

THE WILDFOWLER

SUMMER 2014

A PUBLICATION OF THE ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM AND THE BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD

The Swan Island Club: Part Three in a series of OUR HERITAGE IS OUR LEGACY

*From the archives of the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum and
Gun Clubs and Decoys of Back Bay & Currituck Sound, Archie Johnson and Bud Coppedge, Curbac Press, 1991*

Currituck Inlet, November 1870

On the way to Florida for a waterfowl hunting expedition, the yacht, *Anonyona*, owned by Isaac Hinckley, seeks anchorage through the Currituck Inlet and becomes grounded next to Crow Island. The hunters and crew had planned to live on the yacht while hunting in Florida. Being sportsmen who never wanted to miss an opportunity, they decided to hunt with Mr. Hatfield, hunter and farmer who owned Crow Island while they stayed, more or less, on the beached *Anonyona*. Coincidentally, the yacht's crew hailed from Good Ground, Long Island, New York and it seems they found better ground in the shoal waters off of Crow Island. After a very successful hunting season under Mr. Hatfield's tutelage, the hunters chose to lease Crow Island and its surrounding marsh -some 9,000 acres-for the next six seasons. The Crow Island Club was formed in 1876. Most of the original members were from well known, wealthy, Harvard-educated families.

The original "clubhouse" was the grounded yacht, which burned to the waterline in 1877. At that point in time, the Crow Island Club membership purchased Crow Island and its marsh, using Mr. Hatfield's farmhouse as their new clubhouse, which subsequently burned to the ground in 1900. By that point, Crow Island and the Crow Island Club were known as Swan Island and the Swan Island Club]. The new Swan Island Club was built and saw 10 successful hunting seasons, before it too burned to the ground in 1910.

The newest Swan Island Clubhouse was built in 1913-1914 and is still in use today.



Approaching the Swan Island Clubhouse from Knotts Island, NC in 2014

As with any successful hunting/gunning club, waterfowl decoys became an integral part of Swan Island's success. The most productive day in its history was November 11, 1901 when 414 ducks, geese and swans were taken. Some of the decoys are long forgotten, but some are probably proudly owned by today's collectors. Because of its longevity, the Swan Island Club has used decoys by many well known carvers-Lincoln, Crowell, Dudley, Stevens, as well as factory Masons.

It stands to reason that when the *Anonyona* departed from its Good Ground home, it was well-stocked with decoys unique to that region. And, in fact, several of the battery decoys found and/or discovered which may have been part of the original "stock" are quite different from known regional decoys because they have glass eyes, flat and rough hatchet-split bottoms, narrow bills and wide tail sections. The legacy of those unknown carvers lives on in auctions, but the Swan Island Club, with its legacy growing every season, continues to function for its original purpose.



Two Swan Island Club Decoys offered at auction in 2011



Now that summer is here we need to think about what the Guild and Museum will be doing over the next year. You are being asked to suggest items for the Strategic Planning Committee to consider. Enclosed with this newsletter is a survey we are asking everyone to complete and mail back in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Next year marks the 120th anniversary of the cottage, the 40th of the guild and the 20th of the museum. If you have ideas on what the Guild can do to celebrate these events, please send them to Clark so he can pass them on to a committee, as yet to be formed, but Mrs. Kelly Bridgman and Mrs. Ann Verhaagen have already said they would help.

The displays are up for the next year, come in and see them.

If anyone would like to form a birding and photo club within the Guild and be willing to help with it, let me know. If anyone has concerns or questions of Guild operations, please call me at 757.596.0159.

Please see the picture below of a decoy, carved by Mr. Jim Britton, our June Guild Meeting speaker. He graciously offered this to the Museum for our collection.

Thank you,

Ira Abbott

President, Back Bay Wildfowl Guild



Pintail Decoy by Jim Britton

Given to the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum Collection

Happy Summer!

The beach in the summertime is a wonderful place to be-specifically, at the de Witt cottage. I am a native, so I know how many people who live here do NOT want to come to the oceanfront because of crowds, traffic, parking and assorted other reasons. But I would encourage you to come to the museum and see the new exhibits and visit for a while.

