to room" trading events for helping her to understand the nuances of paint and condition. All of this not only gave her the knowledge and confidence to make more substantial



purchases, but it also helped her to achieve a true focus for her collecting. Fortunately, her husband had also become quite taken with her decoys and decided to join in on the fun.

## Diving Deeper

By 1998, the Reeder's were prepared to get more "serious" about decoys. She and her husband always enjoyed seeing different parts of the country and made a trip St. Michaels, MD to have a look around. While shopping the town, they happened upon the Keepers Orvis Sporting Goods store where they found a few decoys to buy among the store's broader offerings. Having really enjoyed the area, they went back the following year to see more and to reconnect with some old friends.



*One of Jan's first decoys*



*Harry V. Shourds Yellowlegs, Tuckerton, NJ, ca. 1900*

They visited Keepers again and this time met then store owner Vance Strausburg, who of course is an NAD-CA member and long-time collector. He invited them to visit his collection and she recalls what an impression this made on her. She wanted better quality birds.

In 2000, they heard about a "big" decoy auction at Sotheby's in New York. Although it was January, they figured they should go ahead and brave the cold weather to see what this was all about. Of course, this was the sale of the famous McCleery collection. They used this as an opportunity to meet and talk to many serious collectors to both further their education and make important contacts that would surely help grow their collection in the future. This led to an introduction to collector and historian, Alan Haid, who Jan credits with being her most influential mentor over the years. She recalls his most important advice, "Buy the best quality and condition you can afford,"



*Ira Hudson Brant, Chincoteague, VA, ca. 1930*

and has taken this to heart ever since. She also met Russ Goldberger along with many others, and recounts how helpful and willing all were to share their knowledge.

The Sotheby's auction was really a springboard to regularly attending



*Dowitcher with Shoe Button Eyes, Cobb Island, VA, ca. last quarter 19th Cent.*





*Mason Factory Shorebirds (Mourning Dove, Curlew, Yellowlegs), Detroit, MI, ca. 1910*

shows and auctions in the East, in addition to leading to eye-opening trips to see the Haid and Goldberger collections. During one trip back to St. Michaels for a show, Jan met Baltimore resident Dr. Mort Kramer. She learned that Kramer had long ago befriended Lem and Steve Ward and, in time, became their personal physician. He had, of course, acquired a number of Ward Brothers decoys in the process. The doctor eventually invited Jan to see his collection. There she became enamored with his many shorebirds and ultimately bought her very first shorebird from

Kramer, a spectacular Willet by John Dilley. Over the years, Jan has had the privilege of seeing some of the finest collections in the country. Among the most memorable was her trip to view the amazing collection of the late Jay Koetje, housed in a magnificent building filled with decoys, duck calls, outboard motors, punt guns and more.

### The Collection

While the great Northwest certainly offers opportunities to find wonderful regional examples, Jan's decoy interests migrated well east



*Nate Quillen "Boat Bottom" Canvasback Drake, Rockwood, MI, ca. 1870*



*John Dilley Black Belled Plover in Fall Plumage, Quogue, Long Island, NY, ca. 1890 from the Dr. Mort Kramer Collection*

of where she lives. Bolstered by the extensive knowledge gained from networking with so many collectors, Jan has developed a clear vision for her collection. She focuses on decoys that are at least 100 years old (with some exceptions), and counts overall quality and condition as the most important attributes of anything she buys. While her collection primarily consists of East Coast shorebirds and waterfowl, she does have several decoys from the Midwest as well.

Today the collection includes a veritable "who's who" of decoy makers from the East including John Dilley, Harry V. Shourds, Lou Barkelow, Ira Hudson, Joe Lincoln, and Elmer Crowell. Her husband was a fan of Ward Brothers' work so several fine examples are included as well. Among her favorites are the Dilley Willet from the Kramer collection. Other East Coast decoys in her flock include a wonderfully "stocky" Brant by Ira Hudson, a swimming Red Breasted Merganser by Elmer



Crowell, and a pre-1900 swimming Merganser made by the Delano family from Fairhaven, CT.

Despite her attraction to decoys from the East Coast, Jan holds dear a spectacular early Midwest canvas-back drake made by Nate Quillen of Rockford, Michigan as one of her very favorites. The decoy, referred to as a "boat bottom" model, is one of only two known in original paint by this maker. Jan also owns a very good pair of Mallards by Lou Kelly of Peoria, IL, purported to be from his personal rig. Additionally, there are several Mason decoys gracing her shelves - a fine Canada Goose as well as a selection of shorebirds that includes a mourning dove, curlew and yellowlegs.

