



## William James Mason

*(?- 1905) Detroit, MI*

Edward Mason was a professor of agriculture at the University of Dublin in Ireland. (1) He decided to come to the United States with his wife and five children. William J. Mason was one of four sons and had a strong interest in the hunting and fishing like his father. William was an avid sportsman and became a member of the Old club on Harsens Island in the St. Clair River delta area. He was reported to also be one of the best shots in the club. (2)

William Masson had a partner George Avery and together they founded the W. J. Mason Company in 1882. It was a sporting goods store with a full line of hunting products at 133 Jefferson Ave, Detroit Michigan. It moved later in 1888 and later they closed this business. But even before 1889 William Masson started selling the decoys he made in a shed behind his parents' home at 49 Tuscola St.

From there the decoy business was such a success he moved it to Brooklyn Ave. in 1903 behind Nicholson lumber company. This building had two floors. Lower level was where the bandsaws, lathes cut the wood logs into shape, and the final sanding was done. The painting process was upstairs, there was three benches with an apprentice and a senior painter at each one. The drying racks were on each side of the painters. The packaging of a dozen decoys was wrapped separately in newspaper and packed

completed in wooden crates ready for shipment. Mason's Decoy Factory produced several different grades of decoys: Premier, Challenge, No.1 Glass Eye, No.2 Tack Eye and No. 3 Painted Eye. The Mason decoy company became a volume supplier to Sears - Roebuck co.

William had three sons – Fred, Hugh, and Herbert. Herbert was more like his father with the love of waterfowling in their soul, and where they hunted the many rivers in Michigan together. Herbert worked in the factory alongside his father until the death of William Mason on November 29,1905 then Herbert took over the business.

By 1915 the business had boomed under his direction, therefore the building didn't have enough space to keep up with the growth. In 1915 the company soon moved to its final location 5835 Milford Street, a much larger facility of 150' x 70' with increased production.

But with such a large space and being only a seasonal demand for decoys, he teamed up with Fred Rinshed a paint salesman together they created the Rinshed – Mason company in 1919. As time passed the paint company flourished and Fred decided to close down the Mason line of decoys. As sad as it is today the famed Mason decoy factory made its last dozen decoys in 1924 and the twenty-seven-year-old company closed its doors.

(1) Mason Decoys Bryon Cheever; Hillcrest Publications, Spanish fork, Utah; 1974, page 5

(2) Ibid., page 6