As we close out our fiscal year on June 30, I am happy to report that to date-in this fiscal year, we have had 16,727 guests visit the museum. The fiscal year is not yet complete, but to date, we have had an increase of 42% in visitorship over last year and a 48% increase in gross sales [year to date]. That may not make much difference to you, but in the "museum world", we are bucking the trend of declining visitorship. Since 90-92% of our visitors are "walk-bys", our presentation on the boardwalk is critical and, I think, has made the difference. [I do not believe for a second that our economy is better than it was last year or the years before it-but that's only my opinion...]

I would like to thank everyone who is involved and would encourage ALL of you, as guild members, to become involved in the best way you are able.

Please take the time to fill out the Strategic Planning survey which is enclosed with this newsletter. We are hoping to get ALL completed surveys back by July 5, 2014. Do not hesitate to offer *constructive* criticism-you are encouraged to point out issues/problems with your opinion of the possible solution[s] to those issues/problems. The survey is for the effective growth of the Guild and the Museum. I would like to thank Wayne Jarman for stepping forward to chair the process. Right now, the committee is your elected Board of Directors. I am of the opinion that as the process moves forward we will need to make sure we involve community partners to help us form an effective strategy. And please be thinking about ways YOU can help the process-initially, by completing and returning the very simple survey!!! Please note the PARKING LOT NOTICE at the top of that page

Many thanks and Best – *Clark*

"EPIPHANIES"

Contributed by Jim Mehne



Have you ever had an epiphany? You know a sudden realization of some strange fact that had never occurred to you previously? Something momentous, life changing even? I once had two on the same day, in a duck blind of all places.

I was home from college on Christmas break so naturally my Father and I were in the blind down at Currituck on a particularly cold and windy day. I am happy to report my Father was, and still is, a big guy. Our host that day was even larger than my Father. I was seated between these two big lugs, both of whom were well over 6 feet tall, which happens to be my height, almost.

A group of canvasbacks zoomed us from upwind, 70+ mph. Like jets on a strafing run, they were on us before we knew it, but our 100+ decoy spread turned them and they circled back, into the wind, and we were ready for them. Our host called the shot and I was a second too slow that morning. As I rose all I saw in front were shoulders and elbows. No possibility of a shot. As the gun smoke cleared both men turned to me, still seated on the bench, and inquired why I didn't shoot.

I just laughed. The first epiphany had come over me: As kids, we were told by Mother to eat our vegetables so we would grow up big and strong just like good old dad. I looked up at my Father and said, "I just realized (at age 21) I'm not going to grow up and be as big as you."

With a wink at our host and a serious look on his face, my Father solemnly placed his large hand on my shoulder and said, "Hey Shorty, you mind going out to get those cans, they're starting to drift with the wind."

"It was at that moment I had the second epiphany of the day, to wit: I was my Father's loyal (and college educated) hunting retriever. And it was at that very moment I decided I needed a dog, not just any dog, but a well trained retriever. And my life has never been the same.

And so it goes...

~ Jungle Jim



Al Brandtner joined the Navy after high school and claims to have enjoyed a terrific career from which he retired. Because his last duty station was at Commander Naval

Surface Force Atlantic, he and Rita, his wife, settled in the Tidewater area with their family-Al, Jr. whom big Al claims is the true artist in the family, Brian [father of Al and Rita's two terrific granddaughters] and daughter Dolores, a Virginia Tech grad.

Upon his naval retirement, Al became the art director at Tidewater Emblems. It was there that he met Dr. Alison Drescher who ordered award ribbons for the Mid-Atlantic Wildlife Show. Al Drescher left passes to the show so Al Brandtner went...more than once!

By the mid-1980's Al became intrigued with Decorative Decoy carving and found a class at the Adult Learning Center in Va. Beach to learn. He took several classes from Harvey Ackiss, who became his mentor and very good friend and who encouraged Al to join the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild.

Al carves both "slicks"/antiques and decorative pieces. For the antiques, he uses Lee Dudley [drake] models of Canvasback, Ruddy and Pintail. Al's favorite in this category is the Pintail, due to the rarity of the original. But his true love of carving is the Decorative Style decoys of which he has done over 100, most life size and some 1/2 size. When asked his favorites, he replies, the Red-Tailed Hawk [pictured above] and the Pintail Drake [pictured below].

