



## Chauncey Wheeler

*(1862 - 1937) Alexandria Bay, NY*

Through the influence of his relatives, Chauncey Wheeler started to carve and produced his first pair of miniatures by the time he was eight (Engers 90). It was in Wheeler's workshop that the "Holland St. Whittlers" were formed. Men came to talk, whittle or watch, though everybody had to help keep the shop clean and the fire stoked.

Wheeler produced a decoy that was both utilitarian and aesthetically pleasing. Using little more than a jackknife and spokeshave, he made birds that have angled sides, rounded chests and oval bottoms with sheet lead weights and staples and swivels for an anchor line. Holes in the bottom of each block left by the vise Wheeler used have been filled in and now serve to identify his work. Horizontal eye grooves, mandibles, nostrils and incised bill-to-head joints detail the heads. Another characteristic unique to Wheeler's style is the feather patterns. Using Sherwin-Williams paint and a round-edged paint brush, Wheeler painted rounded feather tips that face backwards. Combining this technique with feather combing, Wheeler created a lifelike stool. He often repainted others' decoys on request and shared his patterns.

In later years, Wheeler carved a few oversized birds and started making decoratives, becoming the area's first commercial decorative carver. Wheeler could have sold more than he produced, but he preferred selling his birds for \$3.50 each to the Alexandria Bay locals (Engers 90).