



# Thousand Islands Decoy Collectors Association

Spring Meeting - March 1, 2025

Carvers and topics covered in the spring presentations depend on a variety of factors:

- availability of new information
- example decoys and other carvings
- suggestions from others

Want to emphasize, we need help with uncovering more information – tips, leads, photographs, introductions to family members, **phone numbers**.

- This is a PDF version of the 2025 power point slide presentation. The PDF version has been expanded to include some text slides to smooth or explain the transitions between slides and various sections; transitions that were given verbally during the slide show.
- Also includes additional photos of LaFlair family decoys brought to the meeting, which help further explain and enhance the discussions.

# 2025 Presentation:

- updates on:
  - Gove family
  - Schutte decoy school
- LaFlair family
- auctions and decoy collecting
- coming events / shows

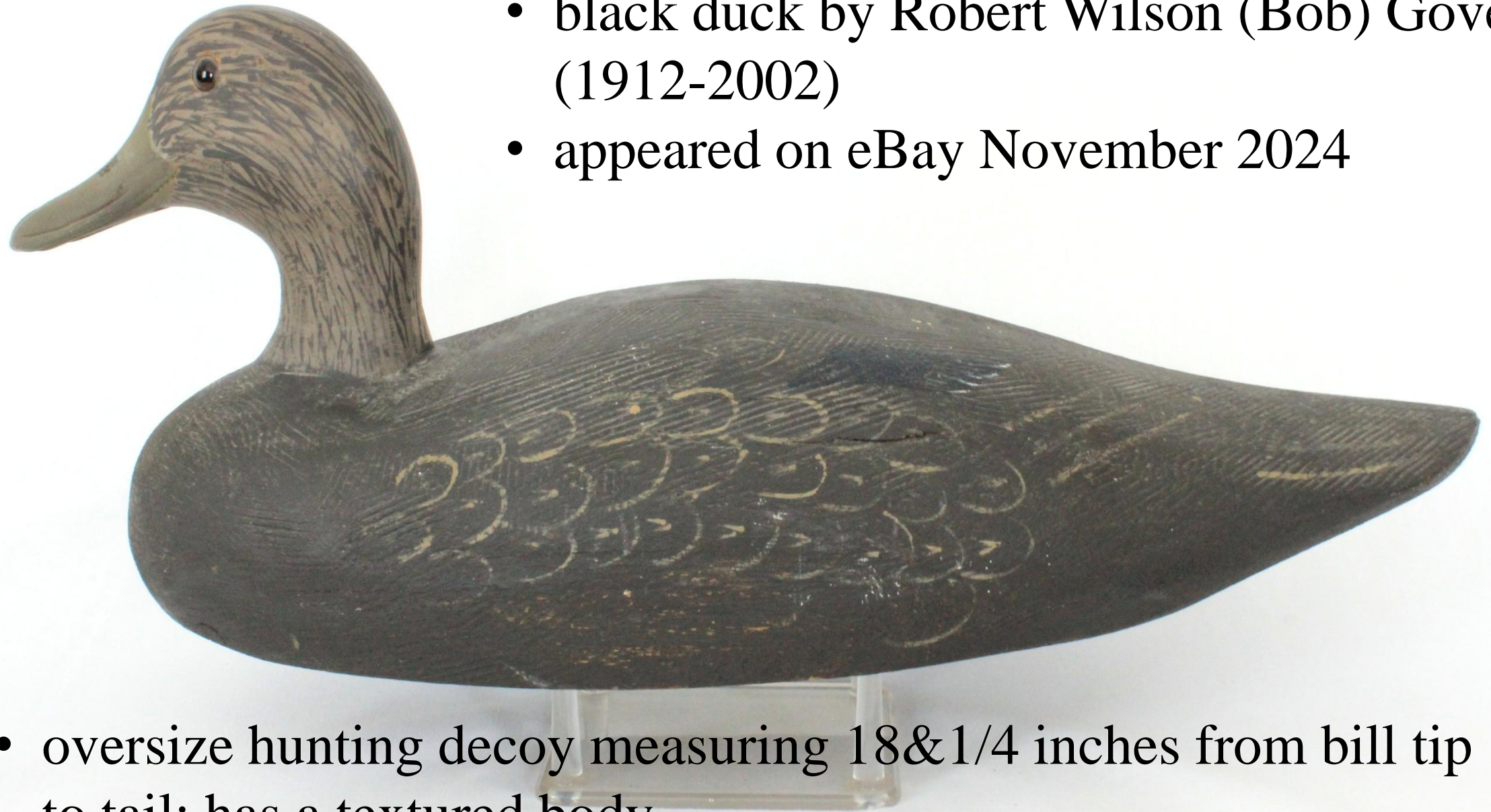
# Updates to previous presentations:

- Most presentations contain some gaps in our knowledge. and there are always examples of the various carvings that were unavailable .
- In the last several years some very interesting examples of decoys and decorative carvings by individuals or groups previously discussed have become available.

# Gove family:

- Very brief introduction spring 2018; main presentation spring 2019.
- Concentrated on Robert Gove, Chippewa Bay, due mainly to the information, decorative decoys, carvings, and paintings available among family members. Only a few hunting decoys were known.
- Brothers Alton and Ellis, Alexandria Bay, were reviewed but no carvings by them were available.

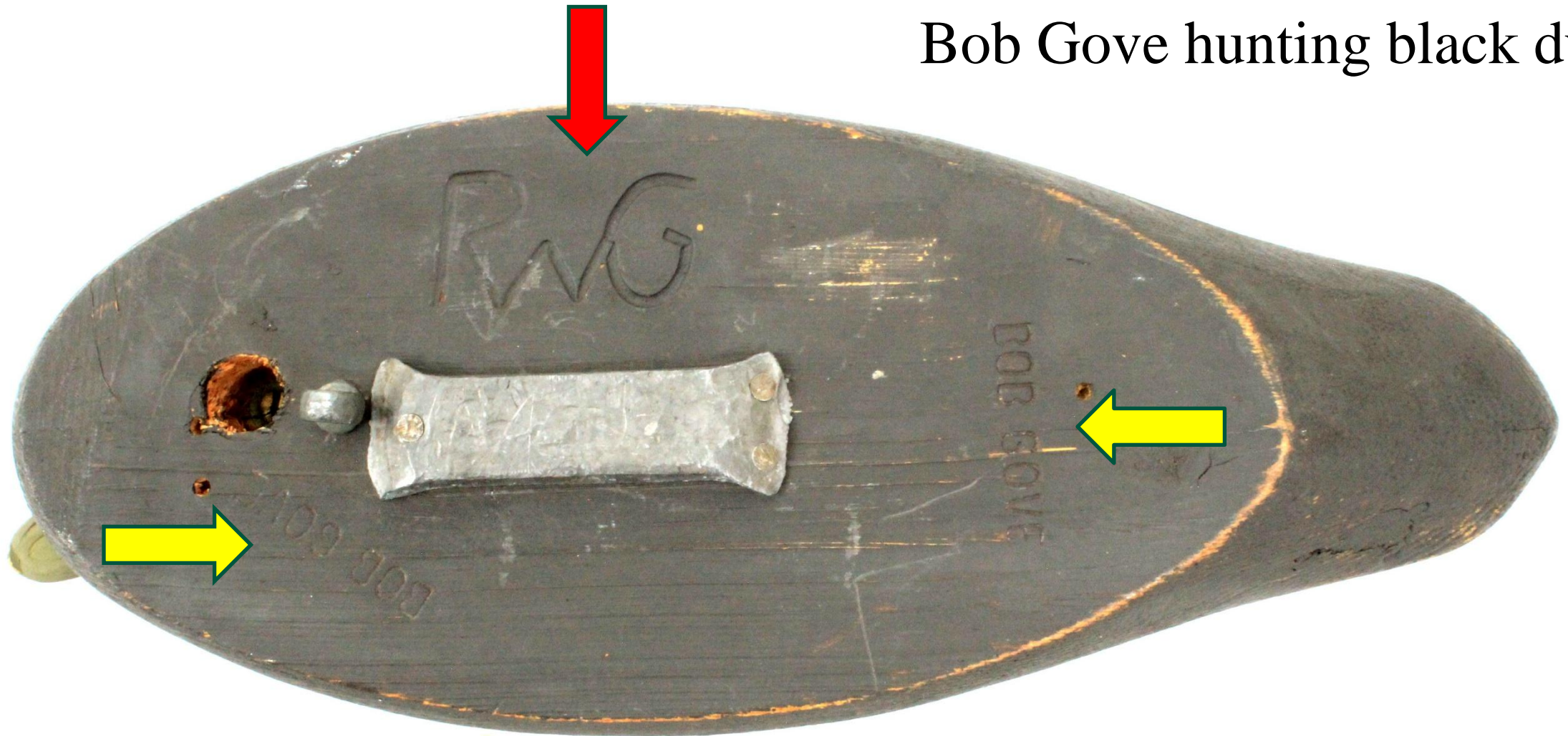
- A number of Gove family carvings have surfaced in the last 2 years prompting this update.
- The first is a black duck working decoy by Bob Gove. Likely from his personal hunting rig.



