

PASCAGOULA DECOYS



A drake pintail with the straight line, Animal Trap Company of Miss., Inc., Pascagoula, Miss. stamp on the bottom. This decoy is similar to the first stamped duck I saw in an antiques store in Slidell.

PASCAGOULA DECOYS

JOE BOSCO



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Gretna 2003

Copyright © 2003
By Joe Bosco
All rights reserved

*The word "Pelican" and the depiction of a pelican are trademarks
of Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., and are registered
in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bosco, Joe.
Pascagoula decoys / Joe Bosco.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 1-58980-143-1 (alk. paper)
1. Decoys (Hunting)—Mississippi—Pascagoula—Design and construction—
History. I. Title.
SK335 .B67 2003
745.593'6'0976212—dc21

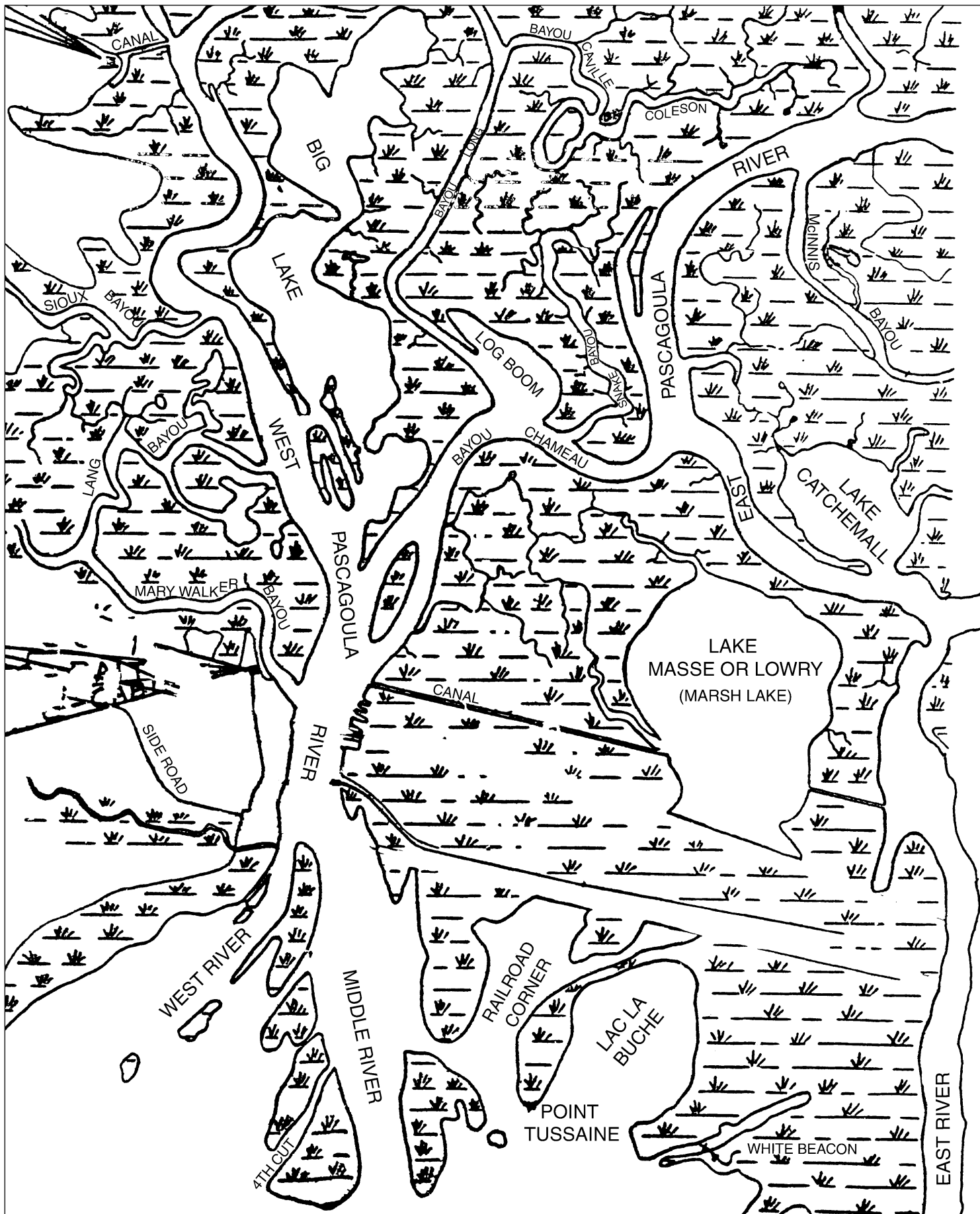
2003008558



Printed in Singapore

Published by Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.
1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana 70053

*To my lovely wife, Susan, whose patience and
encouragement made this book a reality!*



