



## Frank Strey

*(1890-1966) Oshkosh, WI.*

Strey was born in 1890 and lived in Oshkosh his entire life. He worked for the Chicago Northwestern railroad and produced decoys from about 1910 through 1960. His decoys were very heavy, intended for use on Lake Winnebago. He used, exclusively, old cedar poles for his wood, and his painting style changed over the years. This explains why you will see some big variations depending on when his decoy was carved. Strey carved mostly diver decoys because of his proximity to Lake Winnebago, then a hotbed for diver duck hunting.

Strey's early decoys were stylized with long necks and very pronounced chests and cheeks. Later decoys were rasped on the surface to eliminate glare on the water. Over the years, Strey was attributed to have carved over 4,000 decoys and most have graceful necks supporting rounded heads with detailed bill carving and recessed eyes. All his decoys were solid wood and oversized for hunting purposes. All his heads were carved with a jackknife out of pine and were attached to the body with a 1/2 inch dowel and four small finishing nails. Some of Frank's decoys had "STREY" branded on the bottom. Others must be identified by his style, paint and size. His early decoys had a metal bar or lead strip on the bottom for ballast weight. Later years he used a round metal weight attached by a nail.

Many collectors believe Frank Strey coot decoys exemplify his finest work. Frank carved until the 1960's and hunted yet in 1962. He passed away in Oshkosh in 1966. The decoys of Frank Strey today rest in places of honor on the shelves of collectors throughout the US. Truly, Frank Strey is ranked with the great decoy carvers of all time, in an era that will never be seen again!

While it may be difficult to find Strey decoys at local auction, garage or rummage sales, many are available through collectors or thru large auction house decoy auctions each year.

Warman's Duck Decoys (by Russell Lewis), values Franks decoys in the \$500-\$3000 range. He was known to have carved 2 drake decoys to every hen and very few hen canvasback and black duck decoys were made which are now very collectible and valued very high.

Internet values for Strey decoys are currently available in the \$700-\$800 range. (Wisconsin waterfowl association)