While her impressive collection is rife with many outstanding examples by a variety of makers, when pressed to select her favorite, Jan proudly points to her oversized Mallard made by Elmer Crowell with his oval brand on the bottom.

## Collecting Has No Boundaries

Jan Reeder's story demonstrates once again that, regardless of where one resides, assembling a notable collection is possible through ingenuity and networking with other collectors with similar interests. Her experience underscores the importance of going to auctions and shows, and using other resources to connect with and learn from other collectors. To that end, don't forget that the NADCA lists member collecting interests in both the annual printed Member Directory and the searchable online directory making it easy to find other like-minded members.

We want to thank Jan Reeder for sharing her experience and impressive collection with us. You can reach Jan at [jreeder222@hotmail.com](mailto:jreeder222@hotmail.com).



*Gig Harbor Home Display*



*Delano Family Merganser, Delano Boat Works, Fairhaven, MA, ca. 1880*



*Joe Lincoln Brant, Accord, MA, ca. 1900*



# Wooden duck decoys made in Jefferson City

*The following article was written by NADCA member Missouri decoy collector and historian Greg Renner. First published in the Jefferson City (MO) News Tribune in May, 2020, It provides an excellent account of the birth and eventual end of three Missouri decoy factories. Enjoy!*

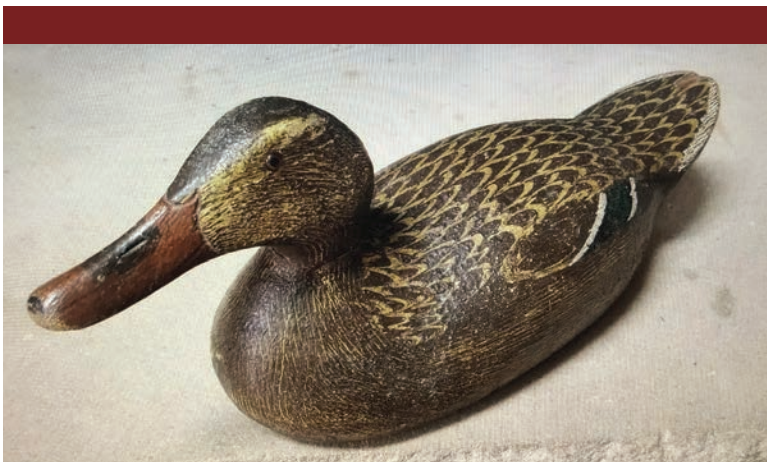


**Evolving styles of Benz Grand Prix Mallards**

Though Jefferson City borders the Missouri River, it is not, at least in this era, considered as a major site for waterfowl or duck hunting. Jefferson City was, however, a major center for wooden duck decoy making from 1921-45. During this interval, a succession of three decoy factories in Jefferson City produced hundreds of thousands of very fine wooden duck decoys that were sold all over the United States.

The history for decoy making in Jefferson City actually begins with establishment of the J. S. Sullivan Saddle Tree Company that was originally set up within the Missouri State Penitentiary in 1876 and initially employed the use of prison labor to make wooden saddle trees. With later phasing out of prison labor, the factory was relocated outside of the prison and eventually to Industrial Drive, near the Bagnell tracks. Most of the factory complex still stands, with the larger building used now as a warehouse. In 1911, the business was bought out by Sullivan's brother-in-law, James M. Hays, who





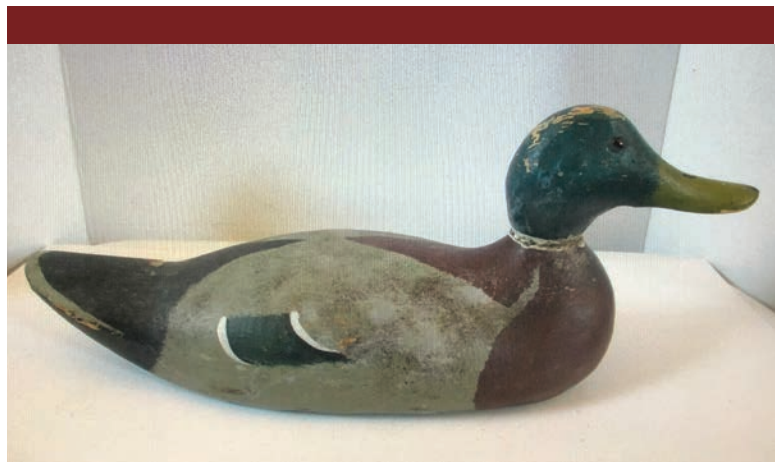
**Gundelfinger Grand Prix Mallard Hen**

had come to Jefferson City in 1878 and over time established a remarkably varied business empire.

