

THE WILDFOWLER

FEBRUARY 2026

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

Back Bay Wildfowl Guild Memories

Second Decoy Painting Workshop is Big Success!

On Wednesday, January 21st
18 people joined our workshop instructors to paint their very own miniature Dudley Canvasback Drake Decoy. For two full hours they enjoyed the satisfaction of smearing pigment color onto wood. They all said they were very pleased with the results of their efforts.

I want to thank Allison Jackson, Gentry Childress, Ben Purvis, George Walker and Mike Videll for their invaluable help during the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation “Winter Wildlife Festival.”

A big thank you to all the workshop students who supported our effort.



Upcoming Guild Events:

Meets every Monday
de Witt Garden Club
10:00 am, at the museum
Bring your work gloves and tools

02/20/2026: Board Retreat
Barrier Islands Center

03/17/2026: Board Meeting
6:00pm in-person and Virtual

Save these Dates

Saturday March 13-14, 2026
Back Bay -Knotts Island Wildfowl Festival
1057 Princess Anne Road. Virginia Beach, VA

	Free Decoy Identification and Evaluation By Jeff Tinkham Past President of The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum Call (757) 724-7131 or jeff@tinkhamlaw.com	
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WILDFOWL HERITAGE

Glenn L (Luther) Martin
(1886-1955)

In this month's edition, we take a sojourn from the confines of Back Bay and Currituck Sound to visit Upper Chesapeake Bay. We will also solve another mystery by connecting a decoy to a common American name we have all heard many times, yet perhaps never gave a second thought. Our story begins...

Recently, a friend of mine inherited the pictured decoy bearing the brand "GLM." My friend knew nothing about the history of the decoy. With the brand and the decoy itself being the only information, it was helpful to know where to start to determine its carver and original ownership. As usual,



identifying a carver begins with our resident decoy expert—Mark Cromwell. Mark suggested one of the numerous Upper Bay carvers, which provided a good start.

Armed with AWHM's copy of Decoy Brands (edited by Robert T. Woollens), I found an entry for the "GLM" brand. The publication attributes the brand to Glenn L.(Luther) Martin, '*aviation pioneer*' (emphasis added) of Rock Hall, MD (Eastern Shore, across the Bay from Baltimore). The publication's entry notes that brand appearing on a Bluebill drake carved by Jess Urie (1901-1978), also of Rock Hall, MD, which had sold at auction. While this may have been a clue as to the carver, it was obviously not dispositive. My research continued with a posting of the decoy's photo on a site entitled "Upper Bay Decoys." That resulted in a reply from a knowledgeable gentleman who suggested the bird was not a Urie, but a Henry Davis/Asa Owens of Perryville, MD. With that suggestion, I found several photos of Canvasbacks by Davis/Owens that appeared identical to our bird. With the timelines of these carvers and the decoy's original owner being concurrent, I am concluding my friend's Canvasback drake is likely a Davis/Owens.

Having the carver mystery resolved, we are then left to discover the unique life of our *aviation pioneer*. Here's where our story takes an interesting turn. Glenn L. Martin was born in Macksburg, Iowa in 1886. Shortly thereafter, his family moved to a wheat farm near Salina, Kansas. (I was stationed near there in my Army days. Having already taken one for the team at large, there's absolutely no need for anyone else to have to go there.) As a six year-old child, Martin became interested in kites and turned his mother's kitchen into a "factory" in which he made them for sale. From this early beginning, he began putting sails on everything from ice skates (yes, standing water freezes hard in Kansas) to wagons, and even his bicycle. His interest in kites led to a fascination with everything flight related, including the Wright brothers. After college, he moved to California. In 1909, he built, by hand, his first airplane. In 1912, he built a seaplane in which he flew roundtrip between California's Newport Bay and Catalina Island, breaking the existing record for an over-water flight. Later that year, Martin started the Glenn L. Martin Company and built an airplane factory in Los Angeles, supplementing his finances by stunt-flying his planes at air shows. He also took a role as the dashing flying hero in a 1915 Hollywood silent movie production, *A Girl of Yesterday*, starring film great Mary Pickford. (The script called for him to kiss a girl, but, alas, it wasn't the famously beautiful Ms. Pickford!) His company made planes that would be used by the U.S. military in WWI and WWII. In 1916, he merged his company with the Wright Company, forming the Wright-Martin Aircraft Company. In 1925, he was enticed to move his entire operation to Middle River, Maryland near Baltimore, presumably to be also near the military's somewhat recently opened Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Obviously, this change brought him into decoy acquisitions and waterfowl hunting in the Upper Bay area. At the time of Martin's death in 1955, his Martin Company had become primarily an emerging aerospace firm, having just won an Air Force contract to build the early ICBMs. From there, the company developed and built the Titan and Atlas missiles that were key elements in our country's space program, carrying satellites and men (okay, women too) into space. Through subsequent business mergers, his company became Martin Marietta Corporation and then today's Lockheed Martin. Along the way, they acquired GE Aerospace and General Dynamics Space Systems Division. As Lockheed Martin, the company has developed the F-35 Lightning II strike fighter, the C-130 Hercules transport (I flew in one in Vietnam), the F-16 Fighting Falcon, the F-22 Raptor, the Patriot missile system, cruise missiles, anti-ship missiles, helicopters (after the Sikorsky acquisition), Aegis Combat System, Littoral combat ships, Trident missiles, etc. Today, Lockheed Martin is headquartered in Bethesda, MD, near the earlier Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Co. site in Middle River, MD.