- black duck by Robert Wilson (Bob) Gove (1912-2002)
- appeared on eBay November 2024

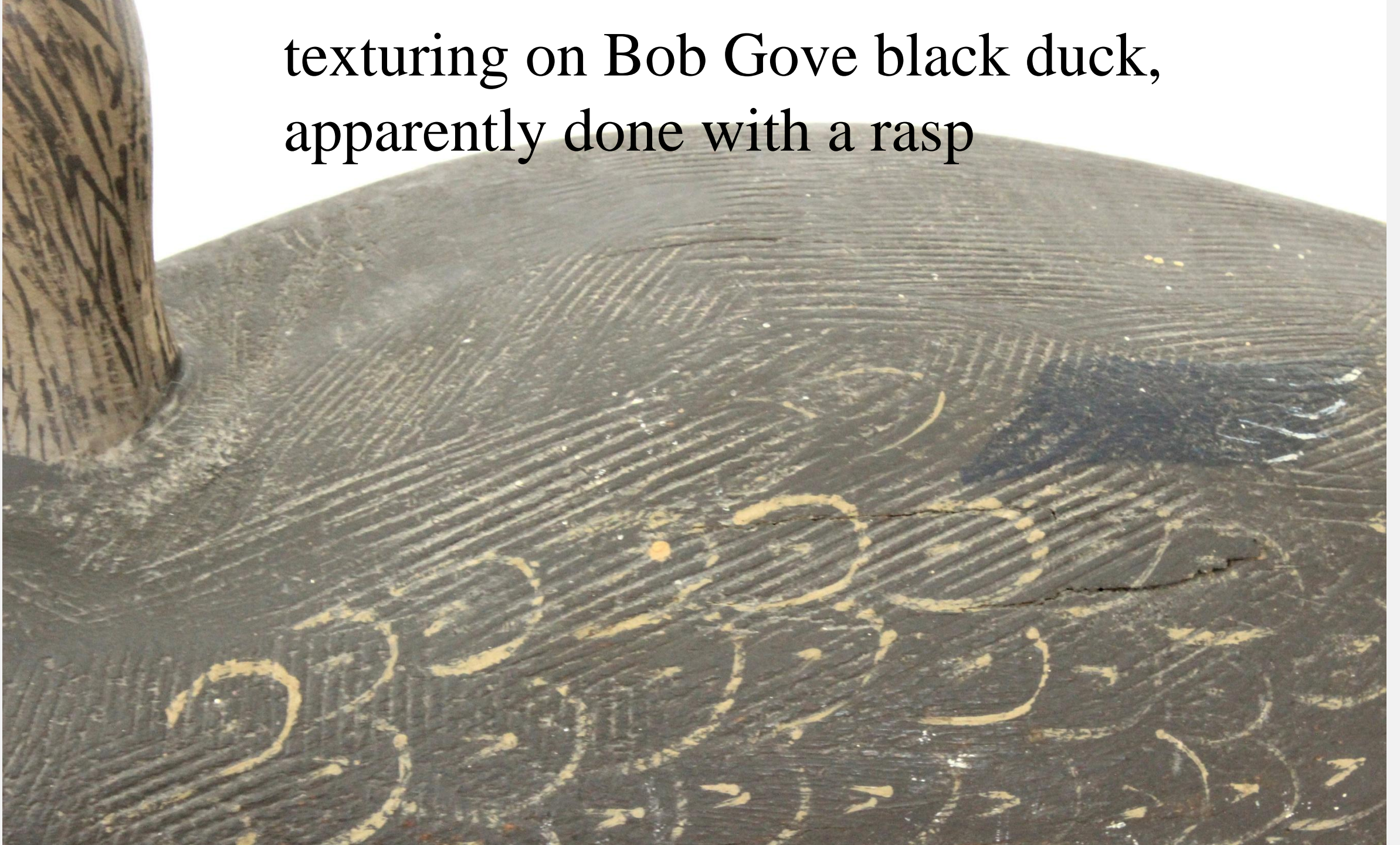
- oversize hunting decoy measuring 18&1/4 inches from bill tip to tail; has a textured body

Bob Gove hunting black duck



- branded twice “BOB GOVE” (yellow arrows)
- carved stylized initials “RWG” (red arrow)

texturing on Bob Gove black duck,  
apparently done with a rasp





## Detailed Bill Carving:

- out-carved slightly from the face
- carved nostrils, nail at bill tip, groove lines in bill

Bob Gove black duck

Bob Gove black duck



- Next are a black duck working decoy, and then a group of miniature half-flyers, all attributed to Alton Gove.
- The black duck and the half-flyers are St. Lawrence River style carvings and might very well have been carved by Alton Gove, but unfortunately, there is no additional documentation to help support these attributions.

- black duck sold at online Blanchard Auction held August 2024
- attributed to Alton Gove (1908-1958)



Attribution apparently based on the label stuck on the ballast weight



combing on black duck  
attributed to Alton Gove



scratch paint on head of  
black duck attributed to  
Alton Gove





- 19 miniature half-flyers donated to a local organization along with a note attributing them to Alton Gove
- none of the carvings are signed or marked
- no other documentation available



miniature half-flyers  
attributed to Alton Gove





goldeneye miniature  
half-flyers attributed  
to Alton Gove

# Schutte decoy school:

- Detailed presentation given 2024 spring meeting .
- Slides 14 & 15 gave a summary of known species carved, with slide 15 covering the rarer ones.
- The original presentation indicated that just one pintail was known.
- That pintail was shown in the article in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, December 3, 1939.



Left - Russ Farmen  
painting  
canvasback head.

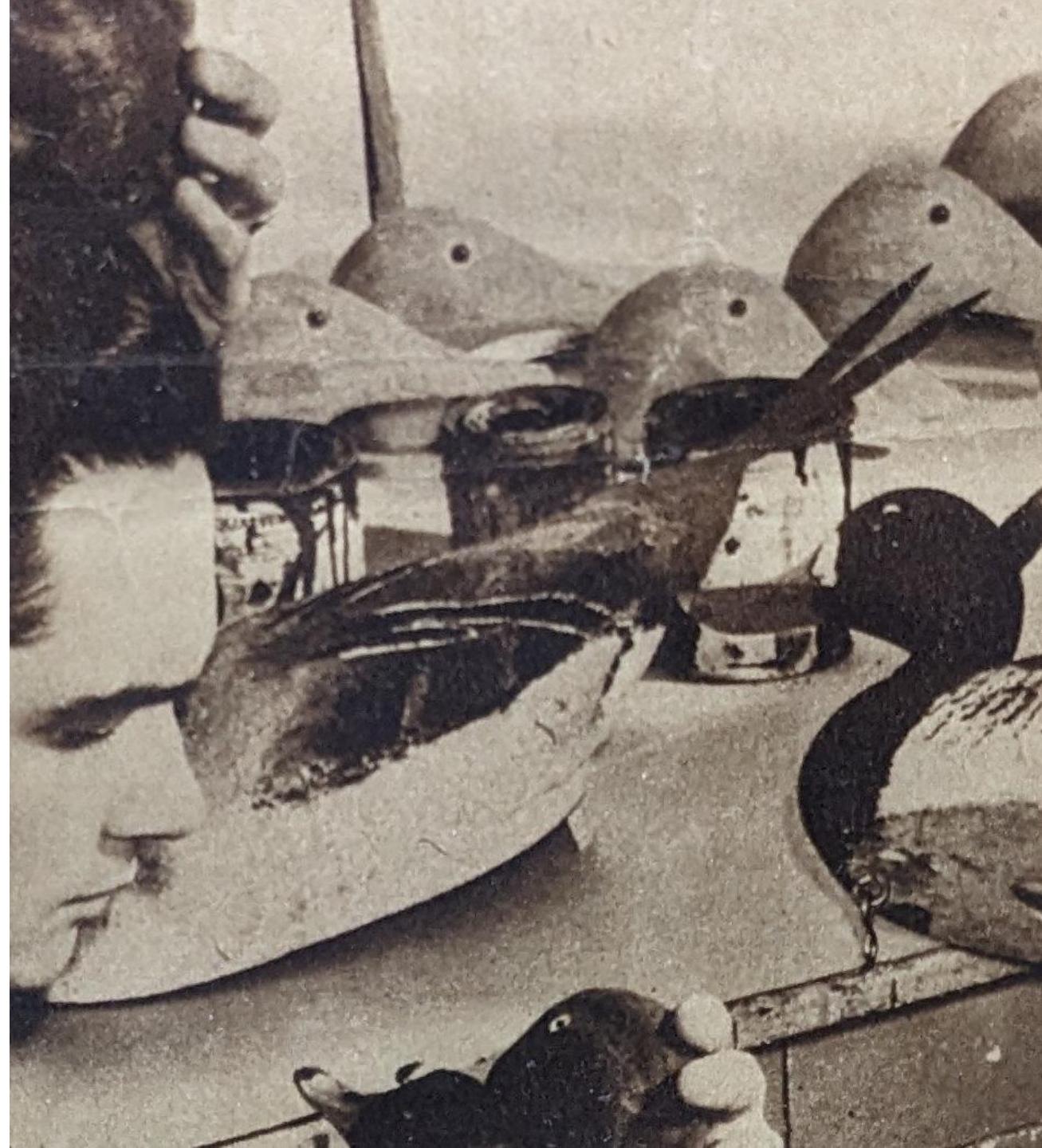
Middle - Harry  
Schutte painting a  
broadbill.

Right - Chet  
Schutte painting  
another broadbill.

drake pintail on the  
bench.

Cropped image from 1939 newspaper article:

- rear 2/3 of drake pintail clearly visible
- long double tail feathers
- several tertial feathers outlined in white



- Prior to downloading the 2024 presentation to the museum's website we became aware of a Schutte-like drake pintail scheduled to appear at a local auction scheduled for the end of April.