Al's love of carving has been infectious for the many students he has taught in classes at the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum since the mid-1990's. While he has taught the Dudley Canvasback, most of his classes have been in the realm of life-sized Decorative Decoys. When asked how many classes he has taught he replied, "I can't remember"...But he CAN remember that his favorite carver is Pat Godin "who is the hands down world's Best" and Al's friend Jim Sprankle, from whom Al took a paint seminar at our show in the late 1980's. And Al, we thank you for all you've done [and all you're going to do!!!]





Jeff Tinkham, a Norfolk attorney and museum board member, has an extensive collection of antique North Carolina and Back Bay decoys. He has hunted

waterfowl on Back Bay for 40 years, and began hunting with his father near Knotts Island when he was 12 years old. Jeff has developed a passion for acquiring quality decoys from our local area, and enjoys sharing the gunning history associated with these wooden "tools" with anyone who has an interest. One of Jeff's favorite decoys from his collection is a drake canvasback made by Oscar Carroll (1868-1946) who lived on a farm just north of Creeds. Oscar frequently carved his decoys from the cypress knees found in Muddy Creek. Jeff's canvasback is featured in the Back Bay section of Bill Mackey's seminal book, American Bird Decoys, published in 1965. On the bottom of this decoy, one will find the Mackey ink stamp and the name "HENLEY" carved deeply into the wood. Grandy Henley carved his name into this bird.

In 1912, Grandy became the caretaker of the Horn Point Club, and remained there until he retired in 1938. The Horn Point Club derived its name from the ram's horn-shaped marsh from which the club's members hunted. Of particular note, one of the Horn Point Club's members was George Eastman who developed roll film for cameras. On page 40 of the book, Gun Clubs & Decoys of Back Bay and Currituck Sound published in 1991 by Bud Coppedge and Archie Johnson, there is a picture of a man shooting diving ducks from a battery. The picture is believed to have been taken by George Eastman himself and the gunner is thought to have been Grandy Henley. Perhaps the decoy featured in this article is also found in that Eastman photograph which memorialized a hunt from 100 years ago.



Jeff Tinkham enjoys sharing his knowledge with others, and he is eager to learn more about the local families who used their hand-made decoys to gun for market until it was formally outlawed in 1918. After market gunning was outlawed, wooden decoys were used by locals when guiding for the "sports". Unfortunately, when plastic decoys were developed in the 1960s, many of these heavy wooden decoys were discarded or used for firewood. If you are interested in contacting Jeff Tinkham to discuss your decoys or to obtain a free evaluation, he can be reached at 757-640-0020/757-724-7131 or at jeff@tinkhamlaw.com.

We thank Jeff for his willingness to serve and help!

If you have not been to the museum lately, you may want to come down and enjoy the recent work done by our newest volunteer! We are excited and extremely thankful



that Ms. Nancy Lekberg has "adopted us" to improve our garden area. She has spent a number of days weeding, planting, watering and making our grounds become vibrant again. Claiming, "I find peace here," Ms. Lekberg has a lot of ideas to improve and maintain the museum grounds-and the willingness to implement those ideas. While the writer of this newsletter has no clue about such things [he can look at a plant and it will shrivel!], even he notices the differences since Nancy got started. If you'd like to help with this ongoing

project, please contact us at the Museum and we will give Nancy your phone number and/or email address.



DONATIONS RECEIVED

<i>In Memory of</i>	<i>From</i>
Joe Lee	Gentry Childress
Dwain Burns	Herb and Pat Videll Elaine Polizos
Bob Price	Elaine Polizos

General Donations

Mary Peckens
Chesapeake Ducks Unlimited
Virginia Beach Ducks Unlimited

Please know your tax deductible donations are most appreciated and always welcome! FEIN: 51-0252674

A KITE STORY

The Saturday of the last Cheerleading Competition at the VB Convention Center, the Museum had many "dad refugees" come a-calling. One can usually tell what's going on-it's not a crazy look, more like a dazed expression many of them have. About 2:30 one of these refugees came in and said he HAD to buy a kite. When asked why, he replied, "Because my wife and daughter told me to go buy a kite." Not wanting to lose a sale, or add to this man's distress, I did not ask him if they told him to go FLY a kite, but sold him a Canada Goose. Two hours later he was back looking a little sheepish, but this time he had his wife and daughter with him. Momma did not look happy. She said, "I want an Osprey." No mention of returning the Goose. She told me that HE WAS HAVING TOO MUCH FUN and SHE wanted to dogfight the kites. And THAT is why we sell kites - to save marriages and the lives of "refugee dads"!

