

# THE WILDFOWLER

WINTER 2015

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

## *The Pocahontas Fowling Club: Part Five in a series of OUR HERITAGE IS OUR LEGACY*

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

*Photo from the Edgar T. Brown Collection, Virginia Beach Public Library*

In Virginia Beach, there is a country lane called Pocahontas Club Road, named after the Pocahontas Fowling



Club. In turn, named for the 890 acres of the marsh situated at the southwest “corner” of Back Bay, known as Pocahontas Island. . With that amount of marsh and nearly 20 “or so” acres of high land the club was founded in 1904. The original charter from the Commonwealth of Virginia for 912 acres was granted to a group of Norfolk [Virginia] sportsmen. Original shares of club membership stock were offered for \$2,500 [that’s about \$150,000 in today’s U.S. Dollars]. These gentlemen were hosts to leaders of the nation and community such as President Howard Taft, Senators, Admirals, Generals and all of

the others who were invited to the club’s famed Muskrat parties. [There is no unbiased report of those parties, but they were considered the highlight of the four [?] month long hunting season throughout the area...]

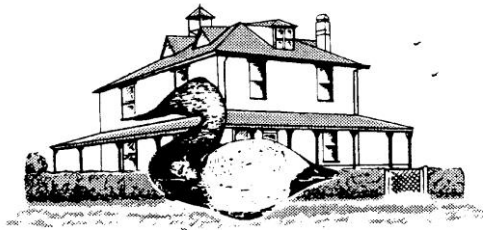
In 1914, the original members of Pocahontas sold their interest to “a group of wealthy Northern sportsmen”, who built the nearly palatial clubhouse pictured above after the original “camp” style clubhouse burned in the 1920’s. Their shares of club membership were bought out by a group of Norfolk physicians and businessmen in 1943.

Local guides were usually employed to assure the success of visiting sportsmen. The son of a former Back Bay market hunter, Captain John Cartwright was one of those guides at the Pocahontas Club from 1927-1939. One wonders how many times he set the Dudley decoys [owned by the Pocahontas Club] on the marsh-never thinking of them as more than useful tools?

The later club members continued to use those “old things” for many years. According to one, decades later he and his former fowling mates were surprised to learn that those earlier “tools” had changed into collectible “commodities”, nearly as valuable as the waters upon which those tools were used. Cartwright may not have realized the decoys’ future values, but he certainly realized the richness of Back Bay waters. Upon his departure from Pocahontas, he established a successful private guide business and received the first license for deep water blinds in Sand Bay, situated due east of Pocahontas Fowling Club.

The charter for the 890+ acres of the Pocahontas Club’s marsh [island] was re[?]-acquired by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1963. These 890+ acres of wetlands have become a large part of the Princess Anne-Pocahontas/Trojan Wildlife Management Area in southern Virginia Beach, which is used for public access to Back Bay for licensed hunting and fishing, as well as kayaking and canoeing. Currently, the former clubhouse and the adjoining 19.1 acres of “high land” is owned by the leader of a local company who moved here from New York.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BACK BAY  
WILDFOWL GUILD



Home of Back Bay Wildfowl Guild, Inc.

As we approach a new year, the Guild and Museum will have several new things planned.

-A Carvers' display will be opened in the Carving Room to show visitors the creations of the carvers who are our volunteer carvers. This display will be under the control of the carvers.

-The April Meeting of the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild will be held Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Program to be announced.

-The May Meeting will be our Annual Fundraiser at the Lucky Oyster. We will meet there on the regularly scheduled first Monday, which is Monday May 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. If you have items for the raffle and/or auction, please let the museum staff know, so the space can be planned, as well as a listing of who's coming. You may drop off your items prior to the auction if you'd like.

-We are in the planning stages of the Anniversary Celebration [120-40-20] of the cottage, Guild and Museum scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup> [all day]

This year is also the time for electing the Guild Board of Directors and Officers, so please be thinking about who you would like to lead our group for the next two years. I will not be running for the office of President, so that position will need to be filled.