Cork-bodied pintail: sold at Hessney Auctions, Geneva, NY,  
auction held 4/27/24, lot #719

- similarities to Schutte decoys
  - keel with inlet ballast weight, sealer evident on the cork body
- initially attributed to Chet Schutte



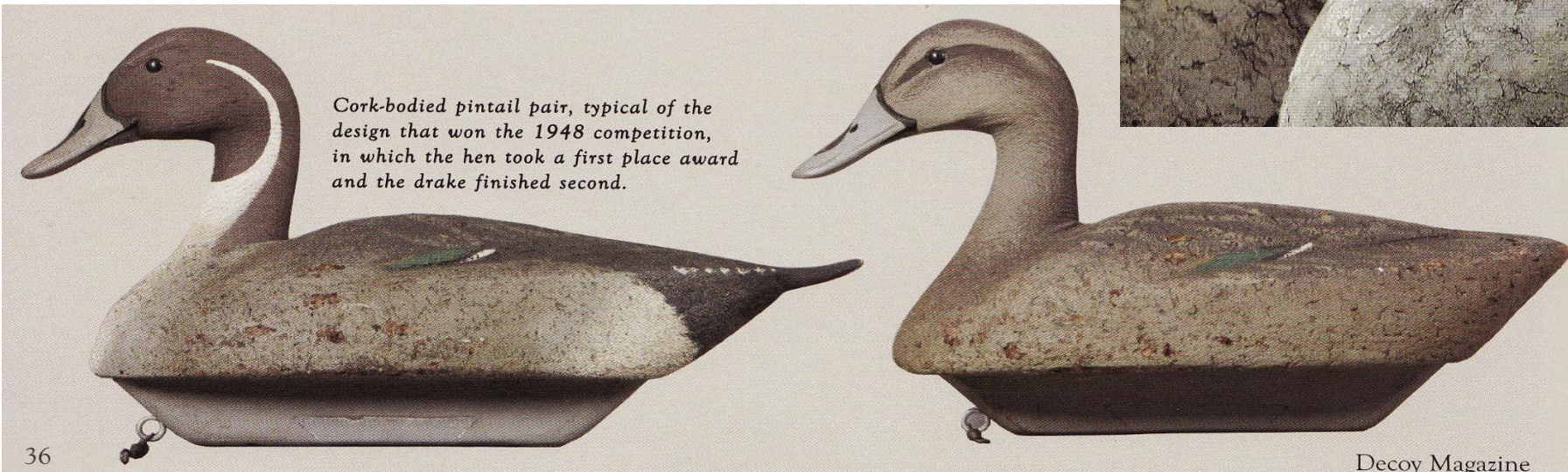
- Based on the pintail sold at the Hessney Auction in April, the 2024 spring presentation was altered to shown two pintails known.
- A nearly identical drake pintail was sold 9/22/24 at a Forsythes' Auction (lot #188) held in Ohio.
- Then learned that other collectors were attributing these two pintails to Bill Enright, Toledo, OH.

## Bill Enright, Toledo, OH: Maumee Bay cork decoys

- Decoy Magazine, Jan/Feb 2007, pages 36-39
- Decoy Magazine, Jan/Feb 2008, pages 28-32
- Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations by Gene and Linda Kangas, pages 115, 116, 118, 130, 131

Above sources provided a wealth of information and some excellent photos of Enright pintails

Based on these photos and the information in the articles, the drake pintails in the Hessney and Forsythes' auctions are almost certainly by Bill Enright.



Above - from Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations  
Left - from Decoy Magazine Jan/Feb 2007

- Another uncommon species to appear within the last year was a drake goldeneye by Chet Schutte.
- The 2024 presentation had stated at only two goldeneyes by Schutte were known.

# Goldeneye by Chet Schutte

- wood body, c. 1930-32



## Known Other Species Carved in lesser amounts

- Coots (8 known)
- Goldeneyes/Whistlers (3 known)
- Pintail (1 known)
- Canada Geese (2 known)
- Miniatures (4 known)

Based on the new information obtained, slide 15 of the spring 2024 Schutte presentation should be updated as shown above – 3 known goldeneyes, 1 known pintail

# LaFlair family

- common last name in the Ogdensburg/Lisbon area of upstate New York
- a number of variations in the spelling: Lafler, Laflare, Leflare, Laflair (likely some others)
- based on comments from area residents, there appear to be a number of unrelated, or very distantly related, LaFlair lineages

- This presentation will focus on the lineage leading to the documented decoy carvers: Richard (Dick) LaFlair and his sons John, Ed, and Lawrence.
- Information in the decoy literature on these carvers is rather limited:
  - Decoys of the Thousand Islands (pages 162-164)
  - 1968 article by Keith Norton – Quarterly Magazine (publication of St. Lawrence Co. Historical Association)
  - canvasback photo in Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations

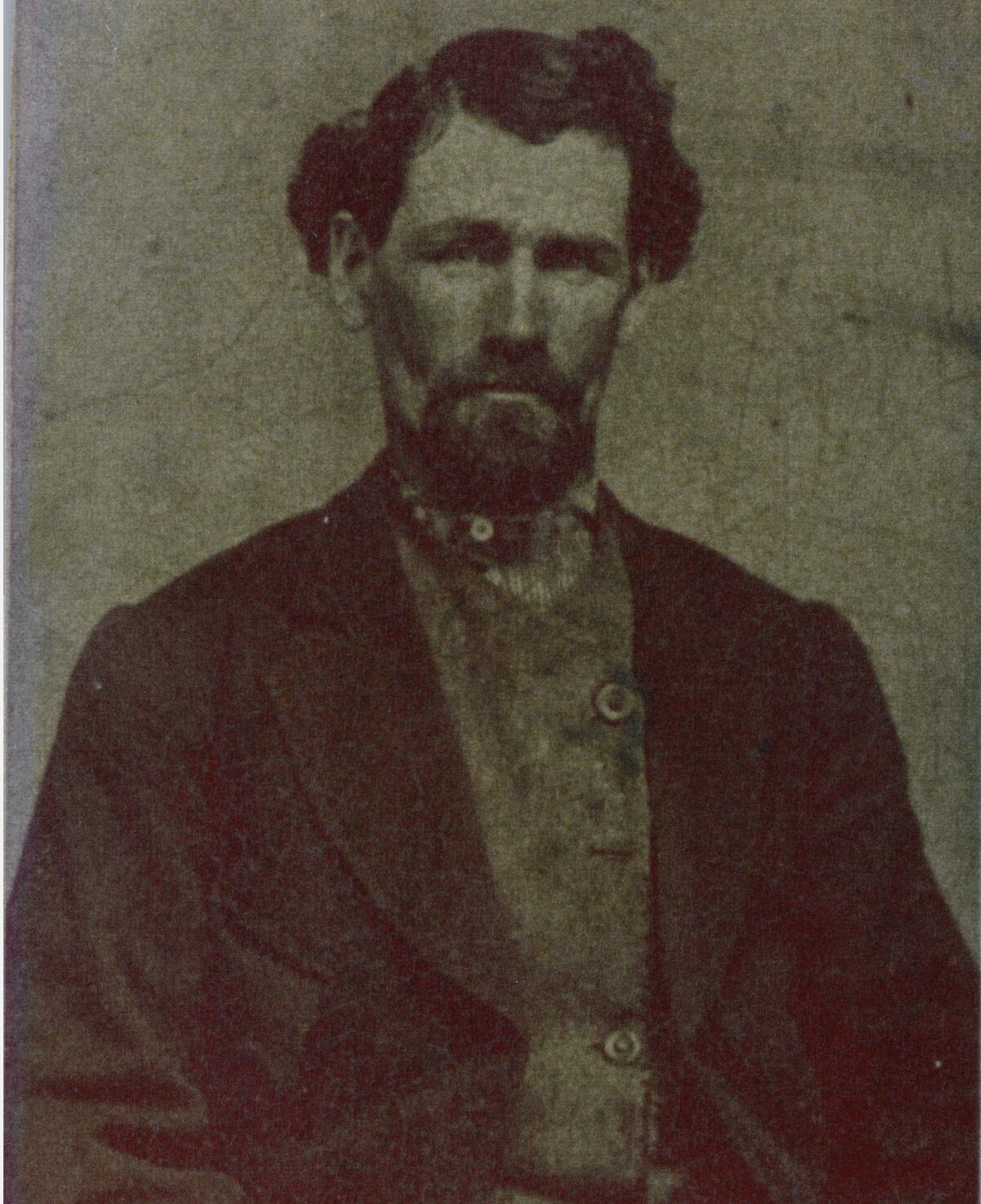
- Will begin by briefly reviewing some of the earlier ancestors leading to the LaFlair decoy carvers.

# John and Nancy Laflare:

- both born in Canada - John ~ 1793, Nancy ~ 1810
- moved from Canada in 1848 and settled on River Road
- 1850 census lists them in Lisbon – John is a farmer
- 1860 census lists them in the Village of “Ogdensburgh” – John is a wood sawyer
- census listings show nine children, 3 sons and 6 daughters; 6 oldest all born in Canada
- second child was Joseph Laflare

## Joseph and Maria (Mariah) Laflare (Leflare):

- 1860 and 1880 censuses list them in Lisbon – Joseph is listed as a farm laborer in 1860, farmer in 1880
- census listings show six children, 2 sons and 4 daughters; all born in New York
- first child was Richard “Dick” LaFlair
- Joseph drowned on the River July 19, 1898, when his sailboat capsized



- Joseph Laflare – photo from Anna McAllister’s family; Anna was his granddaughter
- Rick LaFlair, Joseph’s great grandson, stated that Joseph was a caretaker on Tick Island
- some of Joseph’s children and grandchildren also associated with Tick Island

## Tick Island:

- located on St. Lawrence River about 6 miles down-river (NE) of Ogdensburg; just above Galop or Big Island
- One newspaper article listed size as 12 acres, another listed it as 8 acres - not a huge island
- Galoup (Galloup) Club based on Tick Island was formed in 1851 by 26 Ogdensburg gentlemen, fishing and social organization; clubhouse built in 1882
- steamers made regular stops in the area during the summer season; frequent schedule listings in the papers

**—The steamer Milton will make daily trips to the Galloupe, leaving at 2 p. m., touching at Point Airy, Tick Island and Kellogg's Island. Returning, leave Kellogg's 3.30 ; Tick Island 4.15 ; Point Airy 4.30 and reaching her dock at 5.30 p. m. Fare to Point Airy and Tick Island and return 25c. ; to Kellogg's 25c. each way.**

Steamer schedule listed in The Ogdensburg Journal, 24 July 1889, page 4

- Tick Island sold to Henry Lawrence in 1894, mentions the old club house and declining membership in the Galoups Club (now just 14 remaining)
- then sold to Samuel McDonald in 1920; noted that Henry Lawrence had built a summer home there
- sold to Assemblyman Laidlaw in 1924; mentions summer cottages on the Island
- used for grazing cattle in 1942; wild on the Island
- John Ward cottage sold for \$51 in 1955; before the Island was razed prior to seaway construction

- Local newspapers had quite a number of articles or brief news clips about LaFlair family members fishing and hunting around Tick Island, but only a few of them indicated that they were actually living or working on tick Island.
- Two of those are shown in the next slide.