With many thanks to Johnny Johnson and Larry Lambert, we bid farewell to last year's exhibits.

This year's exhibits include:

Antique Decoy Collection
on loan from
Mr. and Mrs. Mark
Cromwell



Contemporary Collection
on loan from
Mr. and Mrs. Doug Fuller



Turkey and Fox
on loan from
Mr. Larry Lambert



Art [by L.W.Schifferl]
on loan from
Mr. Tommy O'Connor



If you have not been down to the museum to see the new exhibits, please come down and bring a friend or two, or as many as you would like. If you have already been, please come back!! Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but your presence and support is priceless! We still need some volunteers for Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays-and if you do that, you will have a virtually guaranteed parking spot at the oceanfront, along with cold sodas-if you'd like!



A CELEBRATION IN THE MAKING

The year 2015 should be an exciting one for the



Museum, the Guild and our entire community. 2015 marks the 120th birthday of Wittensand and she's still "A Grand Old Dame"! When you really think about it, the de Witt Cottage, home to our Museum, has more character than any other place at the oceanfront. Some say it also has more characters that any other place they know of-but that's for someone else to figure out. At 120, she still stands gracefully and beautifully facing the Atlantic.

And, while only 1/3 the age of the cottage, don't you think 40 years of the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild is something that is worth celebrating too? We should be regaled with stories about the "good old days" and be certain to make THESE days good ones too. We may not be doing shows right now, but one wonders if we could do a "mini-show" for this celebration – a REALLY mini show? The Guild was formed for a nearly sacred mission in 1975 [incorporated 1976]. Some people have left by choice or by death, but, at its core, the Guild still assures that mission guides us.



Twenty years ago [in 2015], the hopes of those early Guild members came to fruition with the opening of the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum in September 1995. We may not be the biggest show in town, but we are one of the best and surely the most authentic. This BIG celebration will take a lot of planning, so the Board has decided that we will set a goal to have the BIG event in September 2015. If you would be willing to help "design" and implement our celebration, please contact the Museum and let us know! Please don't let the significance of all THREE of these anniversaries be lost on you. And know that YOU can make it a wonderfully successful celebration!



MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Bud Coppedge
Wayne Jarman
Archie Johnson
Jeff Tinkham
William Walsh, Jr.



MUSEUM STAFF

Clark Mandigo, Director
Ann Smith, Gift Shop Manager



MUSEUM GIFT SHOP VOLUNTEERS

Monday: [Memorial Day-Sept.] OPEN
Tuesday: Bob Bishop 1p-5p
Wednesday: Archie Johnson 10a-2p
Thursday: OPEN
Friday: OPEN
Saturday: OPEN
Sunday: Jeanette Spreeman



JULY 2014 BBWG/MUSEUM

7/21: BBWG Board of Directors 7:00 p.m.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

7/18-19: 46th annual Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sporting Collectibles Show to be held at the Cerow Recreation Park Arena in Clayton, New York. Contact: Thousand Islands Museum at (315) 686-5794 or visit www.timuseum.org.

7/25-26: The 2014 Sporting Sale by Copley Fine Art Auctions to be held at the Radisson Hotel in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Contact: Copley Fine Art Auctions at (617) 536-0030 or visit www.copleyart.com

7/26-28: Annual summer decoy auction by Decoys Unlimited to be held at the Cape Codder Resort in Hyannis, Massachusetts. Contact: Decoys Unlimited at (508) 362-2766 or visit www.decoysunlimitedinc.net.

7/29-30: Annual summer decoy auction by Guyette & Deeter to be held at the Sheraton Harborside Resort in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Contact: Guyette & Deeter at (410) 745-0485 or visit www.guyetteanddeeter.com.

BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ira Abbott, President
Ken Wilson, Vice President
Jim Mehne, Secretary
Roy Carlson, Treasurer
Kelly Bridgman
Fletcher Bryant
Gentry Childress
Wayne Jarman
Ed Morrison
Werner Seibel
Jeff Tinkham
Herb Videll
William Walsh, Jr.

