

Harry V. Shourds (1861-1920)

2026 Heritage Awardee

By Grove Conrad

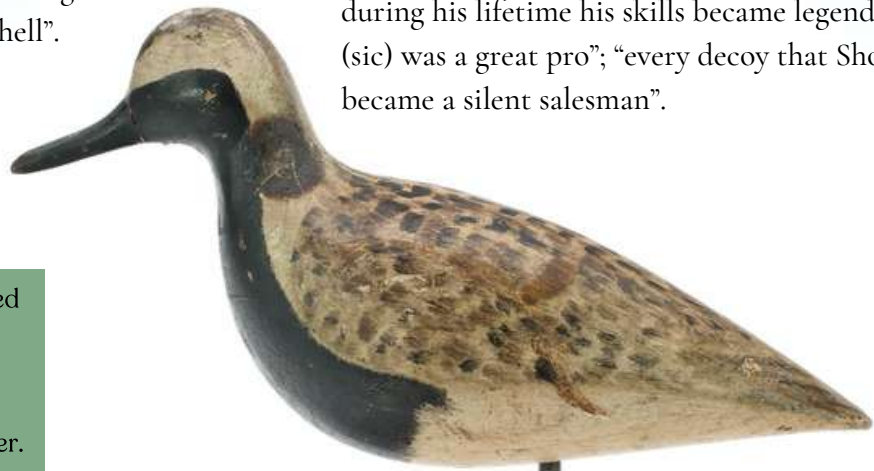
How appropriate that this 2026 Heritage Award be presented to a Shourds during the 250th anniversary of our country's Revolution. During the Revolution, there were approximately 12 Shourds men residing in Tuckerton, among them one Joseph Shourds, a 4th generation Grandfather of honoree Harry Vinuckson Shourds. This Joseph Shourds married Keziah Andrews in 1759 – Miss Andrews was the daughter of Edward Andrews, the man who drove the beavers from Tuckerton Creek and built a dam for his gristmill; today we are presenting this Heritage Award on the shore of that very lake that Harry V. Shourds' 4X maternal grandfather built. As for the Revolution, it is unlikely that any Shourds man fought either as a patriot or a tory – they were Quakers without exception.

How appropriate that this second annual heritage award is awarded to the father of the first heritage awardee! Both son and father were house painters and carpenters respectively. While father Harry passed his heritage (making classic Barnegat Bay decoys) to son Harry M., both are arguably the most recognized decoy makers of all New Jersey generations. Additionally, other family decoy makers that followed both (brother John Shourds, grandsons Alvin Shourds, great-grandsons Ross Shourds and Malcolm Robinson) owe their recognition and abilities to "Nucky" and "Mitchell".



Harry V. Shourds (1861-1920).
Photo courtesy of Ocean County.

How appropriate that despite no mention of Shourds in the first and classic 1935 book of decoy collecting, Joel Barber's "Wild-Fowl Decoys", William Mackey's seminal 1975 book "American Bird Decoys" recognizes Harry V. Shourds and devotes practically an entire chapter describing him as "the greatest professional decoy maker of New Jersey." Never mind that Mr. Mackey misspells Shourds as Shourdes or Shores throughout. Says Mackey: "Even during his lifetime his skills became legend" and "Shourdes (sic) was a great pro"; "every decoy that Shourdes made became a silent salesman".



Harry V. Shourds Black Bellied
Plover in summer plumage.
Sold in 2025 at auction for
\$2,400.
Photo Credit: Guyette & Deeter.

How appropriate that Shourds decoys are prized by collectors throughout the United States and the auction houses offering Shourds decoys often “hammer” those birds for six figures, a far cry from Harry’s six dollars a dozen charged at the beginning of the 20th century. Again, to quote from “American Bird Decoys” - “His kind will never appear along the tidewaters of the Atlantic coast and all of us are poorer without him.”

This Heritage award was designed to recognize the legacy of those who would have qualified as a Hurley Conklin finalist had they lived to be so honored. Harry V. Shourds and Harry Mitchell Shourds are a redefinition of all past awards living or otherwise *how appropriate* for the show committee to recognize the greatness embodied in the legacy of these two men.

**Harry V. Shourd Goose sold in 2025
at auction for \$348,000**

Photo credit: Guyette & Deeter



Tuckerton N.J Jan 11th 1916
Mr Phenace Brammer
Surf City N.J
Dear Sir
The stools are dum and they
will Be dry enough to Box
up to morrow for shipping to
you I had hard work to get
the lumber for the geese But
I got it at last
6 geese 9.00
6 Black ducks 12 ducks 9.00
6 Broad Bills 18.00
and freight to Be Prepaid 40 cents
yours very Truly
Harry Shourds
received Payment for Decoys
Harry Shourds
and oblige for same

Above photo courtesy of James Allen.

Harry Vicknuckerson Shourds

(1861-1920)

2026 Heritage Awardee



Above photo courtesy of Ocean County.

Harry Mitchell Shourds

(1840-1944)

2025 Heritage Awardee



Above photo courtesy of James Allen.

Harry V. Shourds II

(1930-2017)

1999 Conklin Awardee



Above photo courtesy of Ocean County.