



Nathan Cobb, Jr.

(1825 - 1905) Cobb Island, VA

Nathan Cobb, Jr. market hunted and formed a salvage team with his father Nathan, Sr. and his two brothers Warren and Albert. The Cobb family owned and operated a sportmen's resort, the Cobb Island Hunt Club, on Cobb Island off the Eastern Shore of Virginia. While it is possible that the Cobb men carved their own decoys, it is probable that Nathan, Jr. did the carving for the whole family, identifying each decoy with the respective hunter's initials. Carving styles reminiscent of New England and Barnegat Bay reflect Nathan, Sr.'s former residency in New Jersey and his sons' travels along the coast. Further influence from New Jersey can be attributed to Harry Shourds of Tuckerton, NJ who sold hundreds of his decoys to the Cobbs to fulfill their needs. Cobb carved the family decoys from the masts of wrecked ships, transforming the flotsam into well-rounded hollow decoys. The seams of these two-piece lures lie just below the mid-line. Relief-carved V-shape wingtips lie over a notched V-shape tail. Lead weights are attached to the flat bottoms with brass screws. Cobb carved goose and brant necks from holly branches to create a virtually unbreakable neck. He only used glass eyes imported from Germany but utilized the copper nails from salvaged wrecks. Bold paint patterns simplified seasonal maintenance. Minor details like the curve of a neck or the tilt of a bill make Nathan Cobb, Jr.'s decoys unique.

Contributing to this decoy's rarity, in 1893, low-lying Cobb Island was washed over and largely wrecked by the sea, the first of several catastrophic storms that ravaged the unprotected island claimed many of his fine pieces. (Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art)