Lower Pascagoula River



CONTENTS

	Acknowledgments	9
	Introduction	11
Chapter 1	Collecting Decoys	15
Chapter 2	Timeline of Pascagoula Decoy Companies	24
Chapter 3	Grubbs Manufacturing Company	27
Chapter 4	Hudson Manufacturing Company	38
Chapter 5	Poitevin Brothers, Inc. (Singing River Decoys)	55
Chapter 6	Trehern Decoy Factory	71
Chapter 7	Cumbest Manufacturing Company	73
Chapter 8	Animal Trap Company of Mississippi	77
Chapter 9	Pascagoula Decoy Company	121
	Sources	158
	Suggested Reading	159



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the wonderful people of Pascagoula and Jackson County, Mississippi whose cooperation and contributions made this book a reality: Jim Pelham, Louie Gasaway, Eddie Barton, Mike Torjusen, Virginia O'Sullivan, Sean O'Sullivan, Robbie O'Sullivan, Phyllis Devers, Jewel and Lucy Slade, Dena McKee, the Charles Ford family, Robert Hanning, Joe and Donna Tonelli, Chad Daggett, Tommy Wixon, Lucille Wilson, Larry and Linda Stringer, the late Dr. Perry Thompson, Elsa Martin, Lum Cumbest, Halsey Cumbest, Stewart Ramsay, John Bosco, the Jackson County Archives, and the Pascagoula Library. Without their tremendous assistance, the history of the decoy companies of Pascagoula may never have been published.

Many of these contributors are either relatives or close friends of the operators of the decoy factories that resided in this great city. For instance, the O'Sullivan family is related to the Poitevin brothers, Ellwood and Eugene. Lum Cumbest is the son of the late Roy O. Cumbest, founder of Cumbest Manufacturing Company, and was a personal friend of Frank L. Hudson. Lucille Wilson's father and brother, Emp and Elba, founded the Trehern Decoy Factory; the trio previously worked for the Hudson Manufacturing Company in the 1930s. Eddie Barton is the son of Adie Pittman; she was the second owner of the Pascagoula Decoy Company. Lucy Slade is Adie Pittman's sister and was a decoy painter for the Pascagoula Decoy Company for five years. Louie Gasaway was once employed by the Animal Trap Company of Mississippi. What better sources can an author have for the true history and facts than the actual family members and friends who were a significant part of this unique history of Pascagoula?

The other contributors are either sportsmen who purchased these fine decoys during their waterfowling years or historians knowledgeable about Pascagoula.

I would also like to thank my wife, Susan, and our longtime friend Lisa Monti, who performed proofreading and editing services.

And finally, I would be totally ungrateful if I did not offer my heartfelt thanks to the wonderful Lois Castigiolia and Betty Rodgers with the Jackson County Archives for their persistent effort in searching for articles and providing valuable research tips that made this endeavor much easier than I ever imagined.



A hen bluebill carved by my grandfather Daniel ("Ram") Van Court. This little decoy inspired my interest in decoy collecting.



INTRODUCTION

Several publications have included information about the duck decoy factories of Pascagoula, Mississippi, but *Pascagoula Decoys* is the first book exclusively dedicated to the history of the decoy companies once in operation in my hometown.

Three incidents in my life established my interest in decoy collecting. As a boy, I received a handmade bluebill decoy, one of several carved by my grandfather Daniel (“Ram”) Van Court, from Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The primitive hen was made of native wood with drilled holes and weights on the bottom. I still have that decoy today. Then, as a young adult, I was following my wife, Susan, around antiques stores in Slidell, Louisiana, when I noticed a large wooden Herters Canada goose decoy. Struck by its realistic beauty, I had to own it, even though it cost me nearly a week’s salary. And finally, in another antiques store, I was examining a decoy when I discovered the “Animal Trap Co. of Miss., Inc., Pascagoula, Miss.” stamp on the bottom. The realization that this old decoy was made in my hometown solidified my interest in collecting wooden waterfowl decoys, those exclusively made in Pascagoula. This interest has led to many years of collecting enjoyment, browsing through antiques stores and flea markets and participating in cutthroat bidding on Ebay.

As a collector, I wanted the knowledge necessary to make good purchases, so I began to research decoys and the companies that produced them. I found that there was very little information compiled about the Pascagoula factories, and I began to make some historical notes. I started uncovering more and more fascinating information, which I then decided to compile into a book. I gathered articles and advertisements from old local newspapers, magazines, catalogs, and other decoy reference books. But the most specific and valuable information was obtained by interviewing the families and employees who were associated with these operations.

Reminiscing with some of the old-timers about duck hunting and decoy making in Pascagoula made me feel like part of this rich era, and I knew this history needed to be preserved for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. My purpose in writing this book is to document the historical

facts about the Pascagoula factory decoy companies and the nationwide impact they had on the sporting industry. My hope is that *Pascagoula Decoys* will become the definitive history of the decoy companies that were located in this small South Mississippi community.

Countless hours of extensive research have gone into preparing *Pascagoula Decoys*; however, undoubtedly new information will surface. Further information about the Pascagoula companies that is forwarded to the author will be considered for inclusion in a possible revision to this book.



Two hunters using Pascagoula Decoy Company products (skiff, decoys, and paddles) during a duck hunt on the West Pascagoula River in the 1950s.



PASCAGOULA DECOYS