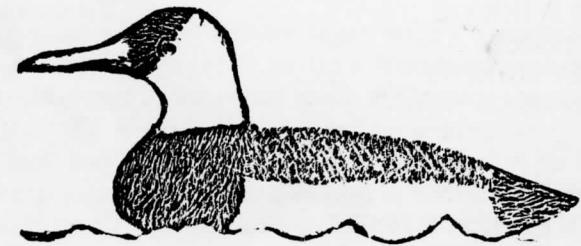


# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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**Keyes Chadwick, Decoy Carver**

BY STANLEY MURPHY

**Jeremiah Pease's Diary (continued)**

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## Keyes Chadwick, Decoy Carver

by

Stanley Murphy

### Editorial Note.

This article is excerpted from a book manuscript entitled "The Decoy Carvers of Martha's Vineyard." Mr. Murphy is one of the Island's leading artists. He is also a member of the council of the Dukes County Historical Society.

The photographs of the decoys are by George Moffett, Jr., of Edgartown.

My interest in wildfowl decoys began with a January walk in what was known then (1956) as Iva's Woods, several hundred yards from the dunes of the ocean beach at Quansoo, on the south shore of Martha's Vineyard. Years earlier a hurricane tide had pushed a thick line of flotsam far inland and a part of his line ran through the isolated woods. Half buried in the decaying refuse I found a grey, part rotted duck decoy, its paint stripped away by the weathering of many seasons, and when I examined it I realized that it was carefully hand-carved by someone who knew a great deal about birds, someone who went beyond craft and created a work of art. I took it home and cleaned and patched it and painted it for a bluebill drake. Later, beginning a serious study of decoys, I discovered that it had been made by Keyes Chadwick of Oak Bluffs.

Keyes Chadwick was born in Edgartown in 1865, a few weeks before Grant and Lee met at Appomattox Courthouse. The family moved to Oak Bluffs when he was three years old and his education began in that town and was continued at the New York State Agricultural College. He hoped to pursue a career of raising fancy poultry but instead was forced by economic necessity to become a carpenter in his home town. He wasn't able to devote much time to chicken-raising until around 1904 when he was hired for that purpose by a man named Owen who had a farm in Lambert's Cove in Tisbury.

Chadwick made his first decoys for his own use in 1881 when he was sixteen years old, then made no more for some years following. It was when he was temporarily disabled by an accident to his leg, and was unable to carpenter or hire out, that he began to concentrate more of his time on the production of decoys for sale. Even so, as he told a reporter many years later, he worked at carving only intermittantly, never steadily.

No readily identifiable ducks have come to light from his first attempts and it is only after he came under the influence of his fellow-carpenter and neighbor, Benjamin D. Smith, that we can begin to trace his development as a carver. Smith was an avid gunner who made decoys for his own use only and Chadwick recognized his mastery and adopted his patterns. The earliest known black duck carved by Chadwick was copied from a Smith creation in its entirety, and he was then closely imitative of Smith in the working of heads of all species, but where Ben Smith appears to have experimented with flat-bottomed, round-bottomed, solid and hollow ducks, Chadwick is not known ever to have carved a hollow decoy or one with other than a perfectly flat base.

Prior to 1900 his decoys do not carry the distinctive flush-poured round lead weight, after that time it is always present. And the oldest Chadwicks are in some ways the most pleasing to the eye, with heads carved in full, careful detail (except for the nostrils, which seem always to have been painted on). The necks tend to be thinner than in later work and the tails are deeply undercut and attenuated. As years passed the more delicate carving was eliminated. The tails, easily broken, gradually became more rounded and strong; necks, especially in the diving ducks, thickened; bill carving was simplified.

Chadwick made his last decoy in 1951, rounding out a creative span of seventy years during which between 1500 and 2000 wooden birds came from his hand. "Probably over 1500" was his own hesitant estimate; it seems likely to me that over 2000 is closer to the mark. In the course of the research for this book I have seen over five hundred examples of his work, and those I have seen have in some cases been only the remnants of much larger Chadwick rigs. There is documented proof that even relatively late in his life he was selling in such quantity as 300,

191, and 100 to a lot and these were ready-to-use decoys which were then put to work by hunters.

I am sure that there are many Chadwicks on the Island that I have not seen, and one of the few off-Island collectors I know told me that at one time he had as many as a hundred of them. Consider the number lost over the years to fire, breakage, and storms, and further consider that during the 1940's the Vineyard towns were visited by antique dealers who filled their pick-up trucks with heaping piles of used decoys (for which they paid as little as 25c each). A figure of over 2000 for the Chadwick output is quite reasonable.

The changes Chadwick made in his decoys from first to last are not dramatic. They came about through a slow process of refinement and resulted, finally, in rugged decoys that could take the hard usage of a gunning trip, that could be jostled one against the other in a gunny sack over a hunter's back without breakage. But the essential Chadwick "look" is in all of his decoys of every period. They are smoothly finished, graceful, and sometimes even stately birds.

When I first became interested in decoys, Keyes Chadwick was still alive and had been in a Vineyard Haven nursing home for a year. I visited him there to talk to him of decoys and gunning, and during the two years remaining to him returned a number of times, usually carrying some wooden birds for him to identify or comment on.

In his last year, Chadwick had his caretaker deliver to me, as an unannounced gift, two boxes full of his older patterns. I was surprised and delighted, and amazed by the number - literally hundreds - of variations. It was apparent that he was never totally satisfied with a given pattern, that his search was for perfection, a perfection always liable to further perfection. Bodies were lengthened or shortened or narrowed; the bottom area was changed; heads were raised or lowered. The variance between one redhead body and another might be in a quarter-inch drop in the small area just behind the neck but the changes were carefully mapped out on cardboard or paper or shingle stock first. Head patterns were varied in almost infinitesimal ways as well as by major alterations. There was bewildering variety in the merganser heads, for instance, and these shelldrake decoys are among the

loveliest of Chadwick's creations.

