

Volume 22 Number 2

Fall 2017

President's Message

From Laurin Garland



A Canadian decoy recently set a record and validated a decision made over a decade ago.

The sale of a Thomas Chambers wood duck decoy for \$270,000 US in July at Copely's Plymouth, Massachusetts auction set a record price not only for decoys by that carver but for any Canadian maker. Now some history.

Early in this century, sometime in 2003 – our aging memory does not allow a more precise timing of the events – we convinced our friend, decoy collector and advertising agency owner Don Hewson to use the talents of his firm to create a logo for the association. The design evolved towards the use of a decoy silhouette, so the shape of the outline became a primary consideration. What shape would be easily recognizable and immediately evoke the idea of a clearly Canadian carved decoy? A Warin Canada goose was near the top of the list and there was consideration of decoys by other well known carvers, such as Wells and Fernlund. Sadly, a shorebird decoy logo was never seriously in the running.

In the end, another auction helped make the decision for us. A Chambers wood duck, one of only two known, sold at a Guyette and Schmidt St. Charles auction in 2004 for the

then unheard-of price of \$187,000 US, setting a record at the time for any Canadian decoy. As a result, we have the logo you see above. The choice of that bird for the logo as one which can be easily recognized as an iconic Canadian decoy seems now to have been supported by the sale of the second version for well over one third of a million Canadian dollars. It is a truly magnificent bird that we are pleased to have represent our association.

Detailed coverage of the Copely auction, featuring many excellent Canadian birds from the collection of Donal O'Brien, and the Guyette and Deeter auction, including great examples of Canadian decoys from the Peter Brown collection, is included later in this issue. A lot of marvellous north-of-the-border decoys have been offered recently and interest in our carvers is strong as are the prices being realized.

One great place to find more Canadian decoys will be our annual fall show. This year it will be held in Kingston at the Ambassador Hotel, Princess St. on 20 and 21 October. The hotel has again offered to hold a block of rooms for us until one month before the show date. They will attempt to locate all of our attendees on two floors of the tower portion, to accommodate the room-to-room trading. Our last show at the hotel had a few folks located away from the group and we are trying to remedy that. In many cases the distant locations were as a result of miscommunication during the booking process. The hotel can only offer the types of rooms that are available on the chosen floors. If clients request a different room layout or a specific feature such as ground floor access, they will be placed in another area of the hotel. Make sure you note that you wish to be located with the decoy group and book before 20 September, the cut-off date for the hold on our block of rooms.

Room-to-room trading will take place Friday and our Annual General Meeting and cocktail party will follow the show on Saturday. Last year we had excellent attendance at the AGM and a good time was definitely had by those who were there. Come this year and welcome your new president Mark Harding.

See you there in October.

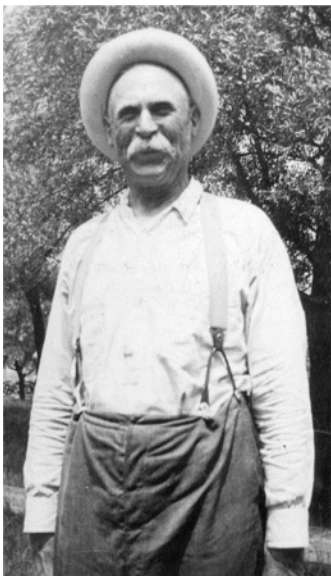
New National Record

A Thomas Chambers wood duck from the Donal O'Brien collection set a record for its maker and a national record for any Canadian decoy sold at auction. It sold for a whopping \$270,000 US including the commissions. This result more than doubled its pre-auction estimate of \$80-120,000.



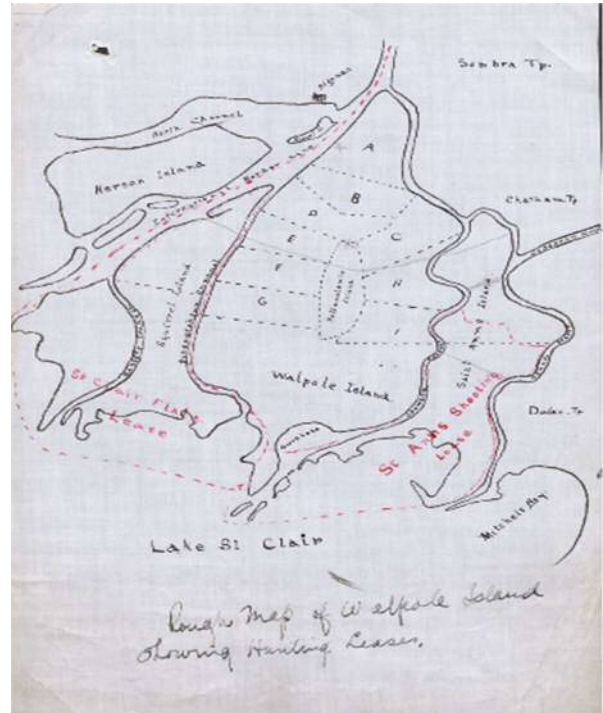
Wood Duck Drake
Thomas Chambers (1860-1948)
Wallaceburg, Ontario, Canada, c. 1900
15 in. long

