

Edward James Sweet Jr. (1907-1978)

Ed Sweet was born March 9, 1907, in Alexandria Bay to Edward James and Eliza Ann Sweet. Raised in Alexandria Bay he was a fine athlete and likely could have played goalie on the 1924 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team if he had been able to afford the costs involved.

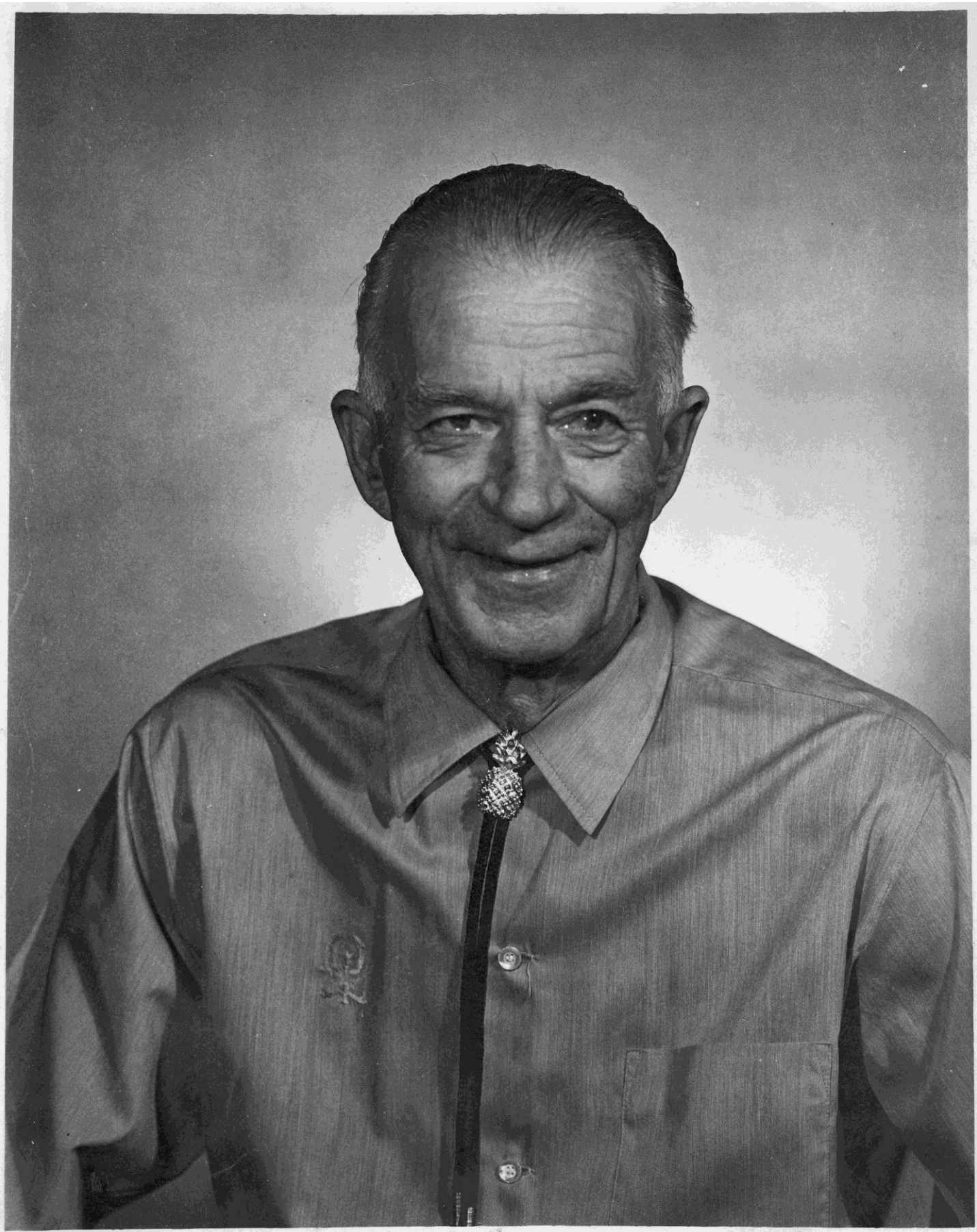
After high school he worked with his father, who was a marine engineer, onboard a small ship named 'The Hinckley'. On December 4, 1926, he married Helen O'Brien, and together they raised two sons and two daughters (James, Greta, Jack, and Marley).

Ed joined the U.S. Lighthouse House Service in March 1927. His first posting was Lorain, Ohio, on Lake Erie. In 1932 he and Helen moved back to the St. Lawrence River where he was first stationed on Crossover Island. Spring, summer, and fall were spent living on the Island, but the family moved to Alexandria Bay for the winter after the shipping season ended. In 1937 he moved full time to Alexandria Bay where he managed Sunken Rock Lighthouse and the various navigational aids in the area. Finally, he transferred to Tibbets Point Lighthouse in 1958, before retiring in March 1967 after 40 years.