## **A Big Muscalonge.**

Mr. LaFlair, who has charge of the club house on Tick Island, caught a 25 pound muscalonge, Thursday. This is the first of the season.

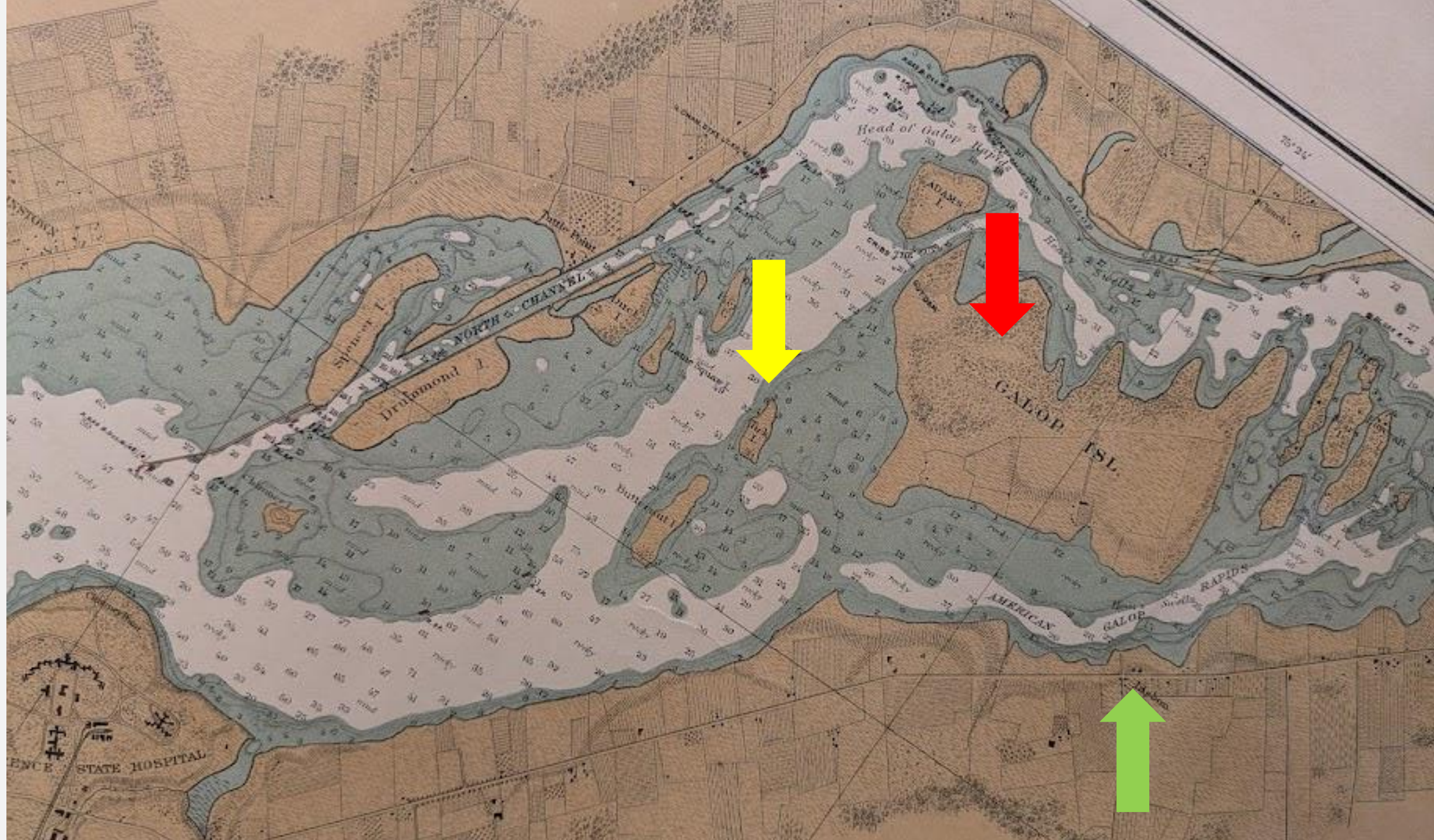
St Lawrence Republican  
and Ogdensburg Weekly  
Journal, 27 June 1894,  
page 5

—Minnows at Tick Island for only 50c. a  
hundred. **RICHARD LAFLAIR.**

The Ogdensburg  
Journal, 18 July 1900,  
page 4

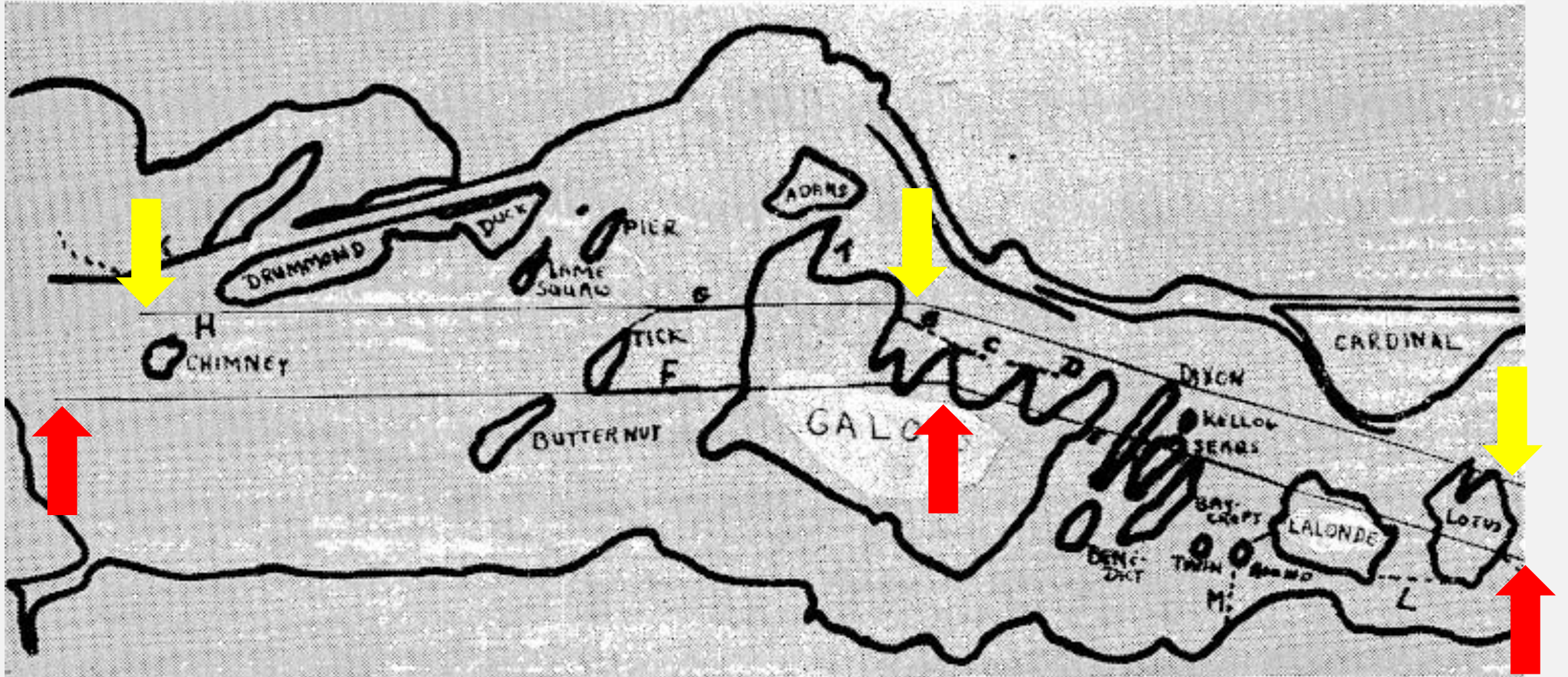
- which years and months the various members of the LaFlair family actually worked or lived on Tick Island are poorly known

- Next slide shows part of a 1906 navigation chart. The chart has been tipped about 45 degrees so that the river appears to be flowing from left to right (west to east).
- The left edge of the chart starts about 3 miles down-river (northeast) of Ogdensburg.
- The yellow arrow shows Tick Island. The red arrow shows Galop or Big Island.
- The green arrow shows a cross-roads named Lisbon, which is no longer shown on maps. The entire area is in the Township of Lisbon. Note the American Galop Rapids between Lisbon and Galop Island.



- The 1906 navigation chart shows part of the shipping channel and lock system on the North (Canadian) shore. There were large bulk carriers on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River long before the St. Lawrence Seaway was constructed.
- Construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway (1954-1958) allowed for passage of larger, deeper draft, vessels, but dramatically changed the lower River.

- St. Lawrence Seaway construction removed Tick Island and much of Galop Island; new channel in the area between the arrows.



