

A Note From A Wood Tinker

Apprenticeship of the Wood Tinker has presented the task of restoring the Chipper Club History Albums. The old albums required replacement of pages that had become unhinged and yellowed with age. (Please note that the volumes are being reorganized into a more chronological order and nothing has been omitted. So if you don't see something in a familiar place, look, it is still there.)

In the 20th century, there was a renaissance of wood carving in America. Many carving clubs sprung up. This was especially true in the post-Korean War years. The National Wood Carvers Association (NWCA) began in 1953 following a suggestion from Science & Mechanics magazine that carvers form a dedicated group. NWCA published a newsletter that year called "Chip Chats." It had 19 subscribers. Chip Chats grew to 1,700 subscribers by 1968. (A NWCA member created Fine Woodworking magazine in 1975.) By NWCA's 25th anniversary (1978), the NWCA membership reached almost 15,000, and power carving tools had become popular.

Wisconsin Wood Carvers formed in October, 1970 as a statewide club. It had 251 members on its roster in 1975. I am not sure, but these appear to have been the Wisconsin members of the National Wood Carvers Association. Monthly meetings were being held in Milwaukee. Bill Lehmann, President, frequently printed articles in Chip Chats under the heading "Wisconsin News". In 1974, about 40 of these carvers were in the Fox River Valley. Many of these carvers hosted a carving show at the Whiting Community Baptist Church, 1020 Tullar Road in Neenah on May 19, 1974. Later that year, the club split with the formation of a local mid-Wisconsin wood carving chapter that organized with 14 original members. Its first formal meeting was held on October 21, 1974 in Neenah at the home of Jack Beranek.

The first officers were:

President	Harvey Jorgensen, Menasha
Secretary-Treasurer	Jack Beranek, Neenah
Board Members	Walter Yurk, Oshkosh
	Ort Henning, Shawano
	Mac McKee, Wausau
	Otis Hayes, Neenah
	Bill Stark, Appleton



John Beranek



Ort Henning

By January 1975, this new chapter was meeting at Whiting Community Baptist Church with 25 people on the club roster. Today we meet one block away at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1140

Tullar Road. Then, as today, meetings were held on Sundays at 1:30 p.m. with a Board meeting at 12:30 p.m. (How's that for consistency!)

The club name "Mid-Wis. Chippers" was chosen at the Ground Hog's Day meeting in 1975. The first "official" club show was held in Shawano on May 18, 1975 and was planned by Ort Henning with Wisconsin Woodcarvers Chapter President Bill Lehmann.



Bill Stark, Appleton.



The first few years of the Chippers saw great co-operation with the Milwaukee based Wisconsin Woodcarvers Chapter and both clubs attended and helped with each others shows; the Milwaukee based club sponsoring a fall show and the Chippers the spring show. (Chip Chats sometimes called the Wisconsin Woodcarvers group the Milwaukee Chapter, and by 1980 this Milwaukee based club had changed its name to Badger State Carvers.) The second spring show under Chippers auspices was held May 22 and 23, 1976 in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. By 1977 the club was chipping along at a fast chip with almost 50 members. Two shows were held. A winter exhibition and public show was held Sunday afternoon February 6th at the Whiting Community Baptist Church in Neenah. The main annual show was held in Madison, Wisconsin, on April 23-24.

Over the next 7 years, the show moved around various mid-Wisconsin locations as a one day event. From 1978 through 1980 the Annual Spring Show was held at the Darboy Club in Darboy. Then for the next two years the Show moved to the Eagle Club in Oshkosh. Truly the Mid-Wis-Chippers lived up to its club name, moving the spring show again in 1983 and 1984 to the Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute in Green Bay. The 11th annual show began the club's second decade of shows in Appleton. In the Chipper's first decade their carving talents were exhibited throughout Wisconsin, but especially in their Annual Spring shows in locations ranging from Shawano to Manitowoc, Madison, Darboy, Oshkosh, and Green Bay.



Woodcarver Harvey Jorgensen demonstrates his talent



Otis Hayes of Shawano is hard at work here, carving another duck decoy. Woodcarving is an interesting hobby for Hayes, who devotes many hours a year to the projects. (SEL Photo)

The Chippers had 35 members at the beginning of 1979 and about 65 a year later. The annual spring shows then were averaging 35-47 exhibitors. The club membership in that first decade from 1974 to 1984 ranged from 14 to 112.

Mid-Wis. Chippers Annual Show - The First Decade

#1	1975	Shawano	May 18th; 50 carvers exhibited
#2	1976	Mid Cities Mall, Manitowoc	May 22-23;
#3	1977	East Towne Mall, Madison	April 23-24;
#4	1978	Darboy Club, Darboy	April 30; admission - \$1
#5	1979	Darboy Club, Darboy	April 29; admission 50 cents
#6	1980	Darboy Club, Darboy	April 27; paid attendance = 672
#7	1981	Eagle Club, Oshkosh	April 26; 53 exhibitors, WBAY tv covered
#8	1982	Eagle Club, Oshkosh	April 25; 58 carvers; paid attendance = 751
#9	1983	Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute, Green Bay	April 24; 73 carvers including 46 from the Mid-Wis. Chippers Club; admission - \$1
#10	1984	Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute, Green Bay	April 29; admission - \$1, ~ 75 exhibitors

In 2018, the Mid-Wis. Chippers will perform its 44th annual show. The Badger State Carvers does not appear to have conducted shows for several years. (Does anyone know whether the Badger State Club still exists?) If my understanding is correct, then our club's show is the oldest annual show in the State of Wisconsin. What an awesome accomplishment! Our annual show is a tribute to the effectiveness of our past and present members in bringing the world of woodcarving to the people of Wisconsin. Our show has everything to get started in woodcarving from wood to art.