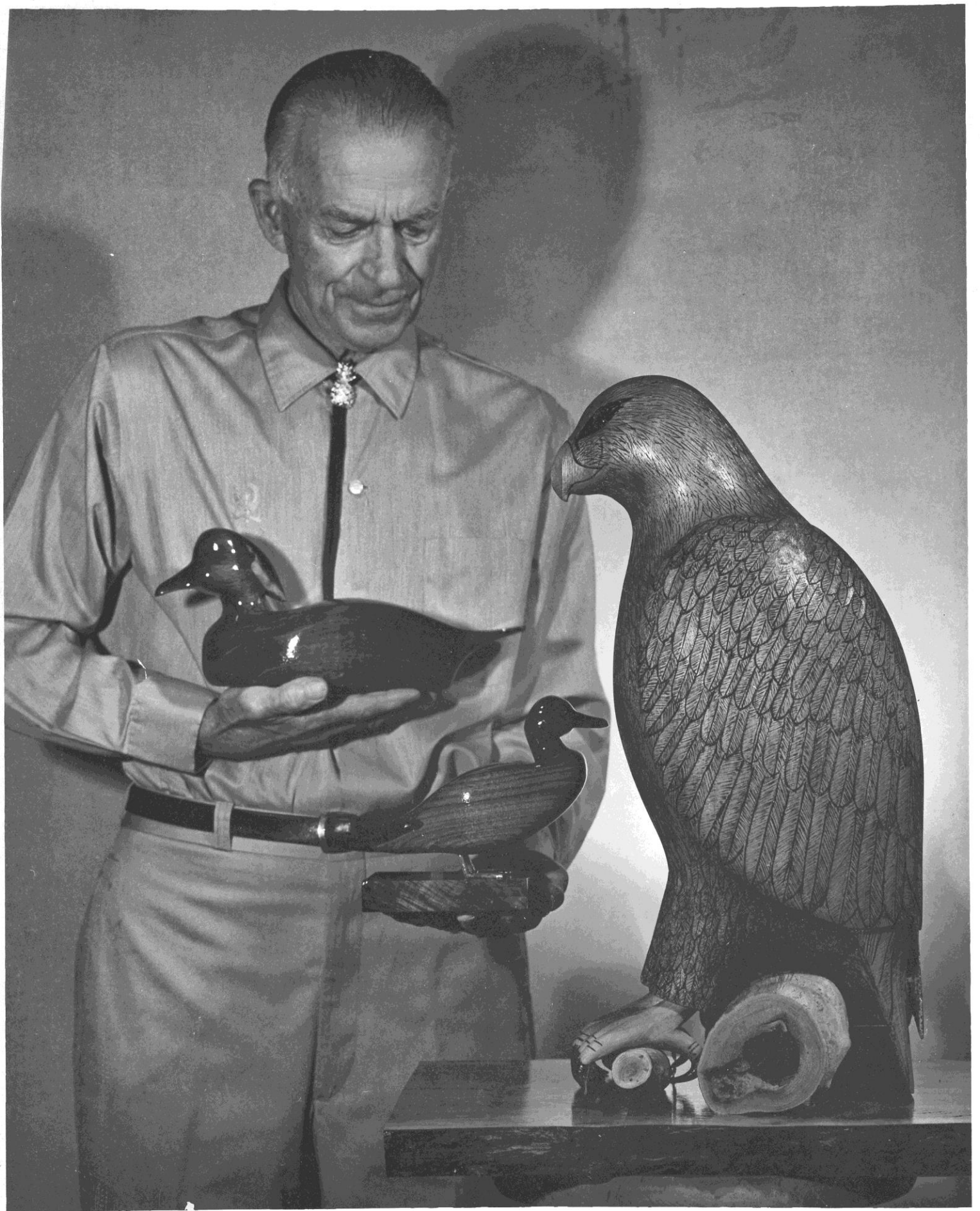
It has been reported that Ed carved his first decoys while stationed on Lake Erie. No examples of these first decoys are known but having been raised in Alexandria Bay he certainly would have been familiar with the St. Lawrence River style. Ed continued to make decoys throughout his life, and often mentioned how he enjoyed being a regular at Chauncey Wheeler's shop during his winters in the Bay in the 1930s.

