



Nate Quillen

(1839 - 1908) Rockwood, MI

Nate Quillen used white cedar logs for the decoys he carved. Each log was allowed to dry for two years before he began to carve it. Using actual birds shot on the marshes for models, Quillen replicated black ducks, blue-winged teal, buffleheads, canvasbacks, mallards, pintails, redheads and wigeon. His solid decoys are serviceable and utilize the wood with knots or other blemishes that impeded hollowing. His hollow decoys are more stylized with a graceful appearance. Quillen was an unconventional carver and managed to hollow some of his decoys eggshell thin by hollowing not from the bottom, but through a hole drilled under the tail. He even hollowed some of the heads, designed to be hand grips for winding up the line; a concavity under the eyes serves as a built-in handle. The heads were mounted on thin necks portraying life-like positions. However, the price for realism was often cracking or breaking even though the inleted necks were dovetailed into the bodies. At the base of the neck, the chest is rounded, but angles sharply towards the bottom. This angular construction helps the decoys to better ride in icy waters. Quillen used flat bottoms for his decoys and carved most of them with small tails that blend into slight wings contours and rounded tops. After the carving process was complete, Quillen relegated his decoys to the barn again for a final year of aging before painting. Quillen used no more than white, willow green, roseate and tobacco brown for all his decoys. (Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art)

