

# THE WILDFOWLER

MAY 2022

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

## ***Bay Back Wildfowl Guild Memories: The dewitt Children made regular journal entries.***

On Saturday February 5, 2022 we were pleasantly surprised when Margaret deWitt paid us a visit here at the deWitt Cottage. She came with a boatload of information about her grandparents and their 10 children. She shared with Martha Davenport and I photographs and journals the deWitt children had written while they were growing up in the oceanfront cottage.

The photograph on the right is Margaret and Martha discussing the material she is loaning the museum,

.The first item we will explore is Julia C. deWitt's journal. This book was written in 1918 when she was 15 years old. Julia was the third child born to Cornelius and Cecile deWitt and would later help her older sister Elizabeth raise their seven younger brothers and sisters after their parents passed away.



### ***Tuesday, January 1, 1918***

*New Year's Day. Still rather cold. A cook came and is going to stay on. Frances Baker came to spend a few nights. We went out skating on the ice. An awful thing happened, several hateful, dirty German spies set some of the most import buildings of Norfolk on fire. The Monticello Hotel and others, 17 in all. It all started on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Monticello then explosions in the buildings were started, The fire started at 4 o'clock in the morning and lasted all day. Mama and I went to Norfolk to see it, but everything was roped off and guarded by sailors, policemen, homeguards. We went to see Mrs. Pannill for a while. We heard good news, school will open on Monday and not tomorrow.*

### ***Wednesday, January 2, 1918***

*The fire has been subdued, 17 people arrested who are supposed to be spies. Damage amounted to \$1,500,000. Three firemen killed by burning roof falling. Frances is still here as we didn't go to school. It is snowing hard. Eleven degrees below zero in N.Y. Amelie is in Oklahoma on her way to Texas with Aunt Carrie. I read some and went to the post office.*

### ***Wednesday, April 24, 1918***

*We saw a big French airplane flying over school. At fifth Bell a very noted speaker, Dr. Wise, came to speak to the whole school about why we are fighting and the third Liberty Loan. The talk was very interesting. After school I went to a K. P. Meeting and went downtown as I was finished my shopping. I met Miss Baker who took*



*me to Howard's where we got a strawberry shortcake which was very good. Our car was very late. After supper some visitors arrived. I finished my lessons rather late.*

***Thursday, May 30, 1918***

*Today was set apart by President Wilson for fasting and praying for the success of our allies. We had a little talk and prayer by Dr. Metlow. This was our last day with regular lessons this year. We all came home early. I studied history real hard for the exam. A man came and sheared our lambs.*

***Saturday, July 20, 1918***

*Uncle Jack has been taken prisoner by the Germans. Sarah Graham and Ellen Souglas Moore came to see Amelie. While all the children were out bathing, Peter went in and the tide took him into 10 ft of water. A sailor heard him cry and ran and saved him. We were so thankful. He was real purple in his face at first, but in a half an hour he was alright. Mama gave the sailor, Mr Tynes, two pretty war souvenirs. I wrote to Aunt Lillie and Aunt Carrie. After supper Amelie, Elizabeth, Harriet, Cornelius, John, Caroline, Sarah, and Ellen went to the Casino. Fine war news, the Americans and Allies are pushing the Germans steadily back.*

***Wednesday, October 2, 1918***

*We went to school on the seven twenty-three. Nine teachers and about 750 pupils were absent on account of influenza. So at second bell we received notice that school would be closed until further notice. There have been many deaths at the naval base. After school I went downtown and did some shopping and caught the 4:35 car home. We are glad not to have to go to school tomorrow, but, we are sorry there is such a terrible epidemic of influenza, 971 cases. There are 450,000 in Norfolk + Naval Base. The children studied after supper I wrote to Louise. The war news is splendid, it seems the war will be over soon. Katrine went out walking, Momma made some apple jelly and Elizabeth pasted in one of her picture books.*

***Monday, October 7, 1918***

*The epidemic is still going on so our school is still closed. Elizabeth fixed breakfast this morning. I went on the beach several times for wood. It is very windy today. Elizabeth helped Mr. Miner write up his account of the church. Momma and Katrine went to see Anna Lee Gray who is a little sick, After lunch Elizabeth went to help Mrs. Ackiss with some Red Cross work. I went to the post office. Momma and I went down to the station and picked lots of black grapes, then we made jelly. I studied and fixed supper. After supper I crocheted. Katrine read to some of the children. Harriet and Amelie spent the day with Jean Tait in the Baltimore mow*

