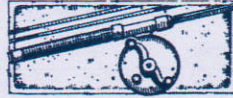


HUNTING & FISHING



COLLECTIBLES MAGAZINE

"History and Artifacts from America's Sporting Past"

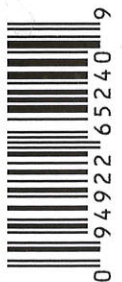
Volume 9, Number 1

January-February, 2009

\$9.95



DECOYS AS FOLK ART • CANADA'S NAT. DECOY SHOW
JOE FRENCH ON MINIATURES • "BEST" FISH DECOYS
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* ——— *SEMIAN ISSUE* ——— *



Vintage photo of Seguin with duck decoys.

Art Seguin:

Maker of Duck & Fish Decoys... and Much More



Red and white working fish decoy by Seguin. (Author's Collection)

Seguin hen mallard and drake bluebill. (Mark Lueck Collection)

A dozen or so years ago as I foraged through northern Minnesota seeking all things old, I encountered duck and fish decoys attributed to an Art Seguin. These decoys had some unique characteristics, with the fish decoys being particularly well done and desirable. Managing to buy a few, I picked up tidbits of information about this maker. Finally, after some perseverance, I connected with Art Seguin's sons and was able to confirm what I knew, dispel some incorrect information, and learn more about this prolific decoy maker. Art Seguin came from that era in which if you needed something and had the skills to make it, you did so, out of necessity. He had the skills.

It is apparent that Art Seguin's sons were quite fond of their dad.

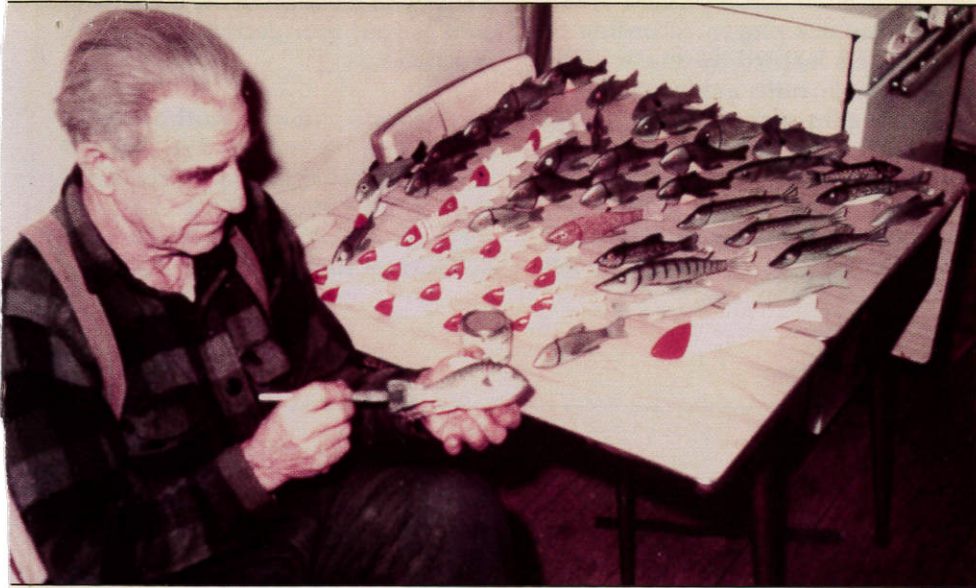
They have great memories of him and recall his prolific work, making duck and fish decoys and much more. According to his sons, Art, Jr., Albert, and Michael, he also made duck calls, ricing sticks by the hundreds, axe handles, oars, duck boats and knives. He even made a few fishing lures and duck calls. This is not a man who was a hobbyist as he definitely did this work for income. In addition to the woodwork, he also sharpened saw blades and anything that needed an updated edge for customers from miles around.