Ogdensburg Journal, 23 July 1956, page 8

- official opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway took place April 25, 1959; first ship passage actually took place a few weeks earlier, April 1, 1959
- St. Lawrence River known to the earlier residents was changed substantially
- Dick Hollis recalled that the American Galop Rapids were very fast but smooth water if no wind; impossible to row against, barely passable with the 5 HP motors most had in the late '40s early '50s

Returning to the LaFlair family, resuming with Richard (Dick) LaFlair, followed by his sons John, Edward, and Lawrence. Included are:

- census records, newspaper articles, family photos
- summaries of information listed in Decoys of the Thousand Islands; section written by Larry Lunman
- photos of LaFlair family decoys, including some examples which include characteristics that have been attributed to several members of the family

# Richard (Dick) and Ida C. LaFlair:

- Richard was born in NY [1856-1942], Ida was born in Ontario near the St. Clair River [1866-1948]
- raised on the River, Dick moved to Detroit in mid 1880s, where he was a ships' carpenter; met and married Ida McDonald there; moved back to Ogdensburg early 1890s
- 1900 & 1920 censuses list Dick as a farmer; 1910 & 1930 censuses list him as a river guide; always listed as living in Town of Lisbon, no mention of Tick Island
- at least 7 children according to 1900 and 1910 censuses



## Dick and Ida LaFlair

- photo from Anna McAllister's family, Anna was the oldest child listed in 1900 census (born about 1888)

House on Tick  
Island

Caption: Childhood home of Anna LaFlair McAllister

- next slide summarizes an interesting newspaper article about an event that occurred in January 1905
- according to LaFlair family history, roads were poorly plowed in the winters in those days and the area residents sometimes opted to travel on the ice
- article noted that Dick and his family were living on the shore of the River at the time, not on Tick Island
- possible that the LaFlairs stayed on Tick Island mostly during the summer months (??)

“HORSE BROKE THROUGH - Thrilling Midnight Experience of Dick Laflair”: (St Lawrence Republican and Ogdensburg Weekly Journal, 11 January 1905, page 3)

- “Dick Laflair, the well-known oarsman and river guide, while driving home with a load of coal on the ice below the city, had a narrow escape”
- horse and sleigh broke through the ice – strayed outside the marked road
- noted that “Laflair lives on the shore about five miles below the city.”

## Information from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- Dick LaFlair was characterized as a riverman, “earned his living as a market hunter, commercial fisherman, hunting and fishing guide, and small boat builder”
- decoys made from cedar, and have painted eyes
- most were made between 1890 and 1910 while living on Tick Island
- decoys have sharply beveled bottom edges
- bottom beveling on Dick’s decoys ended before the tail “leaving the back edge of the bottom rectangular”

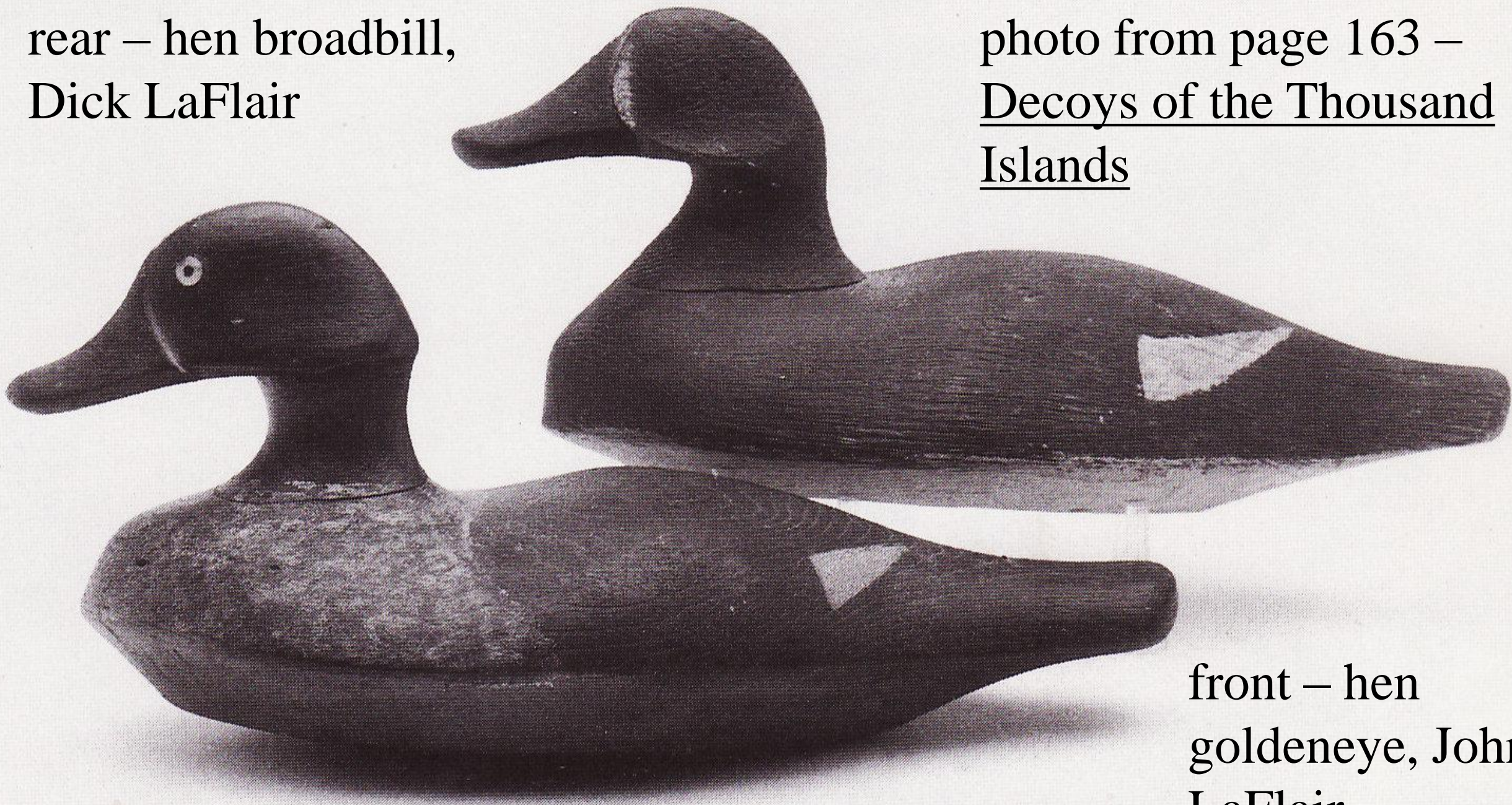
continued from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- concave cut on “leading edge of the tail”
- Dick textured the bodies of his decoys with grooves running the length of the body
- noted that the decoys by Dick and his son John had many similarities
- estimated that Dick and John carved 200 to 300 broadbill and whistler (goldeneye) decoys, most of them hens
- both Dick and John sold some decoys to earn extra money

- photographs of Dick LaFlair decoys are rare; I know of only one in the published literature
- that photo was on page 163 of Decoys of the Thousand Islands, showing a Dick LaFlair hen broadbill, together with a John LaFlair hen goldeneye

rear – hen broadbill,  
Dick LaFlair

photo from page 163 –  
Decoys of the Thousand  
Islands



front – hen  
goldeneye, John  
LaFlair

- the Dick LaFlair hen broadbill, and the John LaFlair hen goldeneye pictured in Decoys of the Thousand Islands, were both brought to the 2025 TIDCA spring meeting where additional photos were taken
- photos of the Dick LaFlair hen broadbill taken at the spring meeting are shown in the next three slides

A close-up photograph of a dark, weathered wooden duck decoy. The decoy is positioned horizontally, facing left. It has a long, straight bill and a rounded head. The wood is dark and shows signs of age and wear, with some lighter-colored wood visible where the dark finish has worn away, particularly around the neck and on the side of the body. The decoy is resting on a light-colored, textured surface.

Dick LaFlair hen broadbill

same decoy pictured on page 163 in Decoys of the Thousand Islands

texturing on the upper body of  
Dick LaFlair hen broadbill



bottom view Dick  
LaFlair hen broadbill



- no texturing on the bottom or lower beveled sides
- concave cut on leading edge of the tail (green arrow), back edge of the bottom rectangular (red arrow); features mentioned in Decoys of the Thousand Islands

## John Duncan and Alma L. LaFlair:

- according to ancestry.com born 12/15/1889 in St. Clair, Michigan – listed as 1890 in Decoys of the Thousand Islands
- 1910 census – John listed as a river guide, living with parents and 5 siblings in the Town of Lisbon
- married Alma L. Wells of Waddington 9/1/1915
- Decoys of the Thousand Islands states he died of pneumonia in 1926, but that is incorrect
- 1930 census – listed as a boat builder with his own shop, living in Ogdensburg with Alma and 4 children

- August 1932 articles in The Republican Journal mention Mr. and Mrs. John LaFlair in connection with Lawrence LaFlair (his brother) and Mrs. Joseph LaFlair (likely his grandmother) – not conclusive this was John D. since there were other John LaFlairs, but seems probable
- Ogdensburg Advance-News, 19 November 1935, lists funeral expenses for a John Laflair – possibly John Duncan LaFlair (??)
- Alma LaFlair died 6/22/71 at Hepburn Hospital; her obituary states her husband died many years ago

## Information from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- John and his father both carved decoys while living on Tick Island; both sold some of their decoys
- both had a concave cut on “leading edge of the tail”; bottom beveling ended before the tail leaving the back edge of the bottom rectangular
- John used glass eyes, but he did not texture his decoys
- noted that the decoys of John and his father Dick had many similarities



John LaFlair hen goldeneye

same decoy pictured on page 163 in Decoys of the Thousand Islands



John LaFlair hen goldeneye:  
low bulging cheeks with a  
ridge or edge continuing  
around the back of the neck

John LaFlair hen  
goldeneye



- concave cut on leading edge of the tail (green arrow), back edge of the bottom rectangular (red arrow); features mentioned in Decoys of the Thousand Islands

# hen broadbill by John LaFlair

(IDed by Larry Lunman)

- more elongated, narrower body
- painted eyes – not glass
- low bulging cheeks with ridge/edge continuing around back of neck



bottom: John LaFlair hen broadbill:  
beveled bottom edges which stop before the tail



# John LaFlair hen broadbill

- note the round dome-shaped ballast weight; I have been told they are commonly found on Dick and John LaFlair decoys
- concave cut on the “leading edge of the tail” (yellow arrow)



The following slides show two very similar hen goldeneyes that were almost certainly carved by either Dick or John LaFlair. However, they show a mix of the characteristics listed for the two men but also lack other characteristics. They are labeled example 1 and example 2.