Larry Lunman stated in Decoys of the Thousand Islands that Ed carved 450 to 500 gunning decoys, most before 1970. After 1970 Ed mainly produced decorative carvings including a number of new species and a variety of different styles. Some of these decoratives were carved from more exotic woods, especially those with distinctive wood grain patterns, and finished with a lightly stained and/or varnished surface. This exhibit includes miniature ducks carved from Koa and Monkey Pod wood which Ed secured on a trip to Hawaii.

Ed developed heart problems later in life and passed away November 9, 1978 at age 71. Helen Sweet passed away June 22, 1993, age 83, while on a trip to Quebec.

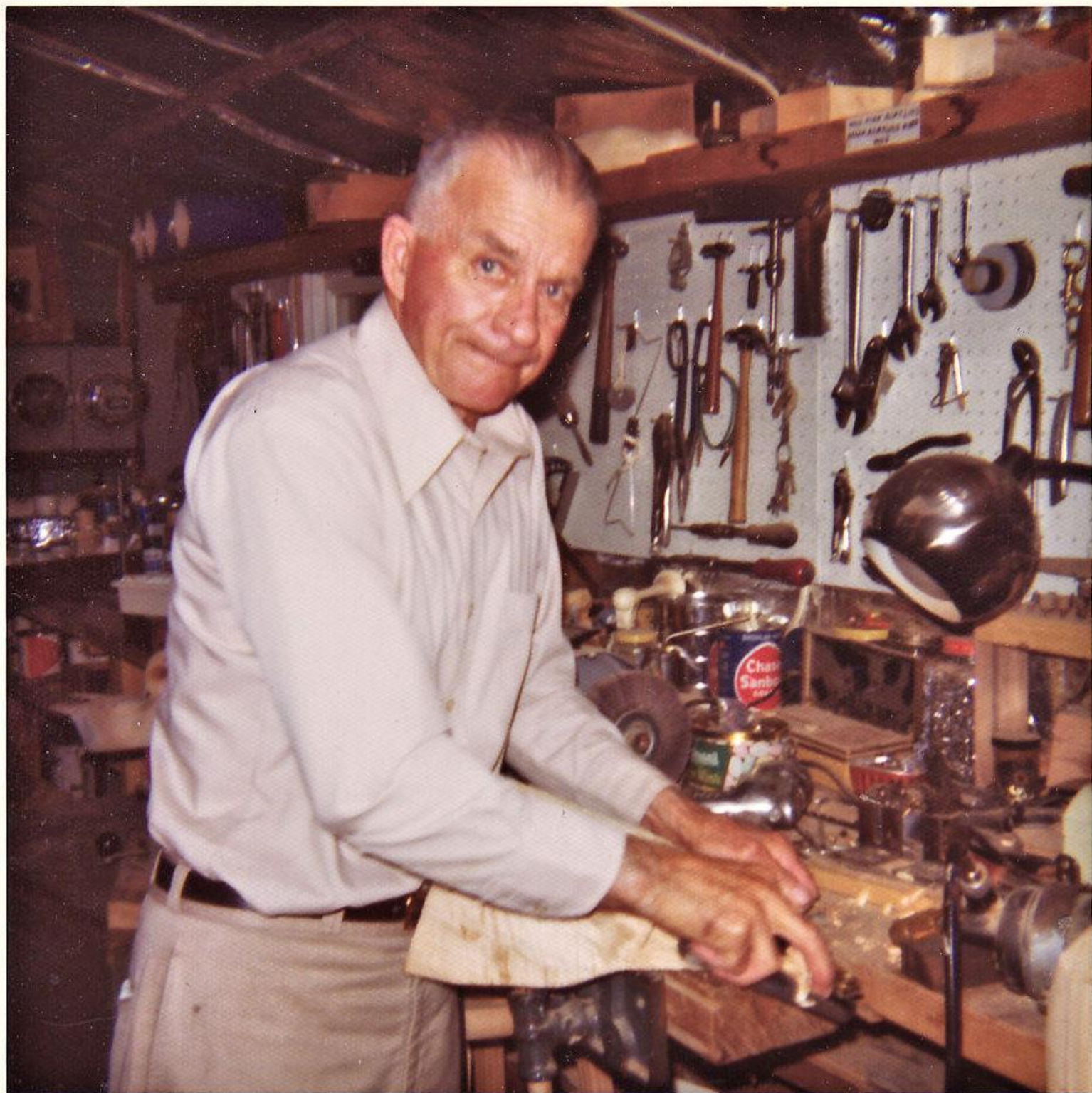


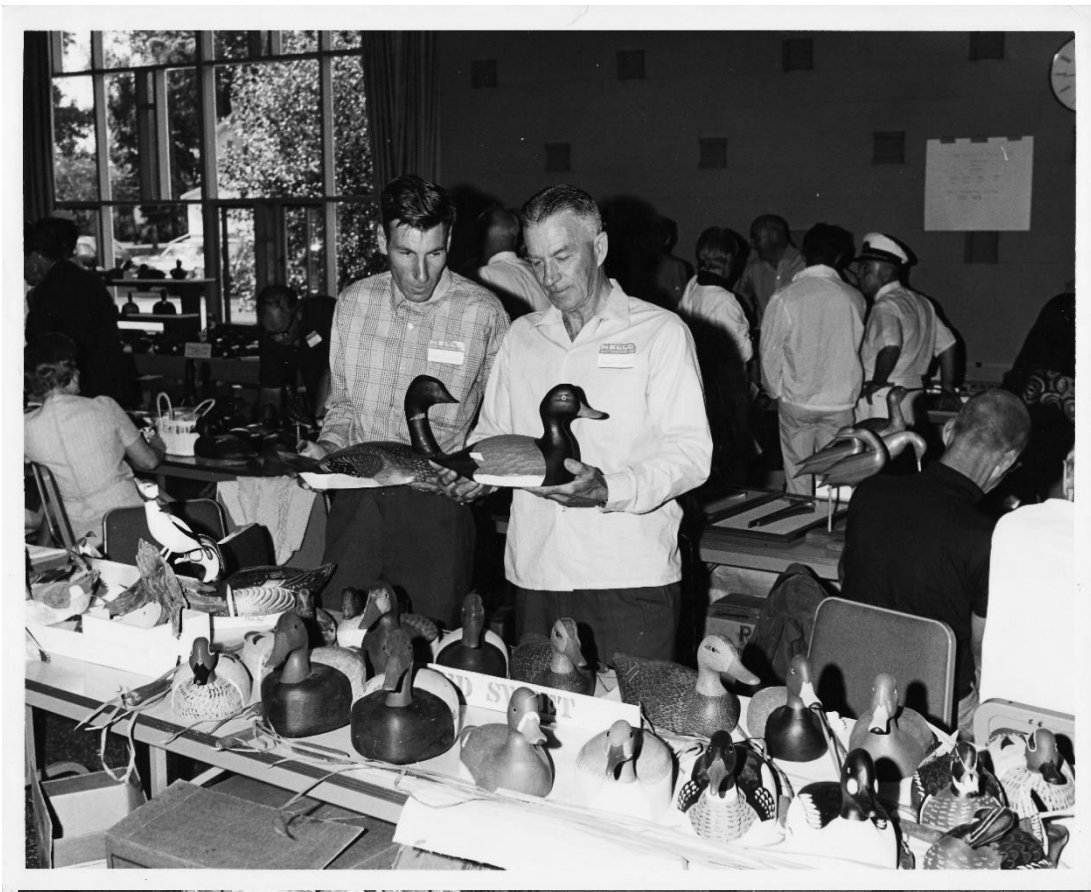
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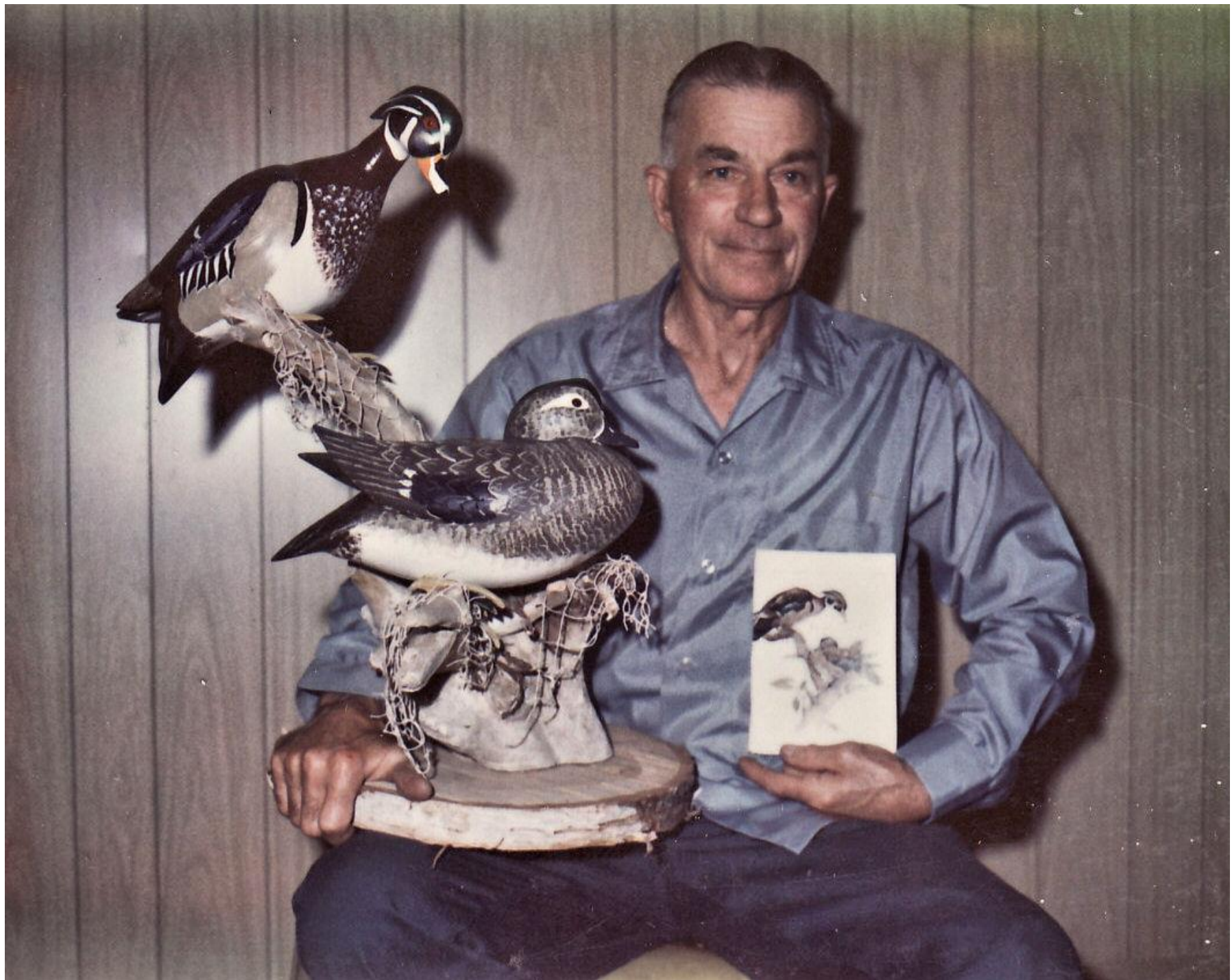