In one of the boxes there were two carefully preserved real duck heads, a bluebill and a redhead. And Chadwick caught the essential differences of them in his carving: the slight peak of the redhead's crown - not often observed by other carvers - as well as the obvious difference in the bills.

Also in this box was a group of old, thin wooden patterns by another hand - shelldrakes, redheads or bluebills, and a black duck. Obviously they are pre-Chadwick, but whose? the divers and black duck are very much like early Chadwick heads, but the shelldrakes are wholly different. Primitive, and still very fine. Carefully penciled in print on the redhead is the name GEO. F. WING. It is not in Chadwick's familiar hand.

Some of the paper and cardboard patterns were never used, but most of them show the black of a pencil tracing completely around the edge, clear proof that they resulted in at least one decoy duck, probably more.

At the time this treasure was given to me I was interested in them only as a curiosity. There was no idea of ever trying to write about Keyes Chadwick or any other carver, and while the actual decoys fascinated me, I found little esthetic reward in the patterns. Several years went by until I talked one day with another of the fine old craftsmen of this Island, Manuel Swartz Roberts, in his shop in Edgartown. He had retired from the business of boatbuilding and spoke of wanting to make some decorative bird carvings to sell. I asked him if he would like to have the Chadwick patterns and he was delighted at the prospect, so after culling out a few items I wanted to keep, I took the boxes to him.

Within a year, he too went to his last reward. And a year beyond that, when I stopped at his house to inquire of his widow if by chance she knew the whereabouts of the patterns, I was told they'd been taken to the town dump by her son (her son by an earlier marriage) and thrown into the fire pit. *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*. How easily they would solve certain problems of Chadwick identification today.

Recently, to my astonishment, I discovered that a decoy collector on the Cape owns a third box of patterns. I believe them to be the ones Chadwick used in the latter part of his life as well as some chosen old favorites. The sleeper black duck is there (the

decoys made from it all date from 1950, give or take a year) and the canvasback head from which he made paperweights late in his career.

### Materials and Techniques

The decoy bodies were cut from white cedar posts which had been stacked outside of the shop to cure for at least a year before use. Heads were made of sugar pine, a wood that takes and holds detail carving easily and yet is tough enough to withstand hard usage. To fasten the head to the body, Chadwick bored a hole, generally  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch diameter, up from the bottom to within  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches of the flattened area which would receive the head. A hole the diameter of the three inch brass screw was drilled through the remaining cedar and, when the head was securely screwed onto the shoulder-platform, the hole in the bottom of the decoy was corked flush with the surface.

A hole was bored to receive the lead weight at the proper balance point in the long axis of the base, its diameter varying according to the size of the decoy. A large-headed nail was driven part way into the center of the hole and this served to secure the lead which was melted on the wood-stove in the Chadwick kitchen and poured until it was flush with the bottom. As neat, solid, and unobtrusive a method of weighting a decoy as has been invented.

His habit was to carve a series of bodies and follow them with assorted heads. It wasn't a matter of completing one bird before going on to the next.

The oldest Chadwicks have eyes that are metal studs. Some were simply painted on. Later, and for a considerable period, glass eyes are set into sockets which are purposely countersunk so as to leave a depressed rim about  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch in width around the eye. In the decoys of the latter part of his life, eyes are set at the precise level of a live duck's eye, in a hole the exact diameter of the eye.

He used the best available glass eyes and they were the proper color of the species involved. At the very end, to judge from the last sizable batch of decoys he made, (which were purchased unpainted and unweighted by an Edgartown man after Chadwick ceased all production), his failing vision betrayed him into setting red eyes in bluebill heads, and eyes of different color in the same head. Except for this aberration, through, the last birds,

particularly the marvelous widgeon, are of his usual high standard.

A man who watched Chadwick carve many decoys reported to me that he shaped the bodies, down to the final smoothing, with a hand axe. I asked if he were certain it was an axe and not a drawknife: "Yes sir!" he replied. "I tried a few strokes on a fresh block in his shop once, and cut too deep and spoiled the block. Keyes gave me hell." I will add that I saw keen and ready drawknives hanging in his shop. They had seen a lot of use. When Chadwick was interviewed in his 85th year he told the reporter that he roughed out the decoys with an axe, then used various knives and finally snappaper. No machine tools except for jiggling the basic outline drawn on block from pattern. A Chadwick decoy is a very smooth affair from which tool marks are absent.

He had a low opinion of his ability to paint his decoys, but the fact is that he was adequate enough to the task. Rather than blend one edge into another, he left the clear division line, and realistic feathering remained a mystery to him. He carefully cut paint patterns in thin cardboard for tricky areas such as the drake red-breasted merganser wing, the wings of the cock whistler, and the back designs of other ducks.

A certain amount of misinformation about the connection between Keyes Chadwick and Elmer Crowell of East Harwich has been published, mostly to the effect that Crowell did Chadwick's painting for him. The facts are these: That Chadwick once sent several black ducks over to the Cape to be painted by Crowell; that when they came back he pronounced them the most beautifully painted decoys he'd ever seen; that later he sent a few widgeon to be painted - no more than six, possibly only three - and that was the sum total of Chadwick-owned decoys painted by the master, Crowell.

What is not generally known is that Elmer Crowell made a number of trips to Oak Bluffs for the purpose of buying Chadwick's work, unpainted. He would look over the latest batch and pick several dozen of the best, saying "I want that one, and that one, etc.," and Chadwick, not about to accept this careful pruning, would reply "All right, you can have them but you'll have to take a dozen of these and a dozen of those along too."