- the bodies of both are textured, but in contrast to the Dick LaFlair hen broadbill shown previously, they are textured on both their top and bottom surfaces

- both have glass eyes, and both have heads and bodies very similar in carving style to the John LaFlair hen goldeneye shown previously
- both have low bulging cheeks with a ridge or edge continuing around the back of their necks
- the bottom beveling in both ends before the tail leaving the back edge of the bottom rectangular
- neither has the concave cut on the “leading edge of the tail”

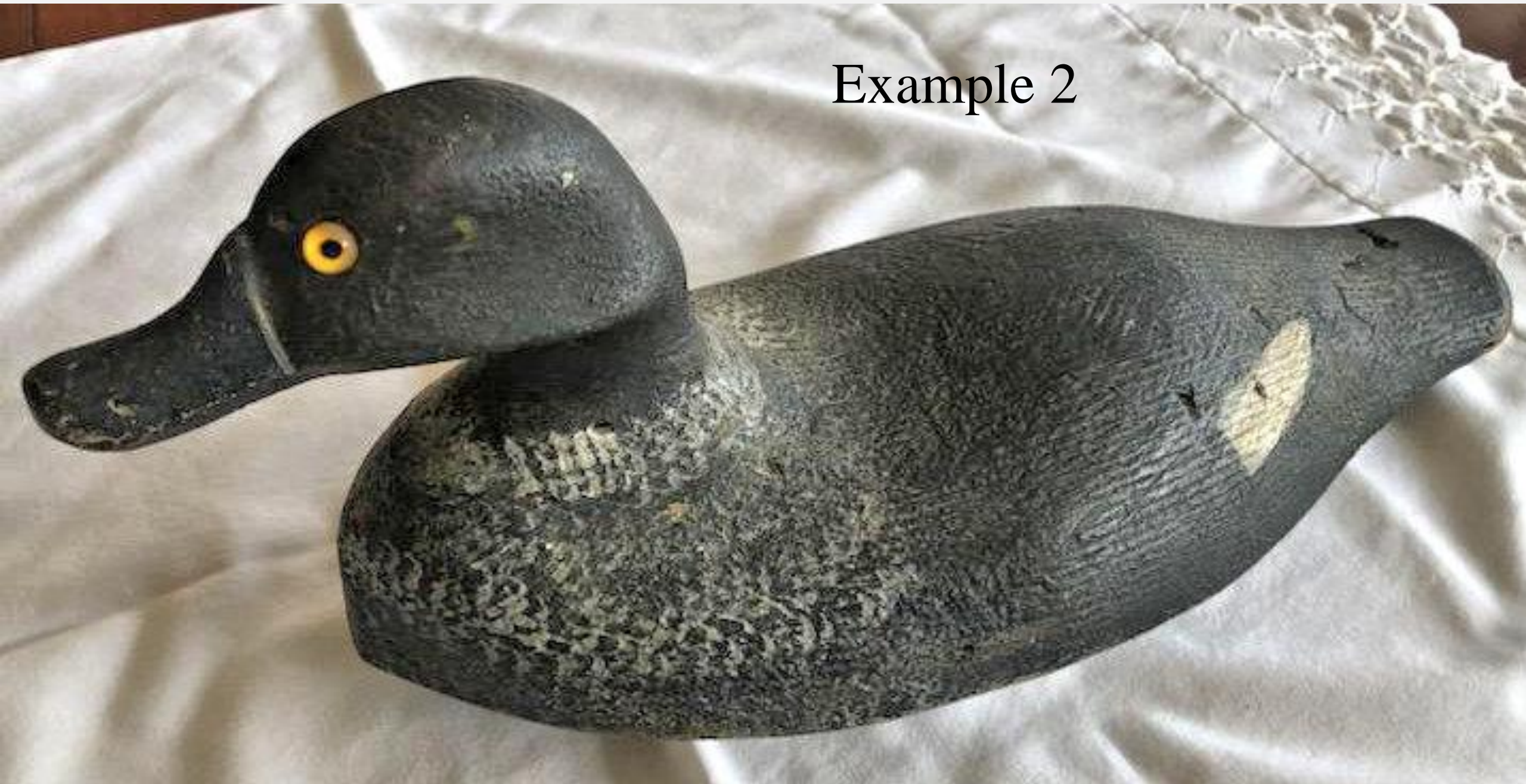


Example 1



Example 1

Example 2



Example 2



- obviously, there are some variations in the features found among Dick and John LaFlair decoys
- in my opinion, this is to be expected; few carvers were always consistent in all of the features they included, especially when comparing decoys made years/decades apart
- I have always enjoyed looking at more examples to see the range in styles and features, although that doesn't always make it easier to determine who made which

# Edward (Ed) LaFlair

- born 4/9/1891 in Marine City, MI; died 5/1/1971 at Hepburn Hospital, Ogdensburg
- 1910 census – listed as a river guide, living in Town of Lisbon with his parents and 5 siblings
- 1920 census – listed as a “laborer farm”, living in Town of Lisbon with his parents and 2 siblings
- 1930 census – listed as a boat captain, living in Town of Lisbon with his parents and his sister Ada and her family

- Ed's obituary (Ogdensburg Journal, 2 May 1971, page 15) listed him as a retired river guide
- he never married
- Dick Hollis and Rick LaFlair recalled that Ed repaired clocks and had a shop in his house; he was meticulous in his work
- the ballast weights on Ed's decoys were often cast in a spoon shape and secured using one nail and a brass screw

## Information from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- noted that Ed worked as a fishing guide, piloted large pleasure boats, worked for a time as a machinist on Long Island
- “perhaps the best of the LaFlairs at finishing a decoy”
- in addition to many hen broadbills and whistlers, he also carved canvasbacks and black ducks
- many had wing and tail carving; tails were fan-shaped especially on the divers; heads were sometimes turned

continued from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- bottom beveling ended before the tail leaving the back edge of the bottom rectangular
- did not carve the concave scoop on the edge of the tail
- some of Ed's smooth-bodied hen broadbills were similar to Lawrence's, but Ed's had more detailed brush-work and the crowns of the heads were often concave
- carved mostly for his own use; between the early 1920s and early 1940s carved close to 200 decoys

# Ed LaFlair black duck

photo from page 162 Decoys of the  
Thousand Islands



this decoy was brought  
to the spring TIDCA  
meeting; photos taken  
there follow



Ed LaFlair black duck



Ed LaFlair black duck

## Ed LaFlair black duck

- crown of the head concave





Ed LaFlair black duck -

2 spoon shaped ballast weights (attached with a nail and a brass screw)



## Ed LaFlair black duck

- back edge of the bottom ending in a point with a slightly rounded tip; back edge not rectangular
- ridge running from the back of the bottom down the underside of the tail

A second Ed LaFlair black duck was brought to the 2025 spring TIDCA meeting; photographs are shown in the next 4 slides

- the overall form of this decoy is very similar to the previous example except it does not have wing or tail carving, and the crown of the head is not concave
- the paint on the two black ducks is nearly identical; likely painted by the same person on or about the same time
- shot holes in the head of this second black duck have paint in them, suggesting the paint was not the original coat





Ed LaFlair black duck –  
top of head not concave



back edge of the bottom rounded (not rectangular); different style  
ballast weight attached with six nails



upper and lower sides of the  
tail; each with a ridge running  
down the middle

Ed LaFlair black duck



## Ed LaFlair broadbills:

- currently have photos of six different Ed LaFlair broadbills; all are painted as hens
- all six have wing carving but two were made without tail carving
- the crowns of the head are concave on two, rounded on four
- bottom photographs are available for two; neither has a rectangular back bottom edge, neither has a ridge under the tail, and both have a spoon shaped ballast weight attached with one nail and a brass screw

## Ed LaFlair hen broadbill

- wing carving
- fan shaped tail with carved feathers



back edge of bottom rather  
pointed, not rectangular

ED LAFLAIR (1891-1977) HERI BROAD BILL  
GIVEN TO ME BY LAWRENCE MONTROE 1988

NFS

2  
10  
S  
D  
12

brass screw in ballast weight



bottom of a second Ed  
LaFlair hen broadbill



back edge of bottom rounded,  
not rectangular, brass screw in  
ballast weight

## Ed LaFlair canvasbacks:

- currently have photos of two canvasback decoys attributed to Ed LaFlair; one hen, one drake
- the hen was repainted and has been cleaned to reveal a very interesting paint pattern; it also has a crack in the bill and in one edge of the fan shaped tail
- the drake was pictured in Keith Norton's 1968 Quarterly Magazine article where it was incorrectly attributed to John LaFlair, and pictured again on page 93 of Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations by Gene and Linda Kangas where it was attributed to Ed LaFlair



Ed LaFlair hen canvasback

# Ed LaFlair hen canvasback



- back edge of the bottom ending in a point; back edge not rectangular
- ridge running from the back of the bottom down the underside of the tail
- spoon shaped ballast weight attached with 3 nails