***Monday, October 14, 1918***

*After breakfast, Elizabeth went to help Mr. Minor and brought him some breakfast. I went to buy some bread and to the post office. We made jelly but didn't have enough sugar at the beach, so I will buy some in Norfolk tomorrow. There was a great forest fire in Minnesota and a 1,000 people were burned. It was set by those dirty Germans. Caroline went over to see Mary Louise who is much better. Hity went for the mail. We got a letter from Amelie and she is working for the Red Cross in the slums in Baltimore so she says she begins to talk like them. After supper, Momma, Elizabeth and I went to see Mrs Ackiss a while and bought a paper.*

**PLEASE STAY TONED FOR MORE EXCERPTS FROM THE DE WITT CHILDREN'S JOURNALS:**

I wish to thank Julie Spivey for her splendid research and her help in putting this article together.





## ***Upcoming Guild Events:***

05/02, 09, 16, 23/2022: de Witt Garden Club  
10:00 am, at the museum

05/08/2022 – Mother's Day

05/17/2022: Board Meeting 6:00 pm  
In Person at The deWitt and on Zoom

05/30/2022: Memorial Day  
Museum begins operating seven days a week  
10:00am – 5:00pm



05/30/2022: Open Mic Night  
At the Gazebo  
Every Monds Night 7:00pm

06/06, 13, 20, 27/2022: de Witt Garden Club  
10:00 am, at the museum

06/06, 13, 20, 27/2022: Open Mic Night  
At the Gazebo  
Every Monds Night 7:00pm

06/21/2020: Board Meeting 6:00pm  
In Person at The deWitt and on Zoom

06/25/2022 Art Show on the lawn  
At deWitt Cottage  
10:00am-4:00pm

	<p><b>Free Decoy Identification and Evaluation</b> By Jeff Tinkham Past President of The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum Call (757) 724-7131 or <a href="mailto:jeff@tinkhamlaw.com">jeff@tinkhamlaw.com</a></p>	
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# DECOYS WANTED

WE BUY WOODEN OR CANVAS DUCKS, GEESE, SWANS & SHOREBIRDS...  
WHAT IS YOUR DECOY WORTH? IT COULD BE WORTH THOUSANDS!

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WE WILL PAY YOU **CASH** FOR ANY OLD DECOYS AND HUNTING ITEMS



**FREE** DECOY IDENTIFICATION  
AND EVALUATIONS  
*of Single Decoys or Entire Collections*  
**BY MARK CROMWELL**  
**(757) 721-2746**  
Member North Carolina Decoy Collectors Assoc.

## COLLECTOR'S SHELF

**Pictured are Herman Smith shorebirds that could have been used to hunt willets, dowitchers and yellowlegs.**

Captain Herman Cornelius Smith Sr.  
– Born June 22, 1880 – October 12, 1951

Herman was raised near the communities of Penny's Hill & Sea Gull, located just north of Corolla of the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

In his early years he was taught the skills of a waterman and developed a life-long interest in hunting and fishing. At an early age Herman maintained a stand of wooden decoys and shorebirds that he carved.



In 1902 Captain Herman Smith Sr. joined the Life-Saving Service and married Pattie Lee O'Neal in Corolla NC and they had seven children.

Around the 1920's while serving in the Coast Guard, Captain Herman Smith became an accomplished shorebird hunter. He made the comment, "It takes about three baskets of shorebird to feed the family."

Also, later in life he made a rig of twelve canvas geese and other canvas duck decoys that were kept in a shed along with some wooden decoys.

He had a distinguished thirty year career in the Coast Guard during which time he worked for the following stations: Pea Island, Core Banks & Bodie Island.







# Art Show on the Lawn



June 25, 2022 10am-4pm

At The deWitt Cottage

For more information email [rxylgrl71@gmail.com](mailto:rxylgrl71@gmail.com)





# We Are Blooming All Over

Happy Mother's  
Day!



And We Are Just  
Getting Started!



## FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

If you were paying attention, and I suspect many of you were, you noticed we did not publish an April newsletter. I had surgery to replace my left knee on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and I was busy at home recovering. I'm now back to near 100%. I want to thank everyone for their cards and well wishes; they were very much appreciated.