The Crowell purchases were then taken to the Cape where he would paint the ducks in his inimitable fashion, and sell them

from his shop. There was, of course, no intent at deception. Crowell was doing a large volume business at that time and couldn't supply the demand, hence the Chadwick decoys meant more stock in hand, more customers satisfied.

It should be known that Crowell had the highest regard for his Vineyard peer. He once said to Chadwick, with witnesses present, "Chad, you are a better carver than I am," and then added: "but you can't paint worth a damn!"

I wonder now whatever happened to all of those Crowell-painted Chadwicks. Could it be that perhaps Crowell might have embellished or trimmed or re-cut parts of the Chadwick blocks to conform to his own style? Or did he sell them, after painting, without adding his famous brand? I have yet to see a branded Crowell that is anything but wholly Crowell (in the head carving at any rate). But I am not well enough acquainted with his work to rule out the possibility that some are altered Chadwicks.

Chadwick made his wooden birds in the basement shop of his home and, when the weather was moderate enough to allow it, he worked under the trees in the back yard. I was permitted by his caretaker to see the shop in that last year of his life. His tools were ready for use, clean, with wood handles rubbed to a burnished smoothness by the varying grips of many years. The knives were razor-edged. The sweet smell of countless sweepings of cedar shavings lingered still.

He told me that there were three things he considered his special accomplishments: he raised prize-winning fancy fowl; he did fine Spencerian pen work of the sort used on diplomas and important documents; he made a good duck decoy. Of the three he was proudest by far of his record as a producer of fancy fowl. In an interview for the Vineyard Gazette in 1950 he said "I've never done what I wanted to do, and that was to raise chickens, just to raise lots of champion chickens." In 1953 he told another reporter that "...he did not want to be quoted as being a decoy maker. He was not, and that was all there was to it. He was a chicken raiser, and did that because he liked to beat the other fellow. 'And I've raised lots of prize winning birds that way. I never cared to show them myself, but sold them to breeders who showed them'."



It is difficult today to realize how popular the raising of fancy poultry was in years gone by. A sizable group of Island men engaged in it, and Chadwick was the most successful by far. Four male birds of his rearing won first honors in National shows at Madison Square Garden. One of his White Plymouth cockerels became grand champion of solid colored birds over almost 6000 entries.

The same sharp eye for judging line and volume was useful in other ways. He was once asked to estimate the combined weight of three enormous hogs which belonged to a neighbor. Other men placed bets on whether or not he could come within twelve pounds, but he came within eight. The total weight involved was well over 1500 pounds.

Recently a man who shot many a rabbit in company with him asked me, "Did you ever hear Keyes Chadwick say an unkind word about anyone?" No. But then I met him only near the end of a very long life. His contemporaries knew him to be a man of unquestionable integrity, a kind man, a gentleman.

His wife was childless and the two were very close. When he rose in the predawn hours to go hunting, she was up to fix him a hot breakfast, and one observer claims that Chadwick never ate a bit of food unless it was in his own house. It made no difference how long he was out gunning or who had box lunches; he would wait to eat with his wife. Their friends remember that the Chadwicks treated each other with total consideration always, living very much for each other yet carefully respecting one another's privacy.

At a time when most men are content to observe life from a porch rocker he still went gunning on occasion, and a small paragraph in the Vineyard Gazette for January 12, 1950, reported that "H. K. Chadwick of Oak Bluffs, who has passed his 85th birthday, took his first jeep ride the other day with Joe Amaral. The quest of the two was an eventual rabbit stew, and Keyes got his rabbit, too." All of his life he much preferred rabbiting to wildfowling, and kept as many as six beagles for the sport.

He stopped making decoys in 1951 and ceased caring very much about anything after Mrs. Chadwick's death in 1953, except that he continued to be gentlemanly to the rest of the human race. He had a habit of giving little baskets carved from peach pits to

people who visited him, if he liked them. The tiny basket was a sort of trademark and a proud one at that. When he gave one to a visiting interviewer (he was then 85) he suggested that the young man give it to a girl and pass it off as his own work. She would know it took patience to whittle such an item, he said, "...and girls like a man who is patient."

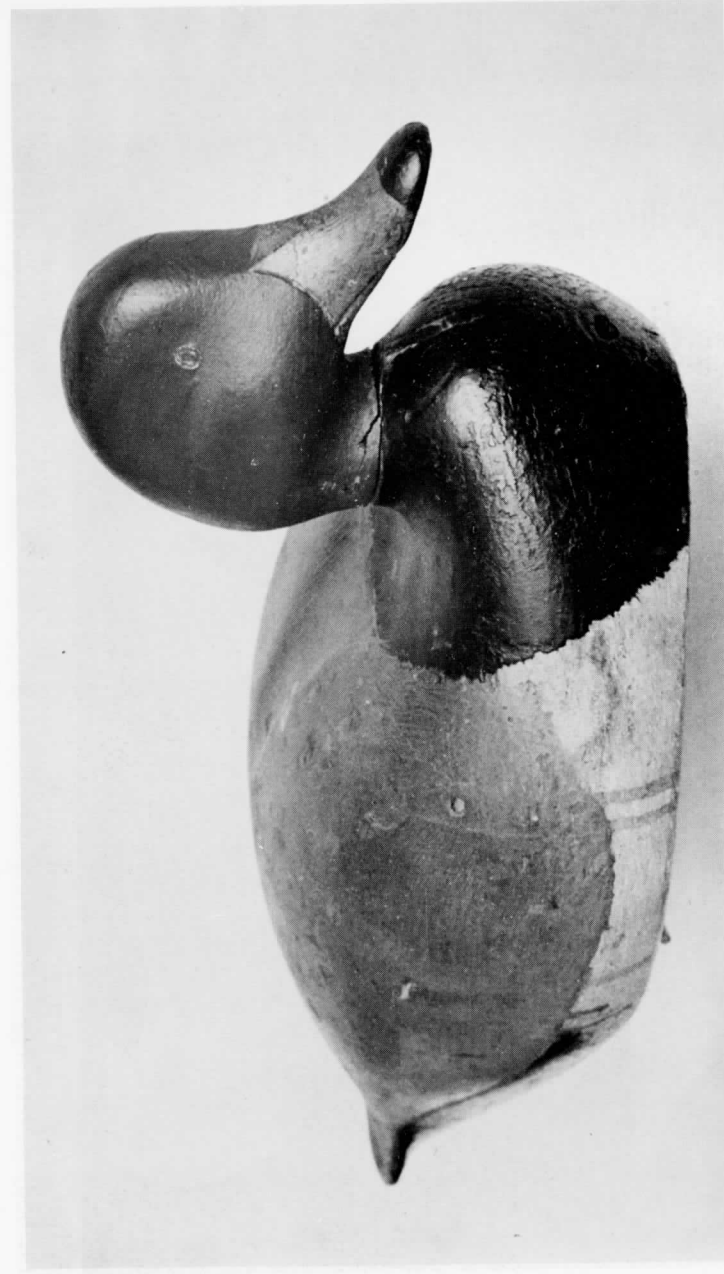
There is one consistent and sad note which runs through the interviews given by Keyes Chadwick in his last years, and it appears in certain of his letters as well. He made it clear that he thought very little of his carving ability and felt that it had no importance whatever in his life, which he considered to have been rather wasted. Ben Smith and Elmer Crowell now, he said, they were artists with the knife and with paint, he himself would have found fulfillment in raising champion chickens.