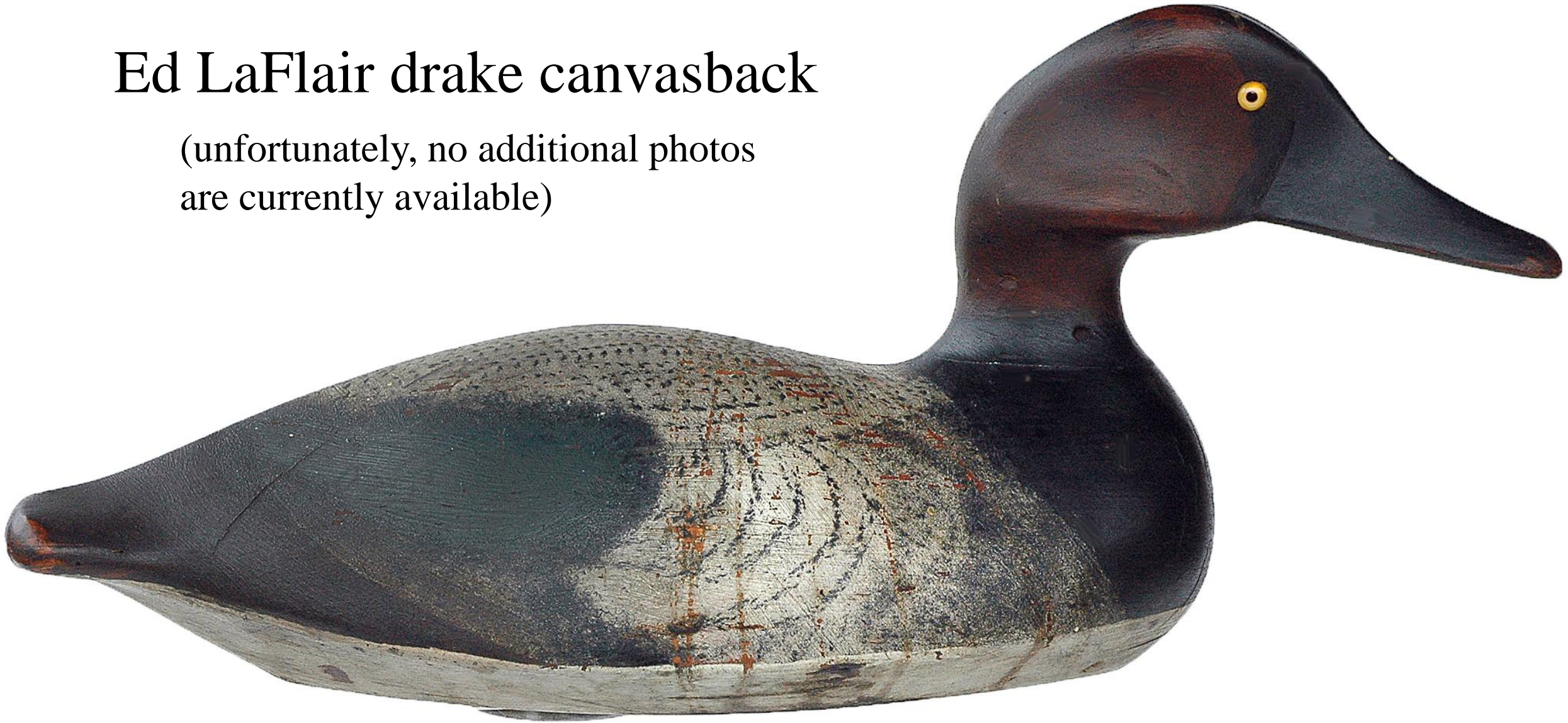
## Ed LaFlair hen canvasback

- crown of the head  
concave



# Ed LaFlair drake canvasback

(unfortunately, no additional photos  
are currently available)

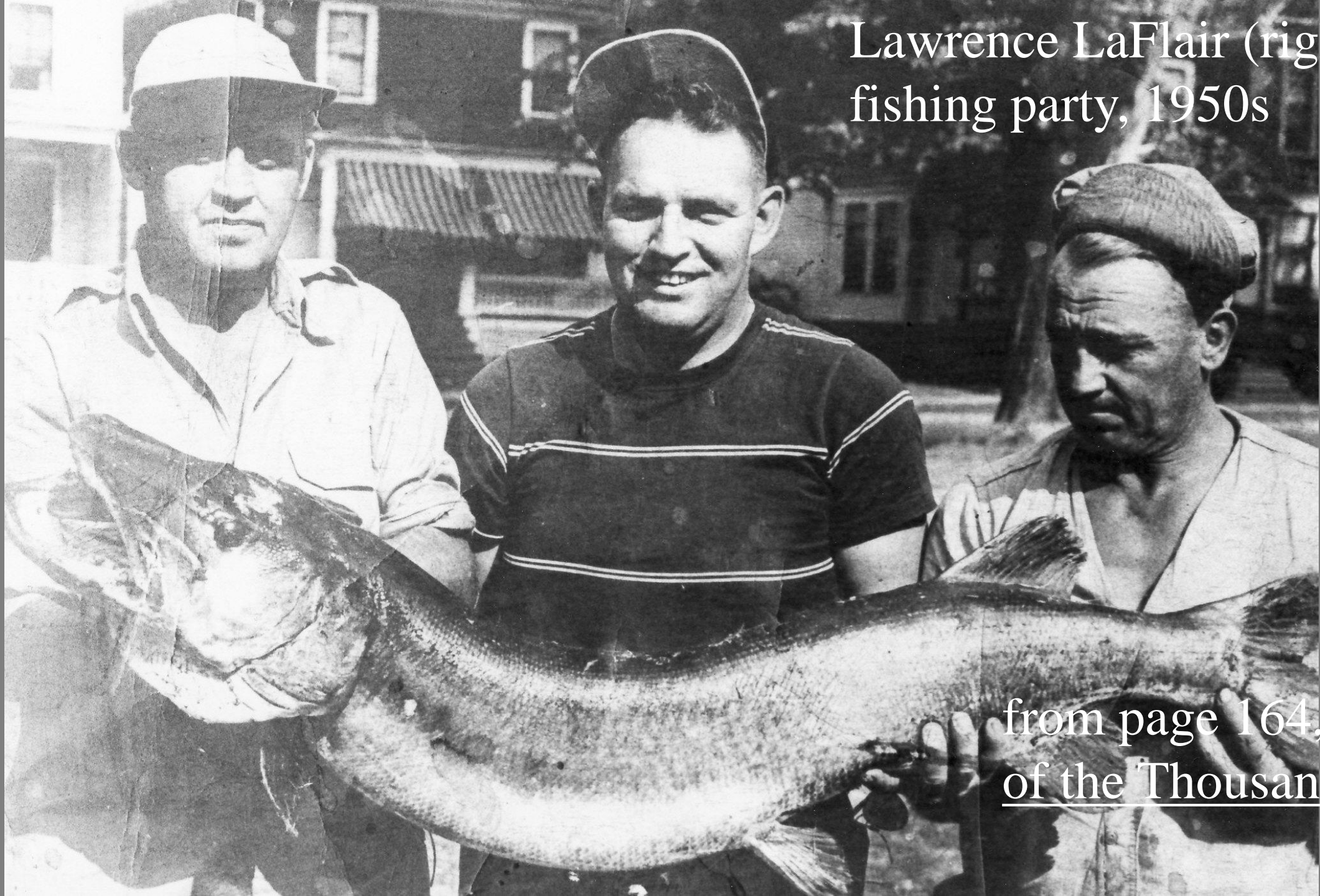


# Lawrence LaFlair

- Lawrence was born May 1898 in Lisbon, died 2/10/1971 at his daughter Helen's home in Ohio
- 1910 census – listed as a river guide, living in Town of Lisbon with his parents and 5 siblings
- 1920 census – listed as a “laborer farm”, living in Town of Lisbon with his parents and 2 siblings
- 1930 census – listed as a river guide, living in Town of Lisbon with his wife Mary L. and one child
- Lawrence and Mary had 3 girls together, but divorced

- Lawrence had a second family with Audrey Rondeau; together they had 4 boys, plus 2 children from Aubrey's previous marriage.
- he earned his living from the River - working as a guide, commercial fisherman, renting boats, and selling bait during the open water seasons, in the winter he built boats and carved decoys
- numerous articles in the local papers describing particularly good catches and especially large fish; muskellunge and lake sturgeon were particular favorites

Lawrence LaFlair (right) with  
fishing party, 1950s



from page 164, Decoys  
of the Thousand Islands

# Lawrence LaFlair with sturgeon

left: 1941

right: 1950



- Lawrence LaFlair built dozens of traditional flat-bottomed river punts
- planking was butt-jointed
- most less than 16 feet to avoid NYS boating regulations
- Walter James Hollis (1896-1968) thought Lawrence made the best punt among the local makers
- one of Lawrence's punts has been partially restored and is mounted on the wall of Rick LaFlair's camp
- same punt owned by Bob Carswell; photo showing transporting milk from Galop Island to Red Mills

# Lawrence LaFlair river punt





Bob Carswell transporting milk across the American Galop Rapids in a Lawrence LaFlair punt

## Information from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- Lawrence LaFlair was the “most prolific carver in the family”; estimated to have made several hundred hunting decoys
- most were carved between 1940 and 1945, but he continued to carve them into the 1960s
- commonly used old cedar telephone poles; roughed out with an axe and then fished with drawknives, rasps and other hand tools

continued from Decoys of the Thousand Islands:

- bottom beveling on Lawrence's decoys was different from the rest of the family; instead of stopping it at the rump, it was continued through into the tail area
- in addition to diving duck decoys, he carved some black ducks, and made a few Canada geese near the end of his career
- Lawrence also carved miniature decoys and “many” miniature flying ducks of various species,



- Lawrence LaFlair goldeneye
- owned by the LaFlair family
  - broad fan-shaped tail

- bottom beveling continued through into tail area (yellow arrow)



- ballast weight attached using just nails

# Lawrence LaFlair hen broadbill

- owned by the LaFlair family
- broad fan-shaped tail



- bottom beveling not continued through into tail area;  
rectangular back edge (yellow arrow)



- ballast weight attached using just nails

- the beveling on Lawrence LaFlair's decoys obviously did vary – didn't always extend into the tail
- the drake goldeneye and hen broadbill previously shown had broad fan-shaped tails, but not all his decoys had such broadly shaped tails
- Lawrence acquired a band saw around the late 1950s, which helped increase his decoy production, although they were still finished with hand tools
- Rick LaFlair and Dick Hollis both recalled Lawrence using a hatchet to rough-out his decoys