On April 8, 9, 2022 we assisted the Atlantic Avenue Association in hosting and feeding hungry Law Enforcement Officers at Virginia Beach Middle School for the College Beach Weekend. 200 additional officers from the Virginia Beach Police, Sheriff's Office, and Virginia State Police were added to the usual weekend complement. The weekend was very safe and ended with no violence.

Our second annual "Salute to Heroes" promotion has drawn to a close. This year we have chosen two beautiful local nurses and their military fiancés as the winners. The heroic couples will each have their special day at the deWitt cottage for free courtesy of the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild, to thank them for being such special people.

On May 30, 2022, Monday, Memorial Day at 7:00pm, We will have our first "Open Mic Night" at our new Gazebo. We already have one act scheduled, a band, Native Love, from Newport News, VA. Come on out and help us discover some new talent. We will host "Open Mic Night" every Monday night throughout the summer. I would suggest bringing a lawn chair for your comfort.

On Saturday June 25, 2022 the museum will host an "Art Show on the lawn at deWitt Cottage". If you are an artist and would like to show your work, Please contact Aimee Rhodes at [rxygri71@gmail.com](mailto:rxygri71@gmail.com). Please come out to see the beautiful artwork and support our local artist. The show will run from 10:00am until 4:00pm.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all!

I invite all of you to stop by with family and friends to see the improvements being made within the cottage and on the surrounding grounds. Construction of the gazebo is now complete, and we all owe our gratitude to Jim Briggs (Board member) for overseeing the project and bringing it in below the estimated cost. The Garden Club has been working tirelessly, along with help from our partners at the Surfrider Foundation, to freshen the outside of the cottage. You will be amazed at what they have done.

Displays inside are being updated to provide a new and refreshed look. Please come and see what is new. All of these changes are already paying dividends in the form of event bookings. So far, for this Summer, ten events are scheduled, and the number will increase. These include wedding, parties, corporate meetings, wedding and baby showers. All of these provide user fees and gift shop revenues that help keep our budget sound, while adding visitor numbers and recognition to the cottage.

I thank you for all the support you provide and encourage you to invite others to become members of the Guild.

Phil Davenport  
President



## BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Phil Davenport, President      Parke Atkinson, Vice President  
Jim Mehne, Secretary      Larry Davenport, Treasurer  
Jim Briggs      Mark Cromwell  
Tom Richards      Jason Seward  
Jeff Tinkham      William Walsh, Jr., Curator  
Aimee Rhodes      Fletcher Bryant, President Emeritus

### MUSEUM CARVERS

Monday      Open  
Tuesday:      Open  
Wednesday:      Roy Carlson & Ed Morrison  
Thursday:      Open  
"The Boathouse Boys" Carving Club:      Jamie, John, Pete  
Friday:      Susan Moritz  
Saturday:      Open  
Sunday:      Open

## MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

Tuesday:      OPEN  
Wednesday:      OPEN  
Thursday      OPEN  
Friday:      OPEN  
Saturday:      OPEN  
Sunday:      OPEN

Museum Grounds: Jacky & Tom Richards, Martha Davenport

### MUSEUM STAFF

Lynn Hightower, Director      Joe Leo, Operations Mgr.

### MUSEUM CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Telephone: 757.437.8432  
Facsimile: 757.437.9055  
Website: [www.awhm.org](http://www.awhm.org)  
Email: [director@atwildfowl.org](mailto:director@atwildfowl.org)

**You can now pay your dues online at [awhm.org](http://awhm.org) !**

*Please understand that we depend on every dollar to operate the museum. If you have not yet paid your 2022 dues, please give serious consideration to sending them into the museum right away. Beginning January 1, 2022, Membership cards will have an expiration date. Each member will receive an invoice from the museum director requesting payment of their annual dues after the expiration date. Memberships run for 12 consecutive months from the date annual dues are paid*

### 2022 DUES

\$35/YR INDIVIDUAL  
\$100/YR BRONZE  
\$500/YR GOLD

\$50/FAMILY  
\$200/YR SILVER  
\$1,000/YR PRESIDENTS CIRCLE



## BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD 2022 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT PAID \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ [CELL] \_\_\_\_\_

*January 1, 2022 kicked off our Annual Membership Campaign. Each member is encouraged to find one new member to join the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild. Our very existence depends on growing the membership of the Guild. Please encourage everyone you know to become a member!*

***Please pass this newsletter on to any potential new member!***