When speaking with his sons, I chuckled and asked if there was anything he *didn't* make; and the response was that he did not make spears. He used William Elmore

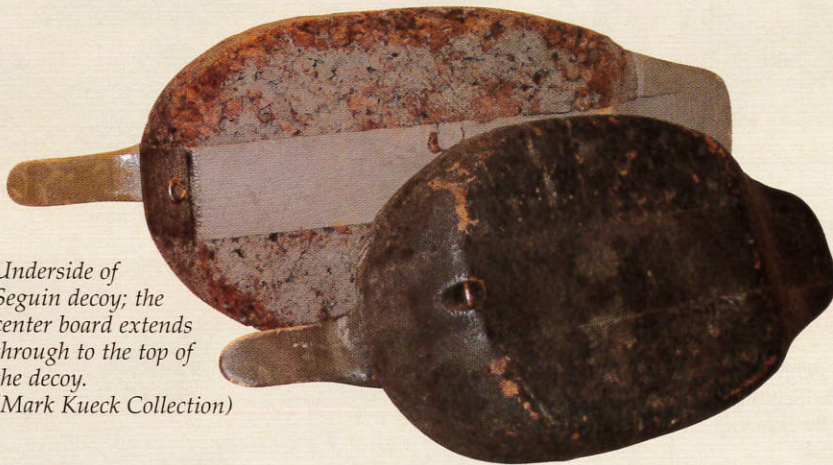
spears but certainly made his own spearing decoys that represent some of this man's finest artistic work. While some of those fish decoys are simple working decoys, others are much more complex and appealing in their carving and paint. Collectors and dealers of fish decoys came to realize this when Art Seguin was in his later years of life.

In the early 1980s, and from time to time, he would make a few fish decoys specifically for collectors. Generally, these later decoys are northern pike and are done very well. The more desirable fish decoys, however, are the earlier decoys he made. According to collector John Banholzer, who has owned and handled Seguin fish decoys, "His early decoys, especially the pike, are darn nice decoys, some of the best around." From time to time, one of

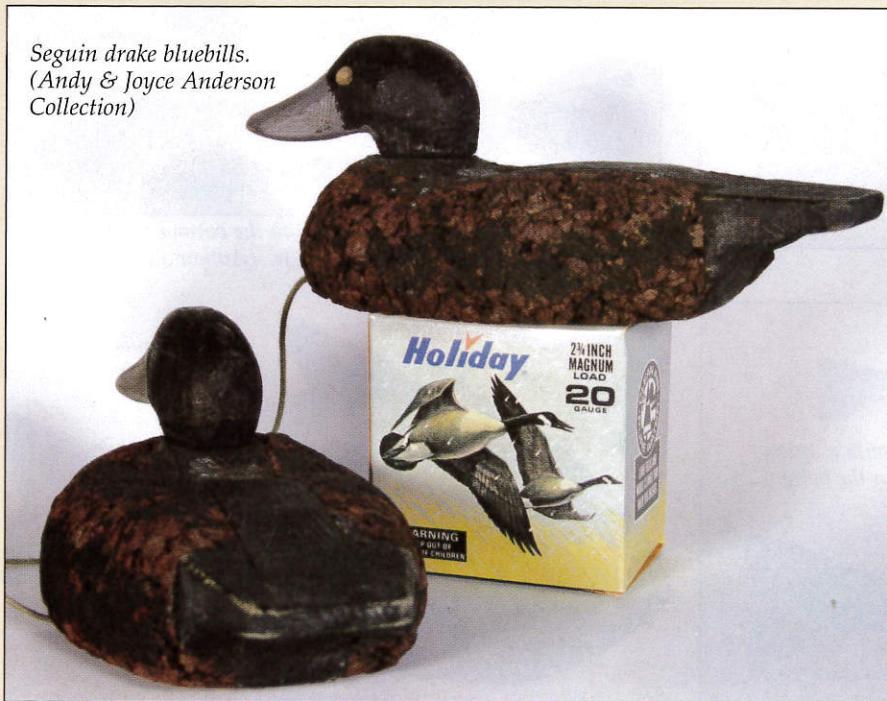
By Kirk Schnitker



Art Seguin with a table full of working fish decoys.



Underside of Seguin decoy; the center board extends through to the top of the decoy.
(Mark Kueck Collection)



Seguin drake bluebills.
(Andy & Joyce Anderson Collection)

his jointed decoys will show up; and according to his son, Art Jr., these jointed decoys would do a figure eight in the water. Art, Jr., himself, took up making decoys and made a few jointed fish, one of which is shown with this article.

