

ing on the Upsalquitch River (New Brunswick). Pleissner, himself a salmon fisherman, wonderfully captured the tension of being hooked into a big salmon: when will it jump? It sold for \$26,500, within estimate. The audience at the art auction was a quite different group from the decoy-buying audience the day before.



Appealing 1937 oil of an English setter, one of several of bird dogs, sold for \$6,900. (William Foster, American, Copley auction)

Antique fish models continue to sell well. At the G&S July auction, a mid-nineteenth century model of a 43 lb. salmon by the English carver Edward Thatcher sold for \$14,375, within estimate. This carving is the earliest such model yet documented.



Thatcher Salmon model, mid-1800s, \$14,375 at G&S July auction.

Canadian Decoys in the Four US Auctions

American auctions continue to be the main public venue for the sale of better Canadian decoys and there were some fine ones. Like their American cousins, good ones sold well, but any of lower quality or with “problems” were in trouble. Unlike 2007-2008, few records were set.

Several outstanding geese were auctioned. At the April G&S auction, a hollow Chambers (Toronto) goose sold for \$19,550 (estimate \$22,500 to \$25,900), while an excellent John Reeves (Long Point) goose failed to sell (low estimate \$20,700). At the July G&S auction, a Warin (Toronto) goose brought \$24,150, well above its high



Warin goose, one of the best, \$24,150 at G&S July auction.



Superb Canada goose, late 1800s, attributed to an unknown Western Ontario carver, fetched \$25,300. (Harmon auction)

estimate. That tied the record for a Warin goose decoy, set almost 20 years ago.

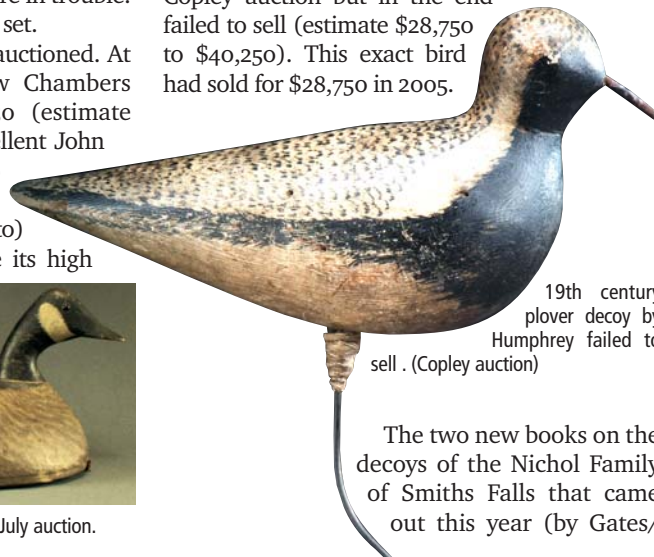
To me, the finest Canadian-made goose offered this year was sold at the July Harmon auction for \$25,300. The photograph does not do justice to the untouched condition, the lovely patina and the graceful form of this ultra-light decoy by an unknown “Southwestern Ontario” maker (probably Long Point). In a hot market, it could have gone for more.

One of the most spectacular decoys sold was a hollow swan from the St. Clair Flats Shooting Company rig, made in the early 1900s by an unknown carver. It sold for \$29,900 at the G&S April auction.



St. Clair Flats swan, \$29,900 at the G&S April auction.

Few Canadian shorebirds came to auction this year. At the April G&S auction, a John Ramsey (PEI) plover brought \$3,750. An excellent black-bellied plover decoy (William Humphrey, Toronto, mid-1800s) was bid well up at the Copley auction but in the end failed to sell (estimate \$28,750 to \$40,250). This exact bird had sold for \$28,750 in 2005.



19th century plover decoy by Humphrey failed to sell. (Copley auction)

The two new books on the decoys of the Nichol Family of Smiths Falls that came out this year (by Gates/

Mewburn/Reeves and by Lunman) may have buoyed up the prices of their decoys. An Addie Nichol whistler hen, one of the best old Nichol decoys, was purchased at the Harmon auction by a Canadian collector for \$14,375. It had previously sold for \$9,200 at the McCleery auction in 2000. Among the dozen Davey Nichol decoys sold were a bufflehead that brought \$1,150 at the Copley auction and a pair of mallards at \$2,375 at the G&S April auction.



Addie Nichol whistler with elegant feather painting. (\$14,375 at Harmon auction)



Davey Nichol bufflehead (\$1,150 at Copley auction)

As well as the Addie Nichol decoy, several other good birds came back to Canada. They included a William Hart (Belleville) merganser, a solid cousin to the hollow-carved decoy that sold for a Canadian record of \$203,000 a few years ago (Copley) and a James Harper (Hamilton) canvasback.



Hart merganser, \$15,000 at Copley auction.



Harper canvasback, \$12,075 at G&S July auction.

Collectors of Ken Anger (Dunnville) decoys had 20 lots to choose from at the four auctions. Their prices were all over the map, illustrating the uneasiness of buyers in this market. At the G&S July auction, a very good pair of redheads