- Rick LaFlair helped sand his father's decoys in the later 1950s and in the 1960s; he remembered Lawrence making and selling decoys by the dozen
- Rick's recollections suggest that Lawrence's estimated life-time output of several hundred decoys listed in Decoys of the Thousand Islands was too low.
- Rick mentioned several times that his father never used screws to attach the ballast weights; nails were cheaper and worked just as well



## Lawrence LaFlair Canada goose decoy

- one pictured in Decoys of the Thousand Islands, page 164
- this example appeared 8/24/24 in an auction held in Ohio

the following slides show Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature decoys and double-wing flyers – many  
were brought to the 2025 spring TIDCA meeting  
where they could be examined and enjoyed



Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature hen  
goldeneye

6&1/4 inches bill-tip to tail-tip



Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature drake  
goldeneye





Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature hen  
broadbill

6 inches bill-tip to tail-tip



Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature drake  
mallard



6&1/2 inches bill-tip to tail-tip



Lawrence LaFlair  
miniature drake  
mallard

Lawrence LaFlair miniature mallard  
sold at an April 2011 Hessney  
Auction, Geneva, NY



Lawrence LaFlair miniature  
Canada geese



# Lawrence LaFlair double-wing fliers



drake mallard above/right;  
black duck below/left



Lawrence LaFlair drake  
goldeneye double-wing  
flyer

12&1/2 inches from wing-tip to wing-tip;  
8&1/4 inches from bill-tip to tail

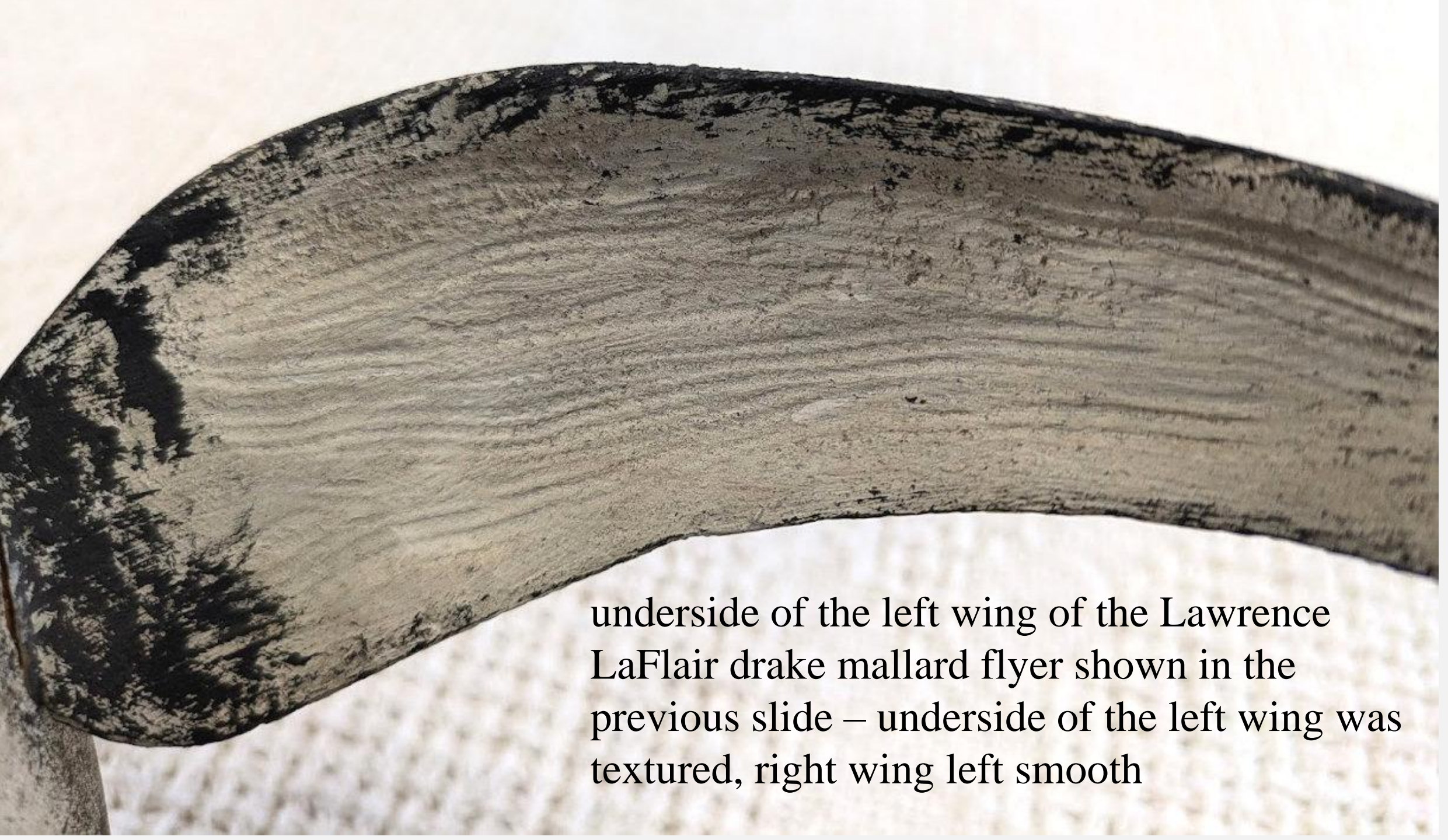




same carving pictured on page  
164 of Decoys of the Thousand  
Islands

Lawrence LaFlair drake  
mallard double-wing flyer





underside of the left wing of the Lawrence LaFlair drake mallard flyer shown in the previous slide – underside of the left wing was textured, right wing left smooth

Lawrence LaFlair hen  
mallard double-wing flyer

10 inches from wing-tip to  
wing-tip; 7 inches from bill-  
tip to tail



## One more problematic LaFlair family decoy:

- repainted drake goldeneye with a beautifully carved head; crown of head is concave suggesting it was carved by Ed LaFlair
- tail with rather straight sides; not fan-shaped
- the decoy was obtained from Henry (Kadink) Montroy (1907/08-1998); Henry was a long-time resident of Ogdensburg and an acquaintance of Lawrence LaFlair; he claimed that this goldeneye was made by Lawrence

LaFlair family repainted  
drake goldeneye



## LaFlair family repainted drake goldeneye

- beautifully carved head
- crown of the head concave



- tail with straight sides;  
not fan-shaped



## LaFlair family:

- still more work to do
- need more examples of their decoys to better understand the different styles and features
- more information of the various family members, especially John LaFlair
- better understanding of the years and months the various family members spent on Tick Island

# Auctions and Decoy Collecting

- Auctions have always been a major source of decoys for collectors; that continues to be true.
- Online bidding and online only sales began in the 1990s and were an increasing trend through 2019, but the covid pandemic marked a major turning point.
- Many firms have now ceased in-person auctions completely and gone entirely to online sales.

- Online only auctions have decreased the opportunity for social interactions; and collectors do not have an opportunity to handle and personally examine decoys.
- However, online auctions allow collectors to preview numerous auctions from the comfort of their homes. They can “find” items they would have been unaware of.
- Online bidding has resulted in an abundance of photographs of higher quality, with multiple views for most items. These photos can be downloaded and saved for future reference.

- Many of the catalogs of major decoy sales have been upgraded in recent years with more color photographs and more biographical information on the carvers; they have become a better reference source.
- There is a limited number of vintage decoys, and many have been sold at auction previously. Catalogs and online photos from previous sales can help document the provenance of that decoy and whether any restorations have taken place.

sold at the Decoys Unlimited Auction  
held 7/26&27/2015 in Hyannis –  
cropped images from photos  
downloaded from the internet listing



Frank Coombs drake redhead

- small chip from the right bottom edge of the bill (yellow arrows)

## Frank Coombs drake redhead:

- pictured in a group photo of Coombs decoys in Jan-March 1969 issue of North American Decoys Magazine
- sold at a 2009 Decoys Unlimited Auction, July 13-14, and again at the 2015 Decoys Unlimited Auction, July 26-27; high quality photos of the 2015 sale were available online
- the small chip on the right bottom edge of the bill was repaired after the 2015 auction
- knowing about the decoy's history, auction sales, and possible repairs, allows for a more informed decision when contemplating a purchase

# Upcoming Events and Shows

Decoy shows within driving distance of Northern NY  
in March-May

- March 8: Long Island Decoy Collectors Association, Hauppauge, NY
- March 8: Back Bay/Knotts Island Waterfowl Festival, Virginia Beach, VA
- March 13-16: Great Lakes Decoy Association and Ohio Decoy Collectors and Carvers Association, Independence, OH
- March 29: New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association, Galloway, NJ
- March 29: Delmarva Heritage Festival, Pocomoke City, MD

- April 3-5: East Coast Decoy Collectors Buy, Sell and Swap Meet, St. Michaels, MD
- April 22-26: North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show, Lombard, IL
- April 24-25: Auction by Guyette and Deeter, Lombard, IL
- May 3-4: Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, Havre de Grace, MD

\* \* \* \*

- July 18-19: Clayton Decoy & Wildlife Art Show, Cerow Arena, Clayton, NY

- TIDCA Decoy Display (July 18 & 19): decoys of Chauncey Wheeler, Alexandria Bay, NY.
- TIDCA Decoy Contest (July 18):
  - 3 vintage black duck decoys by 3 different makers.
  - Vintage Alexandria Bay high-head decoy.
  - Decoy by any maker in Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations by Gene and Linda Kangas.

(assistance with the contest would be appreciated)

# 2026 Spring TIDCA Meeting

Date to be Determined

Tentatively scheduled to have a  
presentation on Harvey and  
George Stevens, Weedsport, NY

