

Stephen O'Brien Jr Fine Arts Publishes Crowell Book

HINGHAM, MASS. — Stephen O'Brien Jr Fine Arts has published *Elmer Crowell: Father of American Bird Carving* by Stephen B. O'Brien Jr and Chelsie W. Olney. Set against the backdrop of Cape

Cod and Boston in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, *Elmer Crowell: Father of American Bird Carving* is a comprehensive examination of the life and carving history of Anthony Elmer Crowell (1862–1952), widely considered to be the most influential American bird carver of all time.

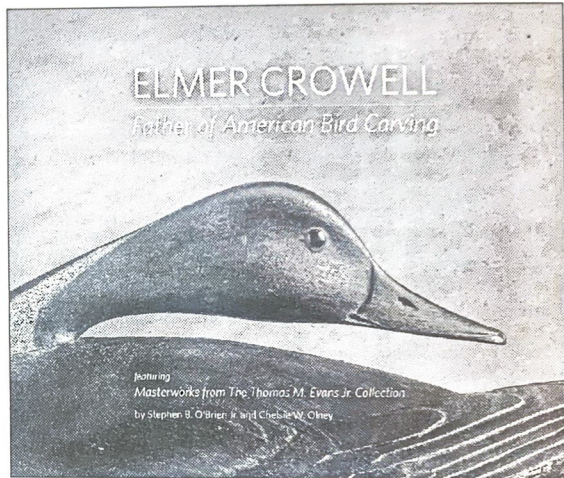
The authors explore Crowell's formative period, which coincided with the American Industrial Revolution. The advances in transportation, communication and firearms fundamentally altered the carver's career. Crowell works from the Thomas M. Evans Jr collection and the top collections in the United States showcase the carver's unmatched abilities. The 304-

page book features more than 420 color images, including Gavin Ashworth's stunning photography along with historic images.

Decoy and fine art specialist O'Brien and writer Olney trace the story of a Cape Cod cranberry grower's son, born in East Harwich, Mass., who possessed an early fascination with ornithology and hunting. These passions led to a career as a market gunner in the late 1800s. In 1898, Dr John C. Phillips Jr, a sportsman as well as a prominent member of Boston society and a prolific author, asked Crowell to manage his Wenham Lake hunting camp.

Upon seeing Crowell's masterful carvings, Phillips and the camp's affluent guests persuaded Crowell to make wooden decoys for them. The resulting decoys from this early period are some of the most elegant bird carvings ever made. Crowell's works would eventually land in the homes of the Fords, duPonts, Rockefeller and other prominent American families of the early Twentieth Century.

Today, works by the maker are the most sought-after carvings in the world. The master's sculptures account for 30 of *Decoy Magazine's* "100 All-



Front cover of *Elmer Crowell: Father of American Bird Carving*, 2019.

Time Highest Price Decoy Lots" (the next highest carvers each have five works in the top 100). Two of Crowell's iconic preening decoys, a pintail made for Phillips and a Canada goose made for Harry V. Long, are the only two decoy carvings to ever top the \$1 million mark. A Crowell "dust jacket" feeding black-bellied plover set the shorebird sales record at \$830,000, nearly dou-

ble the next highest priced shorebird decoy.

Limited to 1,000 copies, the book is available for sale online at www.copleyart.com/sporting-art-auction-catalogs.php. The book can also be purchased at Heritage Museums & Gardens in Sandwich, Mass.; the Museum of American Bird Art in Canton, Mass.; and the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vt.

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"It is true the oak was often gnarled and so were the people. They were a strong, sometimes even crabbed or cantankerous sort, but they lasted. They had the idea of eternity planted in their souls."

-Wallace Nutting

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