



George “Factory” Peterson – Jasper N. Dodge

(1873 - 1884) Detroit, MI

George Peterson was the first “factory” decoy commercial manufacturer of waterfowl decoys in the United States. He pioneered the use of wood turning lathes and standardized patterns to make affordable decoys in sufficient quantity to sell nationally. These early decoys had thin bodies and narrow heads. As a machinist, carpenter, and chair-maker, he established a home- based business in 1873 at Fort Street East, Detroit, Michigan.

His first decoy shop was located on the second floor of the Mellus Saw Factory. He later moved his shop to 276 and 278 Division Street, Detroit Michigan in 1875,

There was no printed catalogues or descriptions of the different models he offered for sale until December 6, 1873 in the “American Sportsman.”

In 1884, Peterson sold his business to Jasper N. Dodge, where he expanded his smaller home-based company from 1873 in Detroit, Michigan. Decoys produced until 1883 were carved entirely by hand without the aid of duplicating machines. Dodge began high volume manufacturing in 1884 when he purchased the assets and machinery from the Peterson Decoy Company.

He then advertised that he was the “successor” to Peterson at age of 55. Dodge also made duck, and turkey calls. Although his decoys and calls were shipped all over the United States it seemed to diminish after 10 years and in 1894, he closed his doors. Although Dodge remained in business for only 10 years, his production was clearly greater than Peterson. At age 65 he went into oar manufacturing, and later became the President of the Detroit Canoe and Oar Works from 1905 -1908. He later died in 1909 in Bay City, Michigan.

Over his 10 factory years Dodge built Ducks, Geese, Swans, Brant, coot, and all sorts of shore birds all made slightly larger than the natural bird. Most ducks and geese were offered both hollow and solid bodies some with glass, tack, and painted eyes.

Dodge produced three grades of decoys; Grade 1 was their top-of-the-line, with glass eyes and well carved bills, and sold for \$9 a dozen. Grade 2 decoys had tack eyes and some bill carving but were without mandible and nostrils being carved, for \$7 a dozen. Grade 3 had painted eyes, no bill carving and less paint detail, was \$5 a dozen.