Early Clayton Decoy Show held at the municipal building. Top, Ed and Ralph Simpson compare decoys; bottom, Ed and Helen at their display

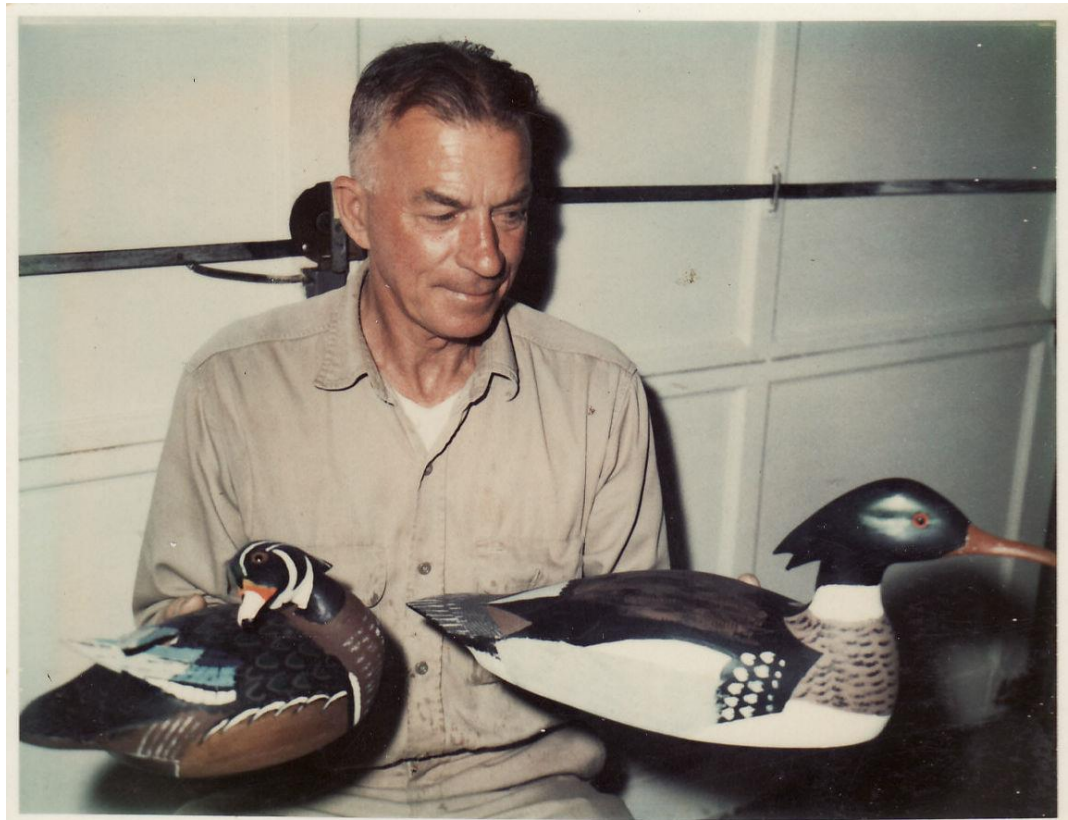
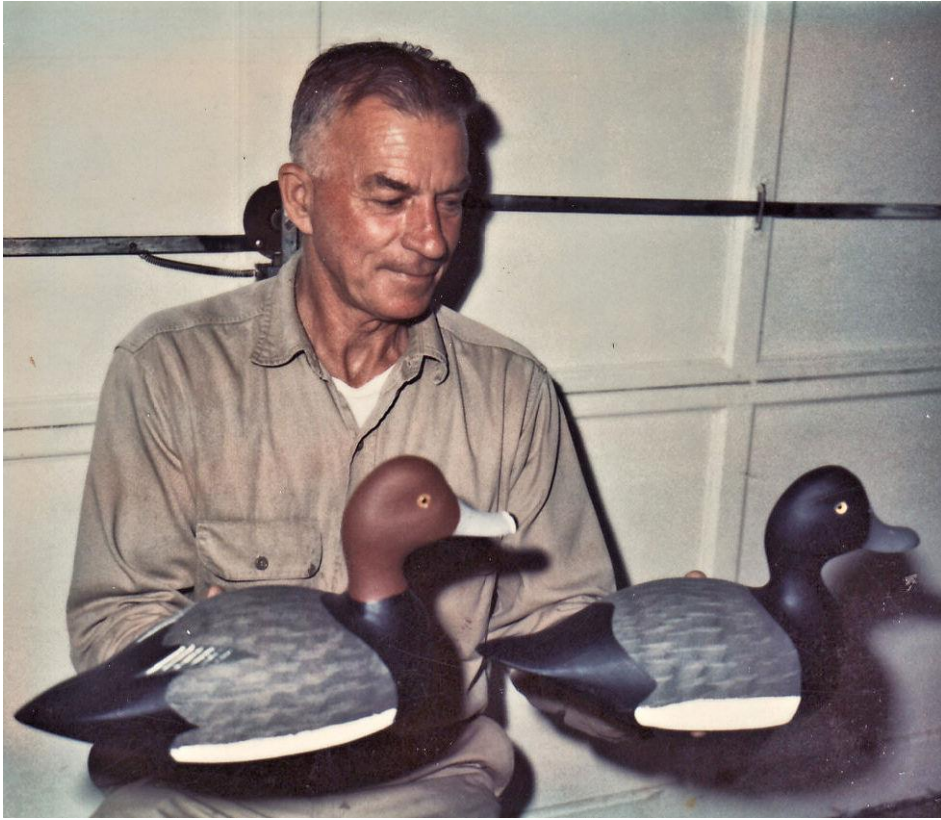


Ed's sons Jack (left) and James [Jim] with a group of decoys most of which were carved by James. The black duck directly in front of Jack