In the final three years spent in a nursing home his mind and memory remained clear, but his then thin body (he had been described by a reporter a few years earlier as 'short, heavy-set') was worn out. There was a small shelf above the foot of his bed, where a shoe-box contained some of his peachstone baskets, a few samples of his lovely, formal handwriting, yellowed clippings about his poultry-prize triumphs, and some keepsakes of his wife. Nothing to indicate that this man was one of the great decoy carvers of his time, or of any time. He died on September 16, 1958, aged ninety-three, and was buried next to his wife, a West Tisbury girl, in the cemetery of that town.



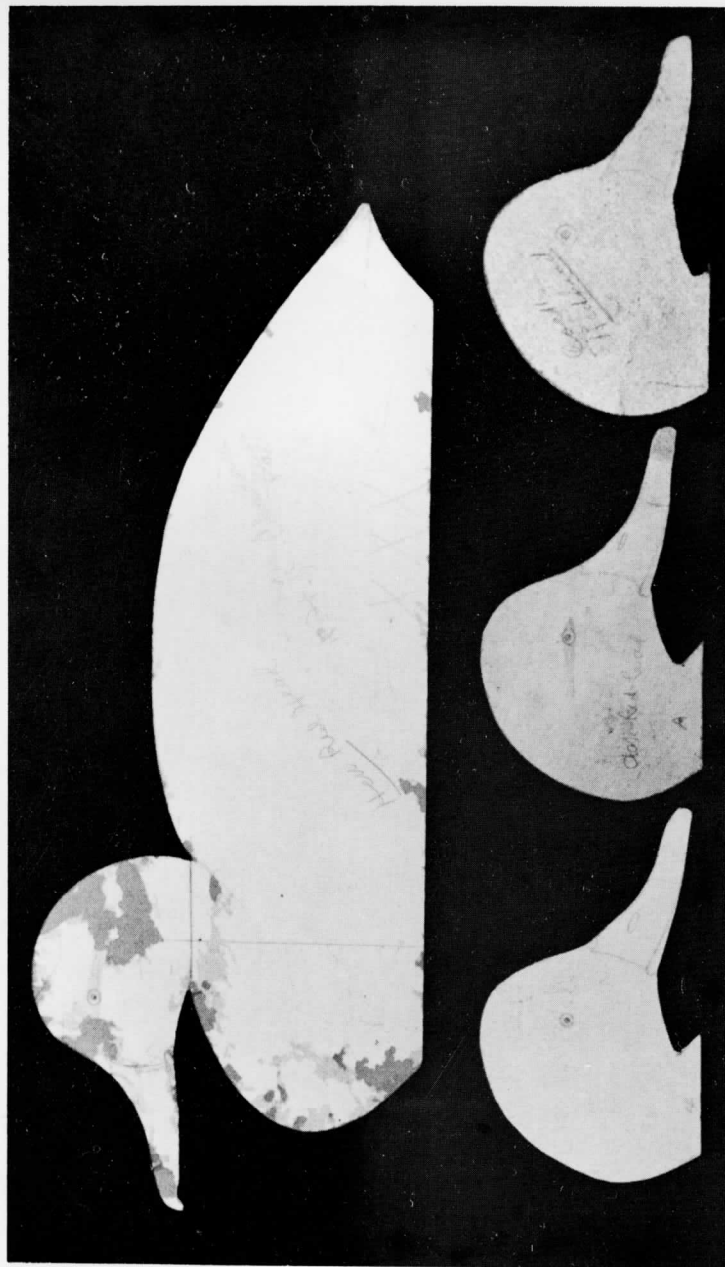
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1. Redhead drake in original paint from one of Chadwick's favorite patterns. 1930 - 1950. Collection of D.C.H.S.



77

2. Redhead drake, a much earlier model than No. 1. The eyes are painted and the area between the shoulders has been deeply carved. 1900 - 1920.



78

3. Just a few of the many Redhead pattern variations. These are cut from thin cardboard. Pencil notes on the body pattern suggest that thirty decoys of this type were made. I have seen perhaps three of them.



79

4. Goldeneye (Whistler) drake, overpainted by a later hand.





80

5. Red-Breasted Merganser drake in original paint. 1900 - 1920. Chadwick had a separate pattern for the white wing area to guide his painting.



