

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 19, 2017

George S. McCarty (1868-ca. 1952) and the Amateur Trapshooting Association: When my father became a serious trapshooter in 1914, men who worked for the gun and ammunition companies kept the records and controlled the sport, sponsoring a "Grand American" trapshooting tournament each year that was held at a prominent gun club in the eastern United States. I think it was in 1900 when the first tournament was held on top of the old Madison Square Garden in New York. State Championship tournaments were also held, and gun clubs of all sizes could apply to hold a "Registered Shoot." The Avondale Gun Club in Sharpless's Park held many early registered shoots over its two traps. Famous marksmen such as Frank Troeh of Portland, Oregon, shot at Avondale. Organized trapshooting went under the name of the Interstate Association, which organization published an average book each year containing the annual averages of all shooters who took part in a registered shoot.

The American Trapshooting Association succeeded the Interstate Association in the early 1920s. The industry representatives wanted to turn over management of organized trapshooting to the amateurs, and while this seemed desirable, it was a daunting task for a group of independent sportsmen with no organization. Nevertheless, the Amateur Trapshooting of America (ATA) was formed in 1923 with Frank Stoops of Spokane, Washington, as its first president. However, the early success of this fledgling association was due, almost entirely, by a flamboyant but serious expert trapshooter from Woodbury, New Jersey, George S. McCarty, who was elected president in 1924. The country was divided into 5 regions, each having a vice president (one of whom would be the president). Each state with active trapshooters, plus the District of Columbia and the Canadian Province of Ontario, had a state association that elected a representative to attend the ATA's Annual Meeting, select that state's regional vice president, and elect the president.

McCarty moved fast to establish a permanent home grounds for the new ATA, where the annual Grand American Championship tournament could be held. Vandalia, Ohio, where the Old National Road crossed the Dixie Highway ten miles north of Dayton, was chosen, as it was "geographically central" to the trapshooting population at that time. Almost single-handedly, McCarty sold Life Memberships in the ATA for \$25 each to pay for the building of the new facility that included a two-floor clubhouse and 22 traps in a single line! The first Grand American was held there in 1924, and my father attended. I'm sure he was a charter life member; my life membership card is dated May 22, 1937, so \$25 got me 80 years!

George McCarty was also quite a showman. When handicap shooting was being debated, some thought 23 yards from the trap was too severe a handicap, even for the very best shooters. McCarty borrowed a gun, shot a light load (2-3/4 drams of powder instead of the 3 or even 3-1/8 drams allowed at that time), shot from 23 yards, and won the event. 23 yards was the maximum until it was increased to 25 yards about 1928, and to 27 yards in the 1950s. Once the A.T.A. was up and running well, McCarty not only turned over the leadership to others but retired from the sport for nearly 15 years.

In the late 1930s, George McCarty, then raising quail near Newfield, New Jersey, appeared at the Yorklyn tournament to visit with some of his old friends, such as Charlie Newcomb of Philadelphia and Forrest McNeir of Houston, Texas. To recent shooters of that time McCarty was just a name from the past, and he was not recognized. My father decided to have a Testimonial Shoot for him at Yorklyn, which was scheduled for August 31, 1940. The program called for 100 16-yard targets, 25 handicap, and 12 pairs of doubles. McCarty, then 72 years of age, had bought a very basic \$12 Winchester single 12-gauge gun and had started to shoot again at local events. For the 100 targets at his Testimonial, my dad made up a squad of Ralph Willis (1), myself (2), McCarty (3), my father (4), and Tom Young (5). Willis and Young were both residents of South Jersey, as was McCarty. We shot well, as follows: Willis 98, Marshall Jr. 99, McCarty 98 (with his \$12 gun), Marshall Sr. 94, and Young 100. The Saturday event was attended by over 125 shooters, a record for a one-day shoot in those days.

George McCarty continued to shoot in 50-target team races in South Jersey and often broke 50 straight. My father held two more events in his honor, as a designated day during the 5-day tournaments in 1941 and 1942. As shooting resumed after World War II, George McCarty no longer came around. The ATA is still going strong with over 100 traps required for the annual Grand American. About 2005, the longtime home grounds at Vandalia, which then had about 100 traps, were abandoned in favor of a new location in southern Illinois.