was carved by Ed and painted by Jack. Today, Ed's grandson Glen is well-known as a carver of decoys. Not as well known, Ed's son James, and his grandsons Guy and Greg (Glen's brothers) also carved significant numbers of decoys.



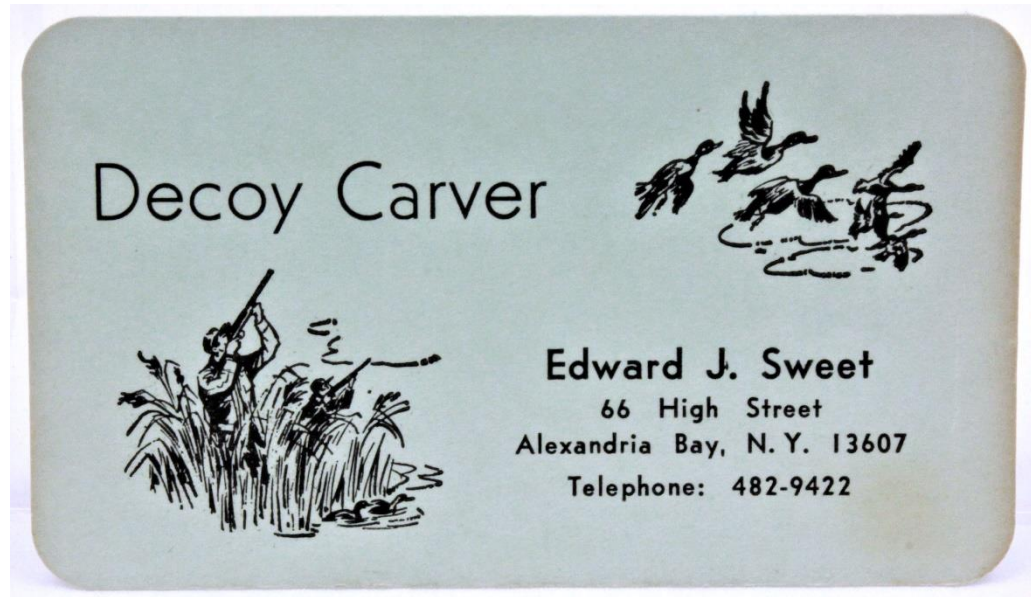
Ed Sweet with a decorative pair of wood ducks inspired by the print in his left hand.