Thomas Chambers (1860-1948) was born in Toronto, Ontario. He hunted ducks and geese at an early age, along the Toronto waterfront in Ashbridge's Bay, selling his excess quarry to the market. Chambers was next the manager at the St. Anne's Club on the Chenal Ecarte part of the Lake St. Clair marshes. While the hunting club was formed by 1882, the start date of his employment at the club is not known. He did spend a few years in their employ.



After the St. Anne's clubhouse fire in 1900, when the nearby St. Clair Flats Shooting Company was looking for a new Keeper, they asked the noted sportsman and ex-member George Warin for his

recommendation. Chambers name was put forth which ended up being fortuitous for both parties.



Incorporated in 1874, the St. Clair Flats Shooting Company, also known as the Canada Club, was one of the oldest hunting clubs on Lake St. Clair. Chambers lived on the club's property in an adjacent house with his wife and three daughters. Chambers would remain the club's Keeper until his retirement in 1943. According to author Bernard Crandell, it was during this time as manager that the 6-foot 1-inch Chambers earned his nickname "King Tom" for his authoritarian air.

In addition to his work for the Club, Chambers was also an accomplished carver. His decoys were typically hollow, well proportioned and reflective of the species being represented. Species he carved included canvasbacks, redheads, bluebills, blacks, pintails, mallards, teal, geese, the 2 known drake wood ducks and a one-of whistler hen. His decoys were in high demand from the club members and, even during the 1930's, a rig of a dozen Chambers decoys would command the unheard price of \$75.

Many collectors consider this carving to be the finest Canadian decoy known. Co-authors Clune Walsh, Jr. and Lowell Jackson, as well as, Paul Johnsgard chose this exact decoy for the cover of their respective books

The Rig – Published by the Canadian Decoy and Outdoor Collectibles Association, c/o 66 Texas Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, P6A 4Y8, as a club newsletter intended for the enjoyment and entertainment of its members and friends. CDOCA's missions are "to promote, share and maintain interest in decoys and other outdoor sporting collectibles." Annual memberships are available for \$30 Cdn or \$75 for three years. US rates are also \$ 30/75 in US funds

"Waterfowl Decoys of Michigan and the Lake St. Clair Region" and "The Bird Decoy: An American Art Form".

Few decoys have evoked the mystique of this wood duck which has never been for public sale.

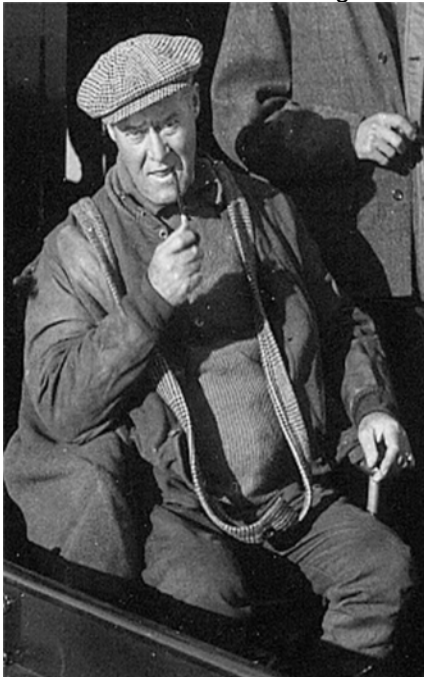
As a wood duck, it is among the greatest carvings of this species from any region. As one of only two Chambers



wood ducks known to exist, this example with its exceptional form, paint, and condition is the better of the two. Chambers captured the likeness of this species of summer duck

effectively, paying special attention to the subtle nuances of the duck's bill, eyes, and crest. Well over 100 years old and a testament to Chambers' craftsmanship, the decoy maintains nearly invisible neck and bottom board seams.

