ing miniature decoys for Elizabeth Hall. (He's been carving and painting decoys and miniatures for a living since.) She would take delivery of her miniatures in a hatbox and travel to Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia and New York City and sell them to various buyers and stores, including Abercrombie & Fitch and Crossroads of Sports.

Later that year, her career with the State of Maryland expanded, leaving her less time to travel and sell her collectibles, so she made arrangements with her new friend, Kitty Cummins, to sell her Lawson miniatures. None of these early Lawson miniatures were signed nor did they have any identification, other than his familiar form and paint patterns.

During 1956 Kitty began applying "jelly jar" labels to the bottoms of the miniatures, identifying the carvings as made by Oliver Lawson of Crisfield, Maryland. By then Lawson had met Kitty and, as Ms. Hall had other obligations to tend to, was selling directly to her. They became good friends and Kitty purchased gunning decoys from him for both her personal hunting rig and her collection.

Rare standing miniature wood ducks by Oliver Lawson.

The "Duck House" moniker was appropriate for Kitty's home for obvious reasons, and by 1956 she openly referred to it that way when she printed it on her decoy labels. The more common printed labels were produced around 1958 and used until 1961 or 1962. Yet Lawson never signed any of the decoys until collectors and customers brought them to his door, much as they still do today.

By 1963 Lawson had established his brand and his reputation was growing. He attended his first decoy show, held in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1965. Ironically, that was about the time that Kitty's "Duck House" business was over. She sold her home in 1969 and moved to Berlin, Maryland, to be near her daughter, where she spent the remainder of her life. But thanks to those jelly labels, her small part time business – the "Duck House" of Rumbley, Maryland - will be remembered by decoy collectors forever.

Miniature Canada goose and goldeneye pair by Oliver Lawson. Ms. Cummins began applying labels to the bottom of the decoys and miniatures in 1956, initially using hand-lettered "jelly labels."