This page and previous page showing Ed in his garage on High Street, Alexandria Bay, with some of his more traditionally carved and painted duck decoys.

Carvings and other items included in the TIDCA display at the 2022 Clayton Decoy Show.



Draw shave from Ed's shop.
EJ Sweet stamped in the handle.





Life-size decorative flying drake mallard by Ed Sweet. Overall height 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Ed is known to have made two life-size flying decoratives. The other is the drake goldeneye shown in the thumbnail below.





Plaque with attached mallards by Ed Sweet. The plaque is 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high by 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide. Dated 1975 on the back.





Decorative owl by Ed Sweet, dated 1975 on the back. Overall height 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; base 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches square.





Miniatures by Ed Sweet, both dated 1977. The upper carving was made from Koa wood with an overall length of 6 inches. The lower carving was made from Monkey Pod wood with an overall length of 6&1/2 inches.



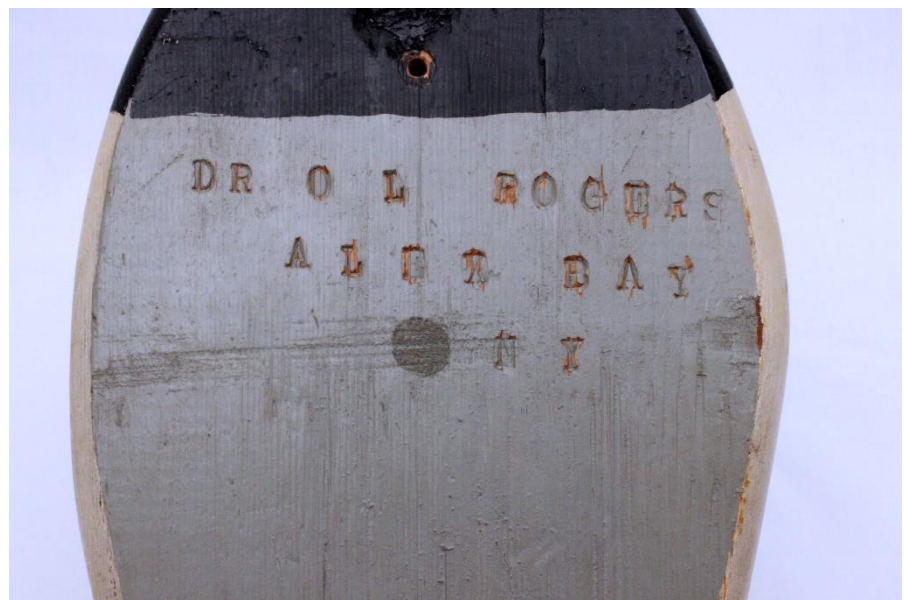
Miniature broadbills made by Ed Sweet in 1955 for his grandson Guy. The overall length of each is 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.



Seagull confidence hunting decoy with applied wing tips, made by Ed Sweet, c. 1975. Overall length from tip of bill to end of tail 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



Brant and drake bufflehead decoys by Ed Sweet. The brant has an overall length of 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, is dated 1977, and is believed to be the only example made by Ed. The bufflehead has an overall length of 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It was once offered for sale at a garage sale or at one of the early Clayton Shows and still has the asking price of \$15.00 written on the bottom.



Pair of magnum canvasbacks made by Ed Sweet. The drake has an overall length of $19\frac{3}{4}$ inches, while the hen has an overall length of $18\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The decoys were once owned by Dr O.L. Rogers of Alexandria Bay, NY, with his name and abbreviated address stamped on the bottom.