The bird is branded "GEO. M. HENDRIE." George Muir Hendrie (1885-1942) was "the sporting son of a sporting father". His life was centered on horse breeding, he was a lover of thoroughbred horses, sporting dogs and "game chickens". The Hendrie family had business interests in railways and rail promotion, cartage, contracting and manufacturing. Eventually, the family had investments in the iron and steel business in Hamilton, Ontario. He was a St. Clair Flats Shooting Company member through the years 1889 to 1943.



The bottom board on the decoy was fashioned from a food-packing crate and is also branded on the underside "GUARANTEED BY H.J. HEINZ."



This iconic bird held a special place in O'Brien's collection. It resided in his den alongside his Susquehanna River mortise-headed Canada goose that he considered the finest bird in his collection.

Condition:

Outstanding original paint with minor gunning wear, working putty to a sliver under the bill, and minimal touch-up under tail.

Provenance:

George M. Hendrie - acquired at the St. Clair Flats Shooting Company

Ronald Swanson Collection, acquired from the estate of the above, c. 1970

Donal C. O'Brien Jr. Collection, acquired from the above

Literature:

Paul A. Johnsgard, "The Bird Decoy: An American Art Form," Lincoln, NE, 1976, front dust jacket and pl. 108, exact decoy illustrated.

Clune Walsh, Jr. and Lowell G. Jackson, "Waterfowl Decoys of Michigan and the Lake St. Clair Region," Detroit, MI, 1983, plate 16 and on the slipcase cover of the deluxe edition, exact decoy illustrated.

Laurence Sheehan, "The Sporting Life," New York, NY, 1992, p. 79, exact decoy illustrated.

Jackson Parker, "O'Brien Classic Decoys on Display at Museum of American Folk Art," North American Decoys: Wildfowl Carvers and Collectors News, Spanish Fork, UT, Spring/Summer 1982, p. 32, exact decoy illustrated.

Jeff Waingrow, "The American Decoy: Folk Sculpture from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Donal C. O'Brien, Jr.," *The Clarion: America's Folk Art Magazine*, Fall 1981, p. 32, exact decoy illustrated.

Loy S. Harrell, Jr., "Decoys: North America's One Hundred Greatest," *Iola*, WI, 2000, pp. 10-11, exact decoy illustrated.

Exhibited:

New York, New York, "The Art of the American Decoy: Folk Sculpture from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Donal C. O'Brien Jr.," Museum of American Folk Art, September 3–November 8, 1981.

Prepared with notes and photos from Copley Fine Art Auctions LLC, Ken Cole and the National Archives of Canada.

2017 Summer Auctions

The summer auctions of 2017 will be remembered for the second installment of the Peter Brown collection at Guyette and Deeter Inc. and the initial disbursement of the Donal C. O'Brien collection through Copley Fine Art Auctions. Both these auctions were highlighted by outstanding hunting decoys from across Canada.

For complete auction highlights and official prices realized, please refer to the auction houses websites. Photos are courtesy of the auction houses.

Guyette and Deeter Inc.

Shown is a small selection from the summer sale of the more interesting items having a Canadian heritage.

A rare pair of Ivar Fernlund teal – Hamilton, Ontario



Markham rig redheads



Alain MacDonald redhead – Verdon, Quebec



Clarence Ernst mergansers – Indian Point, Nova Scotia



Copley Fine Arts Auctions LLC.

While the Chambers wood duck was their top lot, there were a few other interesting Canadian items heading off to new homes.

George Warin goose (circa 1880) – St Clair Flats \$43,200



Phineas Reeves goose (circa 1880) – Long Point \$34,800



Albert Hochbaum "Suitors in Pursuit" (1973) \$5,842



Frank Benson "On the Redhead Grounds" (1924) \$307
(A Long Point Club scene created by the artist on a visit to the club and marsh.)



Did You Ever Wonder...

From Peter Munger

All seasoned Canadian, and most American decoy collectors, are quite well acquainted with the works of the Dunnville, Ontario decoy maker Ken Anger. Anger followed in the footsteps of Pete Pringle in the design and development of his decoys. He carved approximately 3000 decoys in the years 1930 through 1960.

Although not covered in the well-known decoy books of the 1980's, perhaps because his work was not yet considered antique, his decoys were recognized for their quality as early as 1948 at the National Decoy Makers contest in New York. There 5 of his 6 entries won 1st place ribbons in the categories for decoys made outside the United States. Anger has also been written up in several different articles in North American Decoy magazine and, its successor, Decoy Magazine.

In the Fall 1973 issue of North American Decoys, an



Ken Anger. After a hunt C. 1965

article written by Myrl Smith, also of Dunnville, includes a photo of Ken holding a brace of woodcock in his right hand and a double barrel shotgun crooked in his left arm.

Apparently, woodcock hunting was as much a favorite to Ken as duck hunting. Ken passed away

in 1961 at the relatively early age of 56. But did you ever wonder what happened to the old double he used? I know I did not really give it much thought at all.

This spring I got a text (- it used to be you got a phone call) from a fellow duck hunter and retired fireman. He told of being at a retirement party where another senior member of their fraternity, knowing he was a hunter, mentioned he was getting on in years and since no one in the family was inclined to have it asked him if he would be interested in buying an old shotgun. This gent was a fellow by the name of Garth Anger. My friend said he was not interested himself, but, knew just the guy who would

bel! He texted me about this right after the retirement party providing me with a name and phone number.

To be honest the significance of this did not register right away since I received the text while at work. It "sunk in" not long after and I gave the fellow a call and arranged to go out and see him at his riverside home.

When I arrived at his home I met a very amiable Garth Anger and his lovely wife Carmelle and "the" shotgun, nicely laid out for me on the living room couch. Garth explained that Ken Anger was very small of stature and thus the almost "youth" size of the gun. He went on to explain how he came to have it. Evidently when Ken passed away with no direct heir (he never married) his close male relations were his cousins Cecil and Olaf and Olaf's son 20-year-old Garth (making Garth Ken's second cousin). As all lived nearby (Olaf just across the street), they got together and as Garth put it "kinda drew straws" for the items of his estate. When Garth had his turn, he chose the shotgun. Garth told me that although he hunted a bit when he was younger he never fired this gun, perhaps due to it's dimensions, and it has been carefully stored these past 56 years.

Ken Anger's shotgun is a L.C. Smith made by Hunter Arms, Fulton, N.Y. A 12 Gauge with 27" barrels, it sports a raised solid rib with ivory front bead and a centre bead. It has double triggers and auto-ejectors. The stock is short with a length of pull of only 12 1/2 inches to the forward trigger. Research garnered from the L.C. Smith Collectors Assoc. indicates it originally was made with 28" barrels and speculation is that it was cut down along with the stock by a gunsmith to accommodate Ken's stature and maintain it's balance. Ken Anger was just about 5'4" according to Garth, a small man with an immense talent. It seems uncanny that Ken passed at 56 and another 56 years passed before his shotgun came to light.

So, if you ever did wonder, you can stop wondering and come see the famous decoy makers' shotgun this fall at the Canadian Decoy & Outdoors Collectibles show in Kingston.



2017 CDOCA Show

Where: Ambassador Hotel - Kingston, Ontario.

When: Friday, October 20th and Saturday, October 21

Displays:

- 1) Quebec outdoor collectibles
- 2) Quebec decoys

Contests:

- 1) Decoy from the Peter Brown collection
- 2) Tom Martindale decoy or other carving
- 3) Any outdoor collectible with a beaver in commemoration of Canada's 150th birthday

Membership Fees

Your membership expiration is shown on the newsletter mailing label. To stay current, please send cheque or money order to club treasurer/secretary John Battaglia at 132 October Crescent, London Ontario. N6K 4E1, e-transfer to optician@sympatico.ca or renew at the club show in October.

Keith Avann (1934-2017) – In Memorial

From Robin Craig and David Dauphinais

Our association lost a good friend with the passing of Keith Avann on July 15, 2017. He was a charter member

of the CDOCA when it was formed in 1996.

Keith participated in the operation and activities of the association in many ways. In 2000 Keith became president, a position he held for 6 years,



during which time the association transformed into the more structured organization that we know today. He also volunteered to manage the association bulletin which later became known as "The Rig", a position he held for 16 years until 2015. Keith worked diligently to solicit articles from the members and for many of the issues he wrote most of the articles himself. Ably assisted by his wife Jean, they assembled and for many years mailed out 4 issues each year to our members. He often entered birds into the decoy contests and he usually had a table to sell old decoys and some of his carvings. One year he coordinated a wonderful display of J.R. Wells decoys for our annual decoy show.

Keith grew up in the east end of Toronto but he spent much of his leisure time hunting and fishing with his family at their cottage, north of the city, on Cook Bay at the south end of Lake Simcoe. He trained many family dogs as retrievers and liked to carve his own decoys for hunting. This was a natural fit because he grew up in the presence of the prolific Toronto decoy carver, Cliff Avann, his father.

In later years he began carving shorebirds, other birds, and fish and he also did some flat art. His interests in waterfowl led him to become



a volunteer with Ducks Unlimited Canada and annually the Avann clan would attend a fund-raising dinner together. His interests in waterfowl hunting led him to collecting old hunting decoys. His collecting interests were Toronto decoys and their carvers. He spent a great deal of time researching Toronto carvers and shared much of the information he uncovered through articles in the bulletin/Rig. Two of these articles, one on Cliff Avann decoys and another which unraveled the mystery of the Clark family decoys were also published in Decoy Magazine.

Keith was dedicated to his family. He always attended our annual Decoy Show in the company of Jean, to whom he was married for 61 years. He often spoke of his 3



daughters, his sons-in-law and especially of his grandchildren and great grandchildren. For many years several of us and our wives would get together with Jean and Keith to share a meal,

do a little association business and swap decoy stories. Our most recent gathering was in April 2017. These were great times!

Keith will be greatly missed by his family and his many decoy collecting friends.

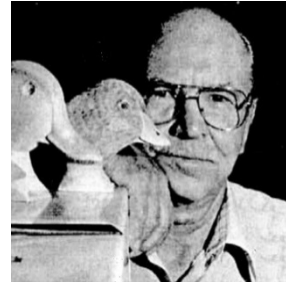
Those wishing to send condolences to the family may do so by email at keith.avann@sympatico.ca. Memorial donations can be made to Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Orest William Andrews

(1922-1994)

Lively, Ontario

From David Ness



Being from Northern Ontario, I was always interested in finding out more about Orest Andrews, a carver from the Sudbury area. He was identified in Bernie Gates first book Ontario Decoys I on page 63.

Over the years I found that several co-workers, and my barber, knew Orest through their common interests of duck hunting and dog retrieving trials. I would like to share the following information about this talented outdoorsman.

Orest spent a majority of his life in the outdoors beginning duck hunting at an early age. Another passion was painting. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art located in Toronto in 1939. On graduation, he began work at Inco in Sudbury, but, resided in the nearby town of Lively.

At Inco for 34 years, Orest worked in various departments ending up in the Graphic Arts and Public Affairs utilizing his artistic background. He was known throughout the company as "Inco's artist extraordinaire".

The love of duck hunting had perked his interest carving his own rig of decoys. He was quoted as saying "Most duck hunters take pride in using their own gear. Bringing the ducks into their own decoys rather than those in the next bay is also very satisfying. Ducks aren't fooled that easily; a decoy doesn't only have to look right – its got to ride right and for that you can't beat a well-balanced wooden decoy." He made both hollow and solid body decoys and some cork bodied examples. One remembrance of Orest's garage was the ceiling jammed full of his personal hunting rig.

His decoys were also admired by many of his co-workers



and it was a small leap to teaching carving and painting techniques. His classes to both adults and, eventually, high school students began in 1966 and continued for 20 years. While

he himself only carved waterfowl, the students were encouraged to carve anything from waterfowl to songbirds. Several of his protégé won ribbons at the Toronto Sportsman Show in the waterfowl category. He also influenced another generation of waterfowl artists including Bill Whittaker.

On retirement, Orest continued carving decorative waterfowl. Typically, three birds per winter were completed, each taking approximately 100 hours per bird.

Other interests included fishing, dog training and judging at retrieval trials. His recreation room walls were "papered" with ribbons won by his dogs at trials over many years. He also trained dogs for others, as well.

At the Andrews funeral, the family displayed pieces of his handiwork, both paintings and carvings. The most striking carving was a bluebill drake displayed on the casket.



Decoy photos courtesy of Guyette and Deeter Inc.

CANADIAN DECOY & OUTDOOR COLLECTIBLES ASSOCIATION



2017 Decoy, Fishing Tackle & Outdoor Collectibles Show

Room to Room

Friday, Oct. 20 Buy, Sell & Trade Session!

SHOW

Saturday, Oct. 21 10 am to 3 pm

- . 50 tables of vendors w/decoys, fishing tackle, books, native & outdoor collectibles.
- . Admission \$5, Children with parents free
- . Displays of Canadian decoys, wildlife carving, folk art & outdoor collectibles
- . Saturday evening reception

Kingston Ambassador Hotel & Conference Centre

1550 Princess St.

Exit Sydenham Rd. south from 401

Rooms 1-800-267-7880 US & CAN

Mention CDOCA before Sept. 1 for show rate.

For Information:

Laurin Garland lgarland@xplornet.com

Website www.canadiandecoy.com

Table Rentals

Contact Mark: m_harding@outlook.com
or 613-985-8736

