

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 12, 2015

Trapshooting Trophies of the Past: *Weekly News* stories have frequently mentioned trapshooting, and in my opinion there was a lot of information therein with very limited interest. However, our Director of Education has asked for a story on the trophies that were awarded at major tournaments years ago.

Originally a gentleman's sport, often too costly for the average wage earner, friendly competitions grew into championship events where recognition of shooting skills resulted in the awarding of special trophies to those who bested their competition. Often prestige membership organizations like the New York Athletic Club and the Atlantic Indians (established in 1918) prided themselves in acquiring and awarding the finest sterling silver and comparable desirables to those shooters who excelled in the trapshooting events of their tournaments.

In the first 30 years of the 20th century when my father first engaged in serious trapshooting, resort hotels sponsored "shoots" of several days' duration, and the trophies awarded equaled those of the membership clubs. Famous in these parts were the annual mid-winter classic at Pinehurst, North Carolina, and the Maplewood Club in New Hampshire's White Mountains, which opened its summer season with a four-day tournament. In the years before 1920, Pinehurst hired Annie Oakley and her husband, Frank Butler, to teach guests of its hotels how to break clay targets. While similar to club events, these tournaments were open to anyone who could afford the cost.

In addition to silver trophies, the Atlantic Indians, still going strong today, gave "Indian Blankets" prior to World War II. These brightly colored heavy wool blankets made by the Pendleton Woolen Mills in Oregon made wonderful lap robes for early automobiles. I took one with me to Mercersburg Academy in 1941, my first winter away from Auburn Heights. There were also porcelain plates (with the Atlantic Indian emblem embossed thereon) with a sterling silver ring around the circumference. The Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA), based for more than 80 years at Vandalia, Ohio, regulated all registered trapshooting, and gave four trophies each to about 30 states to be awarded to the winners of the four major events at that state's championship tournament (the balance of the 48 states either did not have a state championship, or were registered with the Pacific International Trapshooting Association on the West Coast).

My father's first Yorklyn Trapshooting Tournament in 1921 featured trophies to match those of the best shoots in the country. Through the 1920s, these were mostly sterling silver vases, bowls, and plates. What was evolving, however, was a trend of excellence in certain shooters that caused trophies in their possession to fast become excessive and surplus. While "class shooting" and handicaps made it possible for the average shooter to win, cash prizes where winners could offset the cost of shooting became increasingly popular. By the 1930s, some clubs like the South End Gun Club outside Reading gave only cash.

During this time, both trophies and cash were featured at Yorklyn, and it proved to be a good mix. In the 500-target "Marathon" shot on Wednesday, all prizes were cash. Most events on the five-day program had "optionals," whereby a shooter could bet on himself on various portions of a day's program. Despite this trend, Yorklyn continued to be known for its fine trophies. Typically in the "Brandywine" on Thursday the trophies would be sterling silver; in Friday's "Auburn Special" they would be fine leather suitcases, and in Saturday's Handicap they would be gold pocket watches, of which 16 would usually be awarded. The winner of Saturday's event would get a high-quality trap gun. After World War II, wrist watches replaced pocket watches. At the economical Night Shoots (50-target events Wednesday and Friday nights), about 15 useful prizes that cost less than \$10 each were awarded on a lottery plan called "Lewis Class."

Some of my most coveted trophies were the ATA's state championship trophies, (of which I had a total of nine), the Dunspaugh Memorial Trophy from Maplewood in 1940, the "Signal of Peace" bronze horse from the Atlantic Indians in 1942, and a sterling silver tea set from Tiffany's which was the runner-up prize in the Amateur Championship of America at the New York Athletic Club in 1948.

It's my impression that most prizes at championship events today are cash, but there are probably still State Championship trophies provided by the ATA, and membership organizations like the Atlantic Indians that feature trophies.