81

6. Red-Breasted Merganser pair. These are from the last batch of fully-painted Chadwick decoys. 1940 - 1950.



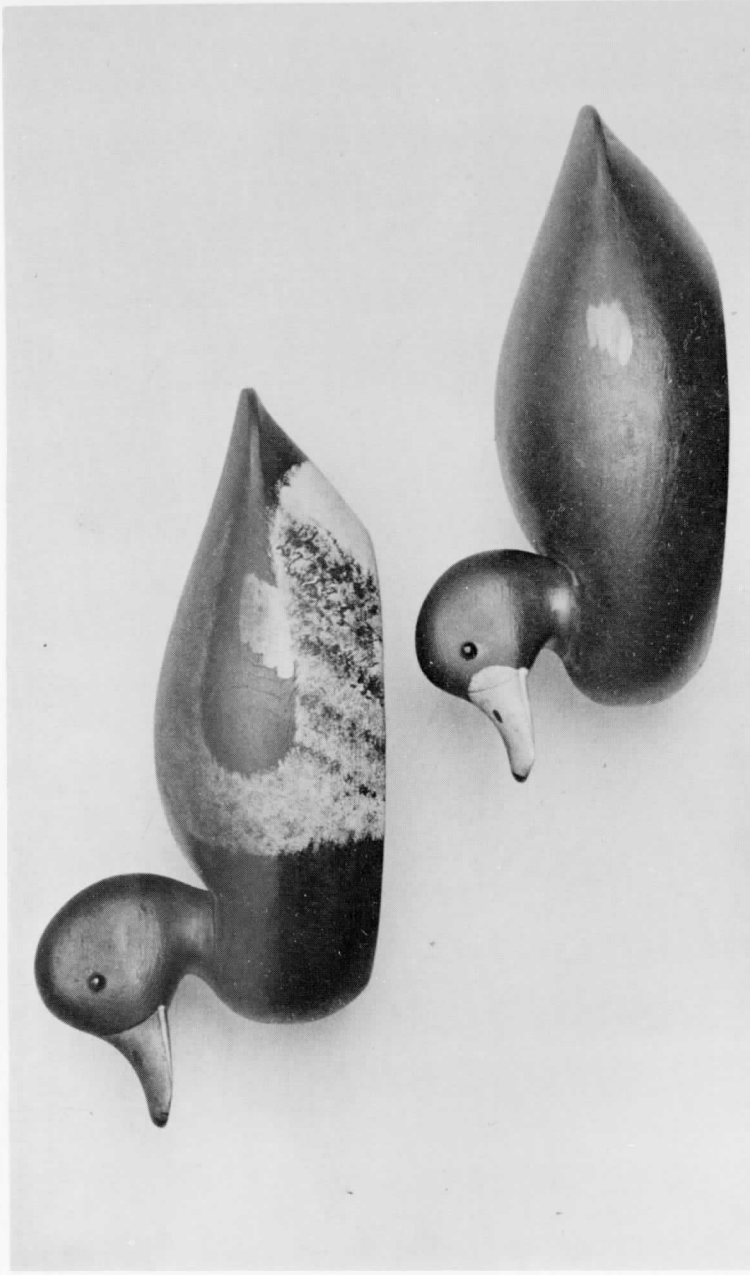
82

7. A great pair of American Mergansers from Chadwick's middle period, 1910 - 1930. They are from a set of a dozen birds of this species which was carved for Capt. Norman Benson of Lambert's Cove in trade for a rabbit dog. All paint has been removed.



83

8. A lovely little Baldpate (Widgeon) drake. It was never painted, but Chadwick penciled in the area for the dark green stripe aft of the eye.



84

9. A pair of Greater Scaup (Bluebills) in original paint. Chadwick's most common, most rugged decoys.



85

10. A Black Duck "sleeper". This one was painted by Chadwick and hunted over by its owner. Perhaps a dozen more sleepers were made from the same pattern, but they were unpainted and unweighted and never got beyond the mantelpiece.



11. A Coldeneye (Whistler) hen from 1890 - 1910. The smallest known Chadwick decoy, in what remains of the original paint.

## Jeremiah Pease's Diary (continued)

January 1821

- 1st. Wind west to north northwest. This day commences a new year. How swift the passing moments run. Set out for New Bedford in the schooner *Hiram*. Stopped at East Chop for ballast and lost the tide. Returned to Edgartown again.
- 5th. Wind west northwest to southwest. Very cauld. The harbor above the wharves frozen over.
- 7th. Wind northeast. Severe snowstorm. The harbor shut up with ice.
- 10th. Wind west southwest to west. Cool. This evening set Mr. Jared Coffin's wife's ancle.
- 11th. Wind south to south southeast. Went eeling. Caught fifteen dozen. It snows at night.
- 12th. Wind west northwest. Moderate, Went to see grandfather Dunham at Mr. A Fisher's, Chappaquiddick, he being very sick.
- 13th. Wind east southeast to east. Light. Cloudy with snow. I got one of the buoys out of the ice. This day my grandfather Elijah Dunham dies aged seventy-six years. Ship *Loan* of Edgartown, Capt. Matthew Norton arrives in Holmes Hole with 1500 bbls of oil. Joyful news.
- 15th. Wind north northwest to north. Attended the funeral of my grandfather at the meeting house. Funeral services preached by Rev. Joseph Thaxter.
- 16th. Wind north to north northwest. Light. Very Cauld.
- 18th. Wind north to north northeast. Clear and Cauld. Harbor entriely closed with ice. And the sound entirely closed. Likewise no water to be seen from the long hill.
- 19th. Wind north to northwest. Very cauld. Went to Holmes Hole with Heman Arey, Silvanus Crocker and others with a view to cutting the ship *Loan* into a more safe place on account of the ice. Stopped at Edwin Smith's tavern and found him intoxicated with liquor. Returned the same day.
- 22nd. Wind north northwest to south southeast. Cauld. It appears like a thaw. Much ice in the harbor and snow on the ground. Snows at night.