Thank you,  
*Ira Abbott*

President, Back Bay Wildfowl Guild

FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

For some people the cold and shorter days of winter are good times to stop and reflect on the passage of time, for others it is a time of the "Winter blues" and, for some it's Duck season. I have spent a good portion of the winter in the reflective mode. The lead "articles" in the newsletter are called "Our Heritage is our Legacy". I am of the opinion that what we pass on and share with subsequent generations is not just what we have done/believe, but also, and maybe more importantly, what was passed to us.

We live in an increasingly informed, but drastically disjointed society which seems to value instantaneous communication and gratification above most other things. A wise teacher once told me that "We are running the risk of the loneliness of being merely contemporary-without shared stories from our history, we [as a people] may become irrelevant. Without roots, both plants and people die." I believe it is important to share the stories of wildfowling, clubs, decoys, carving and all the Guild and Museum represent. At their heyday, these clubs were not just about going out shooting. More importantly, I think, they were about socializing and relaxing in the presence of friends, while enjoying the natural world.

Of course the ocean has been/is a "draw" for many, but I am of the opinion that without wildfowling and the railroad, Virginia Beach might not have been "discovered". Prior to the railroads and the guests they brought, the region was relatively obscure. I am sure there are people that wish it was still that way. Criticisms abound about the development/encroachment that has occurred over the last 140 years or so. But we are fortunate to have the resources we have. Part of our heritage is the lessons learned through the trial and error of the past. We should not live in the past, but we can celebrate it and learn from it. For almost the entire history of humankind, our heritage was handed down by stories. The better the storyteller, the more the story was remembered. I hope we will all share our stories-knowing that our heritage is the legacy we pass on to succeeding generations. The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum occupies an extremely specific "niche". We may be a small piece in a larger puzzle, yet we help to complete the puzzle and its story.

Best, *Clark*

## CARVERS'/COLLECTORS' CORNER – BUD COPPEDGE



Most early Tuesday afternoons, you will find Bud Coppedge quietly carving in the carving room. It is NOT always quiet because Bud is a magnet for Guild members and other folks to come and visit. His knowledge of decoys and local fowling history is nearly encyclopedic, though he might not claim it that way. Bud is both a carver and a collector. Raised on Lakewood Circle [about seven blocks from the de Witt Cottage], Bud has been around here for years. He has hunted all over Back Bay and Currituck Sound with friends and family alike. After graduating from high school, Bud went to work as an emergency dispatch officer for the city of Virginia Beach. He and his wife wanted to “get away from the crowds” and moved to Pungo in 1974 to raise their son and daughter.

In 1970, Bud went to a show and saw some people carving and thought, “I could do that.” And so he did. He didn’t take classes, but was/is able to appropriate what he saw into what he carves. While he has carved standard decoys, his preference these days is miniatures [which are very popular products in the Museum Gift Shop] because “you can hold ‘em in your hand.”

Bud travelled the Decoy Show Circuit extensively for many years, making friends at all of the shows and both teaching and learning much about the forms/styles of numerous carvers, both regional and national. Another Guild member said, “Bud knows EVERYTHING. He can just look at a decoy and tell you who made it and when it was made!” He still enjoys going to shows, but not nearly as many as before. But he stays in contact with many of his collector and carver friends still “trades”. When asked what the best decoy he carved is, he remains silent.

When asked what the best decoy he has collected is, in “Bud fashion”, he replies, “Well, I guess that would be my Mason Premiers. But I’ve got a lot of coots, too.” Bud has been in this business long enough to know that “best” is in the eye of the beholder. There is no doubt he’s got an eye for quality decoys and a deep understanding of their history. As co-author of Gun Clubs and Decoys of Back Bay and Currituck Sound, Bud was instrumental in getting much information from local families with whom he had hunted over the years. This information is truly

invaluable to understand the region’s rich history. While the book is out of print it is still highly sought after by a number of people. And so is Bud!