MUSEUM CARVERS

Monday [May-Sept] Al Brandtner
Tuesday: a.m. Pete DiPietro
p.m. Bud Coppedge
Wednesday: CJ Burns Roy Carlson
Ed Morrison Herb Videll
Thursday: [inside] Hank Grigolite
"The Boathouse Boys" Carving
Club: Al, Jamie, John & Pete
Friday: Gary Holt, Bill Evans
Dave Perkins
Saturday: Gentry Childress
2nd Saturday Roger Lee
Sunday: OPEN

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2014 BBWG/MUSEUM

8/18: BBWG Board of Directors 7:00 p.m.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

8/10: 6th annual Illinois Valley Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Show to be held at Celebrations 150 Banquet Hall in Utica, Illinois. Contact: Dave or Jeannette Kneebone at (815) 663-1568 or visit www.muddywaterdecoys.com

8/16: 3rd Annual NC Ducks Unlimited "Carver/Decoy of the Year" Championship to be held at the NC State Convention Center, Kitty Hawk, NC. Info: www.ncducks.org/2014-state-convention/

8/23: 2014 Baton Rouge Antique Decoy Show to be held at the BREC Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Contact: Gary Lipham at (225) 571-2835 or glipham@bellsouth.net.

8/30-31: 24th annual Chincoteague Island Decoy & Art Festival to be held at the Chincoteague Community Center on Chincoteague Island, Virginia. Contact: Cinda Walls at (410) 546-1635 or knottskn@verizon.net.

FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE

C.J. Burns
Roy Carlson
Herb Videll



CONTACT INFORMATION

ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM
1113 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Telephone: 757.437.8432

Facsimile: 757.437.9950

Website: under reconstruction

Email: clark_mandigo@cox.net

(Please note this email address will be changed very soon!)



SEPTEMBER 2014 BBWG/MUSEUM

9/2: BBWG Meeting, Social Hour 6 p.m., Meeting 7 p.m.; Speaker, Bill Powell, Cork Decoy Maker, Vienna, Virginia

9/15: BBWG Board of Directors, 7 p.m.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

9/6-7: 11th annual Currituck Wildlife Festival to be held at the Currituck High School in Barco, North Carolina. Contact: John Murray at (757) 573-1695.

9/12: Great Lakes Sporting Collectibles Show to be held at the Quality Inn Ballroom in Monroe, Michigan. Contact: Jack Wilkie at (734) 241-8194 or Al Reeg at (517) 617-0797.

9/27-28: 32nd annual Ocean County Decoy & Gunning Show to be held at Tip Seaman Park and the Seaport in Tuckerton, New Jersey. Contact: Ocean County Dept. of Park & Recreation at (609) 971-3085 or visit www.oceancountyparks.org



PARKING LOT NOTICE TO ALL GUILD MEMBERS!

If you come to the beach and park in the Museum Parking Lot, you may observe a new chain [approved by the board] across the parking lot entrance. That chain is merely a deterrent to folks who sometimes use our parking lot inappropriately. If you do come down, the plastic chain is on a diagonal so you can pull in on the south/Grand Ocean Hotel side without blocking the Trolley lane. To enter the parking lot, there is an S-hook you can remove from the picket post [north side of entrance] to take down the chain. Then you can pull in the lot. Please call Clark on his cell phone 757.478.4560 with any questions.



STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY

You are asked to answer the following questions to help guide YOUR Strategic Planning Committee/Team. If you need to write on the back of this paper, feel free to do so. You may choose to sign your name or not, but please know EVERY completed survey we receive will be reviewed and considered as we start the Strategic Planning Process. That does NOT mean we can implement every idea we receive, but all ideas/suggestions/comments will be considered. We thank you, in advance for your completion and return of this survey to us by **July 5, 2014.**

1. What do you like best about your membership/relationship with the BBWG & Museum?
2. What do you like least or see as “Needs improvement” with the BBWG and/or Museum?
3. How can the BBWG & Museum expand and diversify its revenue base to maintain current operations and hopefully grow programs?
4. Compared to our competitors are we better, worse or about the same?
5. Are member events/meetings useful to you, if so “How” or “Why not”?
6. What do you see as the greatest challenge facing the BBWG & Museum over the next three (3) to five (5) years.