- 23rd. Wind northeast to northwest. Thaws a little.
- 24th. Wind north to north northwest. Cauld. Moderate breeze.
- 25th. Wind north to north northwest. Very cauld day.  
Thermometer stood at seven below O and I think more.  
The sound freezes over again. Ice for three miles on the south side of the Vineyard.
- 26th. Wind west to west southwest. Moderate but freezes all day.  
There is more ice than has been known for many years and a remarkable cold winter so far.
- 27th. Wind southwest. Thaws. Some rain. P.M. wind west to west northwest.
- 28th. Wind west. Pleasant. Thaws.
- 29th. Wind south to southwest. Thaws. Three young ladies were going from the west side of Holmes Hole harbour to the east side upon the ice. They all fell in and one of them, Mary Daggett, daughter of Capt. Samuel Daggett, was drowned. She was aged about sixteen years.
- 30th. Wind calm A.M. P.M. southwest. Pleasant. Capt. A. Fisher and A. Loper crossing the harbour upon the ice fell in. Soon got out by the assistance of many men.
- 31st. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Thaws the ice and snow very fast. Some of the ice breaks off the flats, The harbour remains full. Mr. Samuel Butler's wife dies in child bed.<sup>(1)</sup> The winter has been very severe.

#### February 1821

- 1st. Wind southwest to north north west. Rains. The ships *Loan* of Edgartown and *John Adams* of Nantucket comes from the Cove.
- 2nd. Wind southeast to south southwest. The above mentioned ships return to the Cove.<sup>(2)</sup>
- 3rd. Wind west. Light and calm. Much people go to cut a passage through the ice.
- 4th. Wind east to south south east. Thaws. Nathaniel Vincent's daughter dies being one of twins about two years old. The vessels that have been long laying in the ice cut through and come up to the wharfs.

(1) Samuel Butler's wife had been Rebecca Smith of Pohognut. Her "Diurnal Records" for the year 1813 are in the archives of the Dukes County Historical Society's library.

(2) Because Edgartown harbor was blocked with ice and the ships could not get in.

- 5th. Wind north to north northwest. Snows A.M. Cool. Much people go to cut ice again.
- 6th. Wind east southeast. Light and calm. Attended the funeral of the above mentioned child. How lamentable it is that when a poor person or their children dies to see so little attention paid to their funeral. The number that attended this funeral was but very small. Shame, shame. The pilot boat *Hiram* goes out through the channel cut for that purpose.
- 8th. Wind north northwest. Ship *Loan* comes into the harbour. The first vessel that has come in since it closed up with ice the most of which is now gone a passage being wide enough for vessels to pass.
- 9th. Wind south southeast to south southwest. Vessels that have been long frozen up sail for their destination.
- 14th. Wind east to east southeast. I went out for New Bedford in sloop *Democrat*. Got as far as Woods Hole. Thick snow storm and heavy gail at south southeast.
- 15th. Wind north northwest. Fresh breeze. Arrived at New Bedford abreast of Palmer's Island. The ice preventing us from getting up any farther.
- 18th. Wind west to north northwest. Fresh breeze. Arrived home from New Bedford.
- 21st. Wind south southwest to southwest. Ship *Loan* comes to Coffin and Osborn wharf and begins to discharge her cargo.

#### March 1821

- 7th. Wind north to north northeast. Cold weather. Attended a meeting of the owners of the ship *Loan* at Mr. Butler's tavern relative to sending her on another whaling voyage. Mr. Allen Tilton was appointed master and is to commence fitting the ship for that purpose with all possible dispatch. Captain Tilton was first mate on her late voyage. I attended the meeting as agent to Mr. Samuel B. Mayhew for five shares in the ship.
- 9th. Wind north northwest to southwest. Pleasant. Sally Marchant dies having been deranged in mind for a number of years.



- 13th. Wind southwest to south southwest. Fresh breeze in the evening. Thomas Manter of Holmes Hole was lost out of the pilot boat *Superior* of that place. He being the only one left aboard<sup>(1)</sup> The pilot boat came ashore against Peases landing.
- 15th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Attended the auction sale of land sold for widow Mercy Worth as her attorney. The land sold for forty-two dollars to Capt. Matthew Norton.
- 20th. Wind east northeast. Light small breeze. Ship *John*, Capt. Clement Norton master sails for the Pacific ocean. My brother Abner D. Pease and my brother-in-law Jonathan Worth goes in her. She is a fine ship and well fitted for the voyage and may the blessings of almighty God be with them. P. M. snow and rain storm. Wind south southeast.
- 31st. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Assisted T. Cooke Esq. in putting up supports &c. for his saltworks.

April 1821.

- 2nd. Wind south southeast to north northwest. Snow squalls. Cauld at night. James Vincent comes to live with me.<sup>(2)</sup>
- 5th. Wind south. Light breeze. This day is set apart by the Governor and Council as a day of fasting throughout the Commonwealth. Two men brought from Holmes Hole to prison. Assisted H. Arey in putting his pump to his saltworks.
- 8th. Wind east southeast to west. light and rainy. This day closes another year of my short life.
- 9th. Wind east northeast to south west. Light breeze. Watched with Mrs. Thaxter the wife of Rev. Joseph Thaxter she being very sick with the dropsy. She dies at about 10 o'clock in the evening. She was a very pious woman and dies with the greatest composure and resignation. Oh what a happy state is a truly pious mind.

(1) This must mean that the pilot boat was in his charge, all the other pilots having boarded vessels which needed a pilot.

(2) This probably means that James Vincent came to live with the Peases as an apprentice, to take the place of Jonathan Worth who had gone in the ship *John*.