The company was purported to be the largest maker of saddle trees and related items in the world at that time and was the principle supplier of saddle trees to the U.S. Military in World War I. In 1917, with diminishing need for saddle trees, the company's name was changed to the J. M. Hays Wood Products Company and continued to make saddle trees, but over time, a variety of other wood products were made as well. They produced a variety of wooden toys, several furniture products and later a special wooden automobile bumper known as the "Hays Hickory Hitter." Sometime in 1921, they began to manufacture wooden duck decoys.

Early decoys produced by the J. M. Hays Wood Products Company were made very similar to those being manufactured by the Mason Decoy Company of Detroit, Michigan, which was at that time the world leader in wooden duck decoy production. Hays produced a higher grade "Grand Prix" model and a lesser grade "Superior" model for most sporting duck species. A later 1922 catalogue for the Hays Wood Products Company indicates they made decoys of 17 varieties in the Grand Prix model and 15 varieties in the Superior model.

In the later part of 1922, ownership of the Hays Wood Products Company was bought out by a group of Jefferson City businessmen who had formed a company called Standard Crate & Filler, whose special mission was to produce a special hexagonal egg crate product and necessary crate filler. They continued all of the activities of the J. M. Hays Wood Products Company as a Division of the Standard Crate & Filler Company, but they sought to produce their special wooden egg crates, filler and other products as well. They made consider-



**Hays Superior Model Mallard Drake**



able changes to the body styles and painting schemes for most of the varied decoy species and continued to sell them throughout the United States.

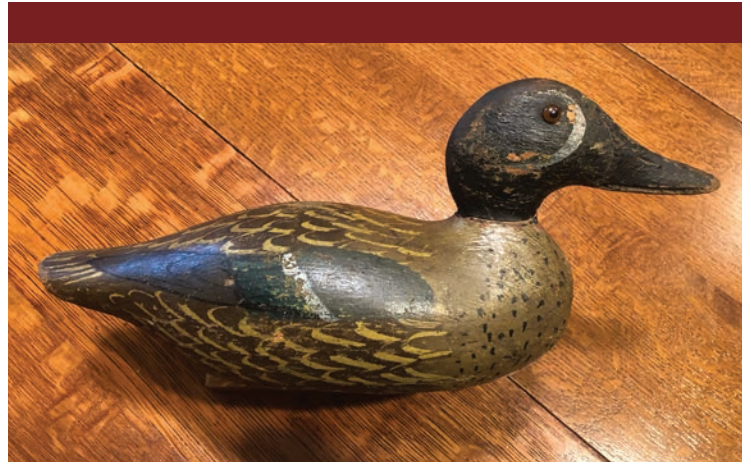
While most would say the first-generation Hays decoys were the best made by the company, in this second-generation era, the Hays company began to employ the use of scratch-feather and cross-body comb painting, which evolved over the following two decades to be very special hallmark features of most Jefferson City wooden decoys.

The Standard Crate & Filler Company was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1924, and the company assets were eventually bought by three members of the Gundelfinger family of Jefferson City and St. Louis. They then set up the Gundelfinger Wood Products Company in the same factory buildings that had housed the Hays Wood Products Company and continued to make varied wood furniture items and high-quality wooden duck decoys. Gundelfinger continued to primarily produce higher-end Grand Prix and lesser Superior grade decoys but did experiment with some other models at times. While they used the same duplicating lathe equipment as had the Hays company, Gundelfinger made changes that allowed them to produce their own unique style