All of this began with a six-year old kid from humble prairie origins who might have been told to "go fly a kite"...and then did! As an adult, that same kid found time away from airplane design to enjoy waterfowling on and around Chesapeake Bay. My friend is lucky enough to have inherited one of the decoys Martin owned, and we are all fortunate to be able to share the same waterfowling he enjoyed. Glenn Luther Martin remarkably progressed from humble origins to unimagined business success, which facilitated his discovering the thrill of sitting in a blind while watching the sun come up over a spread of decoys and anticipating birds filling the sky. The decoy pictured above likely floated in that spread.



Now for an intriguing digression into history. When Glenn L. Martin moved to Maryland, he joined the Maryland Club, an exclusive private social club in Baltimore, similar to Boston's Somerset Club and NYC's Union and Knickerbocker Clubs that we've previously read about in relation to Currituck Sound's Lighthouse Club. At its 1857 founding, the first president of the Maryland Club was one Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte (1805-1870), nephew of Napoleon I, Emperor of France. He was the son of Jerome Bonaparte, who was Napoleon's younger brother, and Elizabeth Patterson of a wealthy Maryland family. Interestingly, he also attended Harvard, where he was a member of the Porcellian Club like many of the members we've read about from the Lighthouse Club. How did he come to be in America? As noted, his father, Jerome, was a younger brother of Napoleon...perhaps a somewhat troublesome brother from Napoleon's perspective. While Napoleon was away from Paris on military campaigns, Jerome was an extravagant womanizer back at the Parisian chateau. To address this nettlesome situation, Napoleon dispatched Jerome to the French interests in the West Indies. Bored while there and without Napoleon's knowledge, Jerome traveled from the Caribbean to Maryland in the United States, where he met and married Elizabeth. Already upset with Jerome due to one of his misadventures in the Caribbean, Napoleon was livid at his brother for marrying an American, heiress or not. Instead, Napoleon envisioned marrying his family to European royalty in order to forge alliances that would further his imperialist continental designs. Additionally, the marriage complicated a scheme Napoleon was contemplating in America to send a military force up the Mississippi from New Orleans and claim a vast territory for France—the area that eventually became the Louisiana Purchase. Jerome's marriage to an American greatly complicated that plan. Napoleon insisted that Jerome return to France at once, which he did in 1805, but bringing his pregnant wife Elizabeth with him. However, Napoleon refused to allow Elizabeth to set foot on continental Europe. Elizabeth went instead to England, where she gave birth to our subject Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte and eventually returned with her child to the United States. Napoleon refused to recognize Jerome's marriage to Elizabeth. He asked both our President John Adams and the Pope in Rome to annul the marriage, both of whom ignored him. Nevertheless, Napoleon declared the marriage invalid, enabling Jerome to remarry, arguably now illegitimately, to a German princess. Jerome was then made an admiral in the French navy, a general in the army, and King of Westphalia. (At about the same time, in October 1805, British Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson, leading the British fleet on his flagship HMS Victory, destroyed the combined French and Spanish fleet in battle at Cape Trafalgar off the southwest coast of Spain, dashing Napoleon's designs on invading Britain.)

Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte married a Baltimore heiress himself and had two sons: Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte II (1830-1893), who served in both the United States and French armies, and Charles Joseph Bonaparte (1851-1921), who became U.S. Attorney General, Secretary of the Navy (under President Theodore Roosevelt, himself a Harvard grad and Porcellian Club member), and created the Bureau of Investigation, which was renamed to the Federal Bureau of Investigation—the FBI.

Now you know an interesting and slightly related story.

Larry Davenport



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Members and Supporters,

On behalf of the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Allison Jackson, Gentry Childress, Ben Purvis, George Walker, and Mike Videll for their invaluable assistance with the Decoy Painting Workshop and the Winter Wildlife Festival. Their time, expertise, and dedication were instrumental in making these events a success, and we are truly grateful for their continued support.

I would also like to give everyone a heads-up about the upcoming Back Bay Knotts Island Waterfowl Festival. This year's festival will be held on Friday evening and Saturday, March 13th and 14th, at the Creeds Ruritan Club, located at 1057 Princess Anne Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23457. The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum is the beneficiary of this event. We are still in need of volunteers for this event. If you are able to help ensure its success, please reach out to me at information@awhm.org.

The festival will be open to the public on Friday from 4:00–9:00 p.m., with an ATM and food truck on site. Saturday's hours will be 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We are excited to welcome more than 30 vendors featuring wildfowl art and decoys for sale. I hope you will plan to attend this fantastic annual event produced by Chris Ludford and Jimmy Coppedge. We are honored and deeply grateful for their continued support of the museum.

Now more than ever, we need your support. While financial contributions remain essential, we are also in great need of volunteers. Our Garden Club maintains over 4,200 square feet of museum garden space and could use help with weeding, planting, relocating, and refining the gardens. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from two accomplished Master Gardeners. In addition, we are seeking general museum volunteers to assist with organizing and cataloging inventories, reviewing and sorting old files, photos, and historical materials, and helping care for artifacts as well as volunteers to help staff tables at events throughout the Hampton Roads area, spreading awareness of the museum to residents and visitors alike.

This behind-the-scenes work is vital to preserving the museum's history and collections. If you are interested in volunteering with the Museum

<https://x.gldn.io/ASv8b3kPs0b>

or Garden Club

<https://x.gldn.io/wwwvL4Qmt0b>

please sign up today.

As always, thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission. We truly could not do this work without you.

Respectfully,

Aimee Rhodes

President

Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum



BACK BAY • KNOTTS ISLAND

Waterfowl
FESTIVAL

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*Annual celebration of the waterfowl
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BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD 2026 MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

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☐ \$1,000 / Presidents Circle

Renew your membership online at www.awhm.org or, text WILDFOWL to 44321

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Thank you for your support!***

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