Like most fish decoy makers, Art Seguin made his share of red and white decoys. We all know that must have been what the buyers wanted. He also is known for his sunfish decoys and made some fine examples. Scarce examples of crappies and small whitefish decoys show up from time to time. Likely he made these small whitefish decoys for those who speared the nearby Whitefish Chain of Lakes that had good populations of lake whitefish.

When it comes to Art Seguin duck decoys, he made them as practical decoys that were very effective according to his sons. His decoys are characteristically small, undersized one could say, and they have a unique wood and cork body. His sons said he made them small since the old style wood decoys were so heavy. Besides, they said, many of the ducks he hunted such as teal were quite small anyway. These decoys still show up from time to time at sales in north central Minnesota, and they make very nice additions to a collection. They have a characteristic wood bottom and center that extends from the bottom to the top of the decoy. I have seen no others quite like them and I am told by his son Art that he did not make any all-wood duck decoys.

As stated, Art Seguin helped to earn his living making decoys. Son Mike still owns a paint stamp tool his father made for wing painting so he could make the decoys faster, as he has so much demand. It is likely the span of years he made these decoys was from the 30s through the 70s and that he made a couple thousand duck decoys. These included mallards, teal, and bluebills, with the later seeming to be the most common. The teal are quite scarce. His sons said he did make a few duck decoys in larger, more magnum sizes; but most are the smaller size.

Art Seguin was 88 when he died on March 8, 1988. He was born in Cloquet, Minnesota, grew up in Aitkin, and lived in North Dakota for sometime in his youth. He worked

primarily as a logger but also worked in the ore mines near Crosby, Minnesota where he moved in 1961. He married a woman who had three children, and together they had six more. This man was a real outdoorsman in many ways as he hunted, fished, and enjoyed the outdoor life.

Seguin had craftsmanship and art in his blood. The art included music,

and he was an accomplished violin and harmonica player, according to his sons. He learned the music skills from Catholic nuns in his youth.

Art Seguin was an eclectic man who led a full life of family, work, and enjoyment of the outdoors. His three boys speak highly of him, and they have fond memories of their time with him. For collectors, he left

a legacy in the form of the craftsmanship he put into decoys and much, much more. □

(Editor's note: Author Kirk Schnitker interviewed Art Seguin's sons, Art, Albert, and Michael for this information. Kirk can be reached at 1.800.553.2092. He is a collector of Minnesota fish decoys.)



Fine examples of Seguin northern pike decoys; probably from the 1940s, they have great paint and appeal. (Author's Collection)



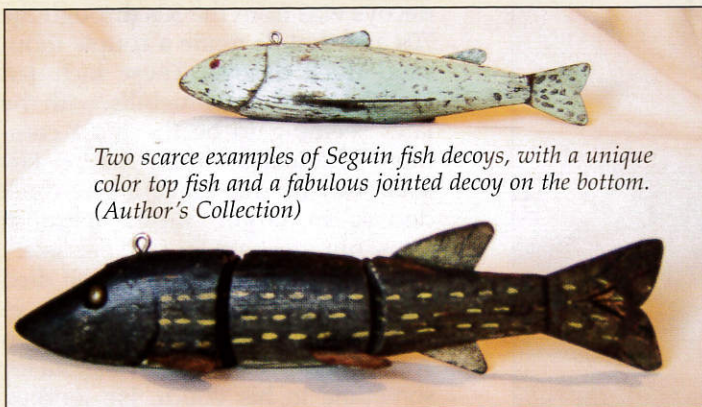
Very nice Seguin panfish decoys, with the crappie on the right and the bass on the top being the finest. (Author's Collection)



Small panfish decoys done by Seguin, likely for spearing whitefish. (Author's Collection)



Three red and white Seguin decoys with the bottom one being jointed; one was done by Art Seguin, Jr. (Author's Collection)



Two scarce examples of Seguin fish decoys, with a unique color top fish and a fabulous jointed decoy on the bottom. (Author's Collection)



Seguin sunfish decoy. (Author's Collection)