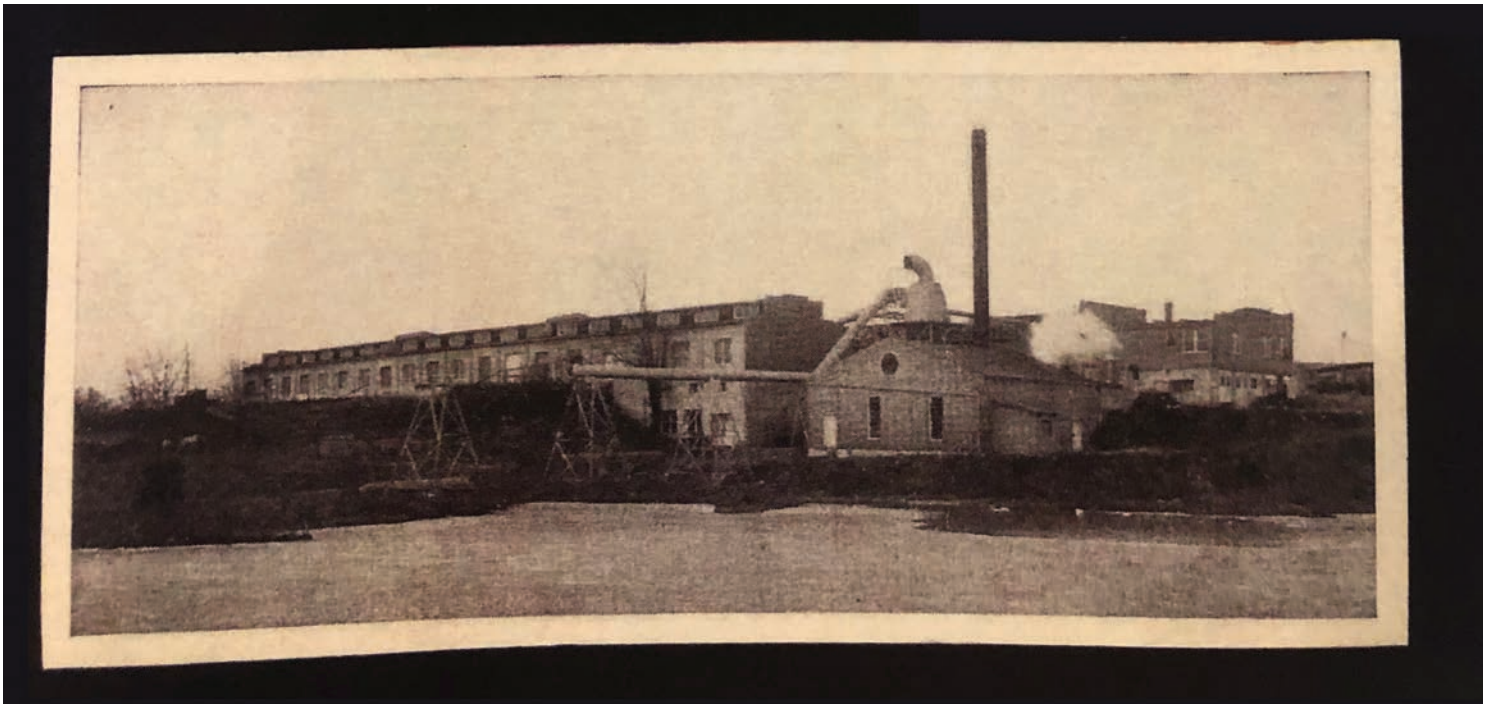




**Gundelfinger Superior Model Shoveler Hen**



**Hays Grand Prix Blue-Winged Teal**



**Hays/Gundelfinger Complex**

of decoys in a wide variety of species. Throughout most of their production era, Gundelfinger applied a notably thick paint that, unfortunately, did have tendency to chip with use. Gundelfinger decoys without heavy use tend to be very excellent looking decoys.

Unfortunately, the vagaries of business set in again, and the Gundelfinger Wood Products Company was forced into bankruptcy in 1929. This time, the assets were sold to Jefferson City businessman Harry Benz, who then set up the Benz Wood Products Company and continued to make wooden duck decoys for another 15 years. Benz built his own factory building on what is now Missouri Boulevard, and in short time, limited the company to decoy production only. He modified the type of paint used and over time went

through several changes in decoy body design and painting schemes, producing many very fine duck decoys. With the onslaught of cheaper paper mache and plastic duck decoys, Benz discontinued making wooden duck decoys in 1945, ending a 25-year history of high production, very artistic, wooden duck decoy making in Jefferson City.

Special study continues on the three Jefferson City decoy factories (Hays, Gundelfinger or Benz Wood Product Companies) and related businesses (J. S. Sullivan Saddle Tree Company or Standard Crate & Filler Company). Anyone with decoys, photos, other products or information about the people who worked in these factories is asked to contact Greg Renner at 573-808-6103 or [gregrenner51@gmail.com](mailto:gregrenner51@gmail.com).