



Warren Dettman

(1904 – 1979) Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Warren Dettman was another Wisconsin original decoy carver. He was born in 1904, lived in Milwaukee for most of his life, and was employed by the Milwaukee Public Museum from 1935 until he retired in 1968. He was employed as a taxidermist at the museum and worked with Owen Gromme who was the curator of the Museum's Division of Birds and Mammals. While at the Museum, Dettman was paid under the WPA (Federal Works Projects Administration) to provide jobs that included teaching the arts.

Over the years, Dettman carved many high-quality decoys that he used for collecting live specimens for the museum, and of course for his own hunting use. His decoys were hollowed wood, superbly painted with great care showing plumage perfection, as you might expect to see from a trained taxidermist. Most of Warren's decoys had carved wings and tails and many were "chip carved" to give texture to his decoys and reduce glare on the water. It is known that Warren carved mallards, pintails, ringnecks, widgeon, bluebills, and canvasbacks. According to records, Warren did not sell any of his decoys, but he did sell miniatures that he carved. Mr. Dettman also developed and designed some decoy patterns that were also used by fellow taxidermists at the museum (Walter Panzer, Earl Voelker, etc.). While at the Museum, Dettman trained others in the art of decoy carving and was a protege who developed carving plans published by Delta craft (Delta Tools) of Milwaukee which was widely distributed in the State.

While Warren Dettman did not carve hundreds of decoys, his work is exceptional and really established the "Milwaukee School" of Decoy carvers.

Warman's "Duck Decoys" (2006) by Russell Lewis lists the value range of Dettman's Milwaukee School decoys at \$500 - \$5,000. While you may not find Dettman decoys at local auctions, estate or garage sales, many of his decoys are in circulation on the secondary market.

Warren passed away in 1979, his decoys are highly sought after by collectors and will always be a "Wisconsin Original" decoy carver. (Wisconsin waterfowl association)