- 11th. Wind northeast to east, and cool. Attended the funeral of Mrs. Thaxter. She was beloved by all her acquaintance and died lamented by all who knew her. Funeral service by the Rev. Jonathan Smith of Chilmark. This is a solmn day as we have paid the last kind offices to a departed friend of mankind.
- 12th. Wind east northeast. Stormy. Attended the wedding of Mr. Daniel Fellows and Mrs. Hannah Pease.
- 13th. Wind west to southwest. Cloudy. Corn sold this day for 36¢ per bushel.
- 15th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Being Sunday Mr. Thaxter preaches an excellent sermon on the death of his wife.
- 17th. Wind east northeast to northeast. Gail and heavy storms of rain A.M. P.M. Hails and snows. Ground covered with hail and snow. Very cold.
- 18th. Wind continues. Snow storm in A.M. P.M. clears but cold. Flour sold by retail at \$4.75.<sup>(1)</sup>
- 25th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Potatoes sold at 20 cents per bushel retail. Assisted Heman Arey in putting down his scistern for pump.
- 27th. Wind southwest to northeast. Pleasant and warm. Attended a meeting at Mr. C. Butler's tavern relative to business concerning ship *Loan*.

May 1821

- 3rd. Wind east northeast to northeast. Watched with Benjamin Smith formerly high sheriff of this County being sick with complaints incident to old age.
- 4th. Wind east northeast to northeast with rain. Sheriff Smith, so called, dies being about seven o'clock A.M. Eighty-one years old or thereabouts.
- 5th. Wind east northeast to northeast. Gail with rain. Continues cold and stormy. Attended the Funeral of Benjamin Smith, Esq. Funeral service by Rev'd Joseph Thaxter.
- 9th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Town meeting for the choice of representative.<sup>(2)</sup> W. Jernegan, Esq. chosen. This day

(1) That must mean \$4.75 a barrel, which was the way almost everyone bought flour in those days.

(2) That is, representative to the General Court (The State legislature.) At that time every town in the county selected a representative.

James Vincent was bound to me by the selectmen.

- 12th. Wind north northwest to east northeast. Went to New Bedford.
- 13th. Wind south southwest to southwest. Returned from ditto.
- 17th. Wind south southeast to south. Fresh breeze. Rains. Ship *George* of Nantucket arrives from the Pacific ocean. Also sloop *Superbe* of Charleston arrives.
- 27th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Rev'd Joseph Thaxter goes to Boston.
- 29th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. This day we receive news of the ship *Apollo*, Capt. M. Arey having fifty bbls. of sperm oil.

#### June 1821

- 4th. Wind southwest. Mr. Thomas Coffin's house raised.
- 8th. Wind south southwest. Pleasant. Rev'd Joseph Thaxter arrives from Boston. News of the loss of the ship *Essex* in the Pacific ocean arrives and of her crew except the captain and one man. [Sunk by] a whale.<sup>(1)</sup>
- 11th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Letters from the ship *John* of Edgartown arrive.
- 14th. Wind east northeast. Fresh blow. Rainstorm. Polly Arey was put to bed with a pair of twins by Capt. G. M. Shocking circumstance.
- 16th. Wind east to south southeast. Light breeze. Ship *Loan*, Capt. Allen Tilton, of Edgartown sails for the Pacific on a whaling voyage.

#### July 1821

- 3rd. Wind north northeast to north. Cloudy. Went to New Bedford.
- 4th. Wind east northeast to north. Splendid celebration in New Bedford.
- 5th. Wind east northeast to north northeast. Returned from New Bedford. Miss Polly Arey dies.

(1) The news of the loss of the *Essex* as it reached Edgartown was not entirely correct. She was sunk by a whale. But more than just the captain and one man survived. Others were saved in the boats. It may have been the loss of the *Essex* that at least partly influenced Herman Melville to write *Moby Dick*.

- 6th. Wind east northeast to north northeast. Attended a meeting of the owners of the ship *Loan* at Mr. C. Butler's. I was chosen clerk pro tem, J. D. Pease being absent having previously been chosen one of a committee to settle the ship's accounts with the agent. We returned our report which caused a high dispute with T. M. Vinson.
- 7th. Wind south to southwest. Light. Attended the funeral of Miss Polly Arey. The circumstances of this death are very lamentable.
- 9th. Wind south southwest to southwest. Light. Took an inventory of the estate of Thomas Cooke Esq. deceased, being one of the appraisers of the estate.
- 16th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Settled the last accounts of the estate of Jonathan Pease and obtain a quietas. The settlement of the estate has taken much time and been attended with many difficulties has caused me a great deal of anxiety. Assisted T. Cooke in getting in his hay, myself and a boy one half day. Paid J. Daggett the balance of accounts with the estate of J. Pease.
- 17th. Wind south. Light. Went to Tarpaulin Cove on a party of pleasure in company with many ladies and gentlemen. Had a very pleasant visit. Returned the same evening.
- 18th. Wind southwest. Rains at night a fine shower. Took a portion of physic being unwell.
- 27th. Wind southwest. Ten o'clock A.M. the sun in eclips.
- 29th. Wind northeast to south southeast. Moderate. Rains a little. News of the death of Napoleon arrives about this time he having died the 6th of May last.

#### September 1821

- 3rd. Wind south southwest to south southeast. Rains smartly.
- 4th. Wind south southwest to south southeast. A severe storm at sea. At New York many wrecks &c.
- 5th. Wind west southwest. Clear. Schooner, Capt. Osborn, arrives with sixty barrels of sperm oil from the southwest.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) The southwest here probably means off the Carolina coast. Starbuck (p. 238) lists a brig *Planter* which is probably the same vessel sailing from Edgartown on July 1.