While Bud’s work is appreciated by many, those who know him appreciate that he is a man of quality and integrity and also know that his true focus is his family. He and Julie still live in Pungo and still enjoy their family and each other. We thank Bud for all of his contributions and we thank Julie for being supportive.



*One of Bud’s Shorebird sets [on sale in the gift shop!]*

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

*In Memory of*  
Richard Bergstresser

*From*  
Gentry Childress  
Charlie and Maureen Seidel  
Bill and Alice Walsh

C.J. Burns

Herb and Pat Videll  
Archie Johnson  
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*General/In-Kind Donations*

John Mazach

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Hampton Roads Community Foundation

[John Jay and Ola Hill Krueger Fund]

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



**UPCOMING BBWG/AWHM EVENTS**

Monday 3/2: 6:30 PM BBWG Meeting at Museum  
 Tuesday 3/10: 2:00 PM Museum Management Committee  
 Monday 3/16: 6:00 PM Anniversary Committee Meeting  
 7:00 PM BBWG Directors' Meeting at Museum

*Museum Closed Easter Sunday, 4/5/15*

Monday 4/6: 6:30 PM BBWG Meeting at Museum  
 Tuesday 4/14: 3:00 PM Museum Management Committee  
 Monday 4/20: 6:00 PM Anniversary Committee Meeting  
 7:00 PM BBWG Directors' Meeting at Museum

Monday 5/4: 6:30 PM LUCKY OYSTER FUNDRAISER  
 Tuesday 4/12: 3:00 PM Museum Management Committee  
 Monday 5/18: 6:00 PM Anniversary Committee Meeting  
 7:00 PM BBWG Directors' Meeting at Museum

**OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST**

**March**

21-22 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Rappahannock River Waterfowl Show  
 White Stone Volunteer Fire Department,  
 804.435.6355/ [www.rrws.org](http://www.rrws.org)

28 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Decoy, Art & Hunting Collectibles Show  
 and Sale-New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association-  
 Holiday Inn Manahawkin, NJ  
 contact Rich Pemberton 609.338.7524

**April**

10-11 East Coast Decoy Collectors Buy, Sell & Swap Meet  
 Best Western Motorn Inn, St. Michaels, Maryland  
 Contact John Clayton 410.745.2955  
[potomacduck@cox.net](mailto:potomacduck@cox.net)

21-25 50<sup>th</sup> Annual North American Vintage Decoy and  
 Pheasant Run Resort St. Charles IL  
[www.midwestdecoy.org](http://www.midwestdecoy.org) [www.guttedeater.com](http://www.guttedeater.com)

24-26 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Ward World Championship Carving  
 Competition, Powell Convention Center, Ocean City, MD  
 410.742.4988

**May**

1-3 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art  
 Festival, Havre de Grace Middle School, MD  
[www.decoymuseum.org](http://www.decoymuseum.org) 410.939.3739



**BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

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

**FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Roy Carlson Ed Morrison  
 Werner Seibel Herb Videll

**ANNIVERSARY STEERING COMMITTEE**

Wayne Jarman	Ed Morrison
Clark Mandigo	Jeff Tinkham
Herb Verhaagen	Herb Videll

**MUSEUM CARVERS**

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

**MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS**

Monday: [Memorial Day-Sept.]	OPEN
Tuesday:	Bob Bishop 1p-5p
Wednesday:	Archie Johnson 10a-2p
Thursday	Bill Evans 10a-2p
Friday:	OPEN
Saturday:	OPEN
Sunday:	OPEN
Museum Grounds	Nancy Lekberg

**MUSEUM STAFF**

Clark Mandigo, Director Ann Smith, Gift Shop Manager

**MUSEUM CONTACT INFORMATION**

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