



DeWitt Wakefield

1849 - 1912 Fremont, WI.

DeWitt Wakefield was born in 1849 and possibly the “first” known Wisconsin decoy carver. Being a carpenter by trade his woodworking talents undoubtedly helped in decoy making. Writings show he began carving around 1870. His smaller than normal decoys were crafted with slightly rounded bottoms, which he believed he turned out in the hundreds.

Wakefield lived most of his life in the Village of Fremont, WI. Fremont is a small community on the Wolf River, just upstream from Lake Poygan. Partridge Lake rests on the western edge of the village of Fremont. This shallow lake was a magnet for migrating waterfowl and is where DeWitt Wakefield did most of his duck hunting. Mr. Wakefield also worked as a deckhand on cargo and passenger steamboats as they sailed the Winnebago chain.

The mainstay of decoys was bluebills, although he carved canvasbacks, teal, mallards and a few diving duck decoys. He carved decoys out of whatever type of wood he had on hand, with tack and very few glass eyes. The decoys were mostly all in leaded paint, this leaving most decoys retaining the majority of their original colors. Although he was one of the first to make decoys in Wisconsin, the theory is he made less than one thousand decoys in his lifetime. Making what few decoys are still around a true treasure to obtain!

Wakefield decoys are generally valued between \$400 and \$700, and some pristine decoys have sold for closer to \$1,000.