- 6th. Wind north northwest. Clear. Received a visit from Thos. Cooke . and lady and several other ladies and gentlemen. This day the Baptist meeting house is moved.
- 7th. Wind south southwest. Pleasant. Brig *Aurora* arrived.
- 8th. Wind south southwest. Fresh. Boarded brig *Aurora* of Aberdeen Scotland which had been wrecked in a gail at sea and lost her captain and mate and two seamen by shipping a sea.
- 11th. Wind north to south southeast. Schooner *Hiram* and sloop *Democrat* arrive with the brig *Dolphin* of Hallowell in tow she having been dismasted in a gail Sunday night or Monday morning the 3rd or 4th.
- 14th. Wind north to northeast. Brig *Aurora* sails for New York.
- 26th. Wind north to southwest. Pleasant. Referees arrive to settle the long dispute between Jethro Daggett and Peter Coffin and J. G. Godfrey, and set this afternoon.
- 27th. Wind north. Light. Smack *Democrat* returned last night from schooner *Victory* of Eder (?) which was cast away on Long Shoal loaded with plaster. Vessel sunk. Saved sails, cables &c.
- 28th. Wind The referees set at the court house. Peter Coffin's cause tried which takes all day and evening. Received the sails, rigging &c. of the schooner *Victory* of Eden (?)
- 30th. Wind south. Fresh breeze. The Rev'd Brooks from Hingham preaches for the Rev'd Mr. Thaxter and receives great applaus. He is considered to be a man of great talents.

#### October 1821

- 3rd. Wind south to southwest. Pleasant. Ship *George* sails for the Pacific. Sent letters to Jonathan Worth and A. D. Pease.
- 4th. Wind northwest. Pleasant. Mr. William Cooke commences keeping grocery store.
- 5th. Wind southwest. Pleasant. Brother F. Baylies and wife move here from Nantucket. His wife being much out of health is the cause of their moving.
- 7th. Wind north. Fresh breeze. Schooner *Rising Sun* from Str't (?) arrives.

- 11th. Wind north to east. Light. Cool. This day set a shoulder for Mr. Samuel Norton's son without assistance of anyone.
- 19th. Wind northeast to east northeast. Stormy. My brother A.D. Pease's wife has a son born.
- 23rd. Wind north. Clear. Pleasant. This morning the news of the award of the referees upon the cause of Coffin and Godfrey against Capt. Daggett was decided.
- 25th. Wind northwest to east southeast. Raised my porch. <sup>(1)</sup>
- 26th. Wind southwest to west southwest. High wind. Miss Abigail Jernegan daughter of William Jernegan Esq. dies at about 10 o'clock of the dropsy having been sick a long time.
- 28th. Wind southwest A.M. P.M. northwest. Being Sunday the funeral of Miss Jernegan was attended at the meeting house. The audience was very large. An affecting discourse by Rev'd J. Thaxter.
- 29th. Wind southwest. Fresh breeze. Ship *Indus* arrives from the Pacific. Caleb Thaxter son of Rev'd Joseph Thaxter arrives in her.

#### November 1821

- 3rd. Wind south. Cloudy. Evening blows fresh rain. Mr. Erastus Beacher dies of a fever at Holmes Hole.
- 7th. Wind southwest to west. Fresh. William Gibbs belonging to Falmouth being attached to the ship *Eagle* falls from the main yard and is killed. <sup>(2)</sup>
- 8th. Wind west southwest. Fresh breeze. The corps of the young man that fell yesterday was carried to Falmouth. Shocking to his widowed mother.
- 12th. Wind south to southwest and west. Judge of the circuit court arrives from Nantucket.
- 19th. Wind southwest. Rains. Went to Chilmark.
- 23rd. Wind wewest northwest to west. Light wind. H. Ripley moves his shop off my land.
- 28th. Wind west northwest to north. The Methodist meeting house raised.

(1) Porch here means the kitchen ell, sometimes also called the summer kitchen. Most of the old Vineyard houses had such an addition made during the years about 1820-1840, when the iron cook stove began to take the place of the hearth.

(2) Ship *Eagle* was from Nantucket and was evidently fitting out at Edgartown for a whaling voyage. She sailed November 13th.

December 1821

- 6th. Wind northwest Cloudy. Cool. P.M. moderate and clear.
- 7th. Wind west northwest. Received a commission as Inspector of Customs. A schooner cast away on Munamsoy<sup>(1)</sup> went to her in the sloop *Democrat* and on the 12th seized a hogshead of rum which was smuggled from the schooner. Returned the 15th. On the 13th had a severe gail from the southeast. Rode out the gail in the Cove. On the 14th a heavy gail from the west northwest. Rode it in Woodses Hole with both anchors ahead. Being much engaged [those days] I did not keep a particular account of the weather. The new ship *Almira*, Capt. Timothy Daggett arrives here on the 9th from Rochester. On the 10th commences fitting out for a whaling voyage to the Pacific ocean.
- 18th. Wind south to west. Moderate. Rainy. Mr. Jeremiah Banning married to Miss Abigail Marchant. A great wedding.
- 19th. Wind west to west southwest. Pleasant. Capt. Edmund Bradley's wife dies of a consumption.
- 20th. Wind southwest. Calm most of the day. Took down the salt works spouts for T. Cooke, Esq.
- 22nd. Wind east northeast to east. Light. Thick and raining. Mr. Thomas Mayhew's child dies having been very badly scalt a few days ago.<sup>(2)</sup>
- 23rd. Wind north to north northeast. Cold Cloudy. Fresh breeze. Mrs. Bradley and T. Mayhew's child buried.

(1) Perhaps Jeremiah Pease's Munamsoy is Monomoy.

(2) Scalding was one of the very common causes of death to small children in Jeremiah's day. It was always a great temptation to peer into the kettle that was hanging on the crane. Burns caused by crawling into the fire itself were also common among very young children.

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