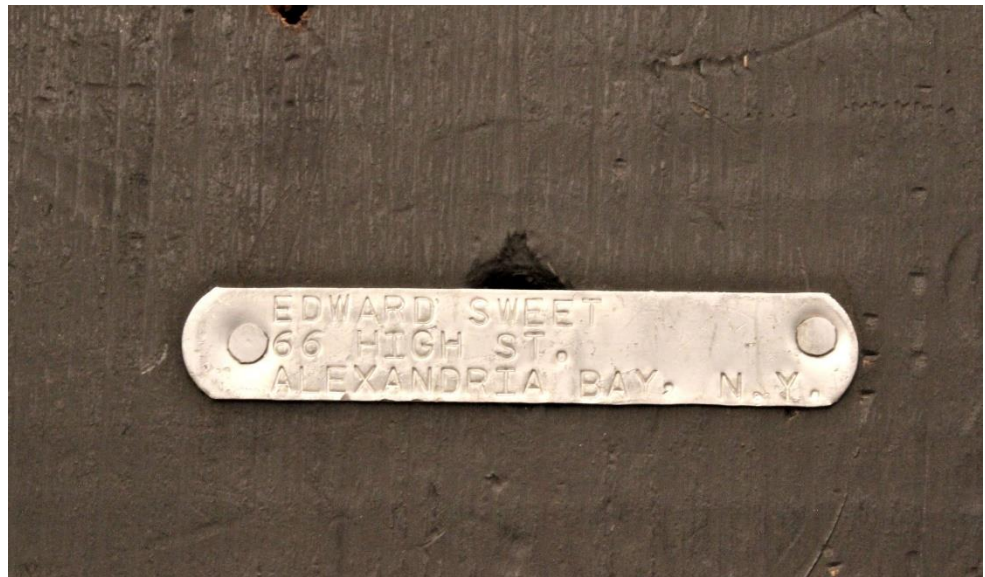


Different styles of broadbill decoys by Ed Sweet. The upper pair are modeled after Sam Denny decoys and have overall lengths of 15 inches. The lower pair are based on Frank Coombs decoys and have overall lengths of 13&1/2 inches.



Another style of broadbill decoy by Ed Sweet based on the decoys of D.W. Nichol, Smiths Falls, Ontario. The decoys each have an overall length of 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, have Ed's aluminum name tag on their bottoms, and are labeled "Lesser Scaup River Broadbill".





Black duck decoy carved by Ed Sweet, but painted by his son Jack. Overall length 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. This decoy has Ed's aluminum name tag on the bottom.



Black duck and drake wood duck by Ed Sweet. The standard grade black duck was carved and painted by Ed, with an overall length of 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The wood duck is a more decorative model with applied, raised wing tips; has Ed's aluminum name tag on the bottom, and has an overall length of 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



Redheads by Ed Sweet, both with aluminum name tags on their bottoms. The drake has an overall length of 14 inches, while the overall length of the hen is 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The hen has white wing speculums which typically would indicate it was painted as a hen broadbill. However, Glen Sweet thought the feather painting on the body was sufficiently different from the typical Ed Sweet hen broadbill that the decoy was most likely intended to be a hen redhead.



Goldeneyes by Ed Sweet. The drake has an overall length of $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches and has the aluminum name tag on the bottom. The hen has an overall length of $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches.



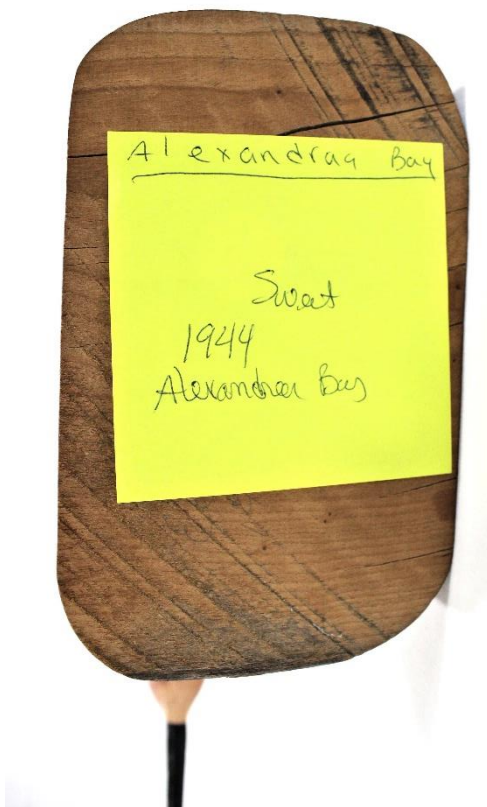
Drake goldeneye by James (Jim) Sweet, one of Ed's two sons. Somewhat smudged signature on the bottom, and with an overall length of 14 inches.





Male ring-necked pheasant by Ed Sweet; overall length 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Very similar decorative pheasants were carved by William Owen Massey and Roy A. Conklin, Jr.



Avocet attributed to Ed Sweet c. 1944. The carving is 9 inches tall and 16 inches from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail.