



## August Moak

***(1852 - 1942) Lake Poygan, Wisconsin***

August (Gus) Moak was born in Germany in 1852 and came to Wisconsin as an infant with his parents. He learned his carving skills for his father Charles "Root" Moak. He grew up in the small town of Tustin, on the shores of Lake Poygan in Winnebago Co. (Wisconsin), as a carpenter, boat builder, market hunter, trapper, and all-around outdoorsman. He began carving in his early teens to serve his waterfowling needs on Lake Poygan and Lake Winnebago, a waterfowling hotbed at the time. For this lake was well known for its large celery beds that attracted huge flocks of canvasbacks, redheads, teal and of course many hunters!

Gus Moak carved thousands of decoys in his time. Almost all his decoys are made of hollow cedar and used bottom boards that were slightly convex. His heads were attached with screws from the bottom before the board was attached. While most of his decoys are canvasbacks, he also made bluebills, mallards, coots, and Canada geese. His decoy bodies were typically a humpback design, and the necks were long. Most, if not all, of his heads are distinctive in that there is a deep "V" carved, separating the bills from the forehead. Most have carved nostrils and mandibles. His decoys are also identified by his swirled breast painting and the illusion of wings with his paint. Moak used a long narrow strip of lead as his ballast weight attached to the bottom by two screws. Some of his decoys have been found to have "AM" stamped under the weight.

There is no doubt that the decoys made by August Moak are the most "prized" decoys from Wisconsin and are sought after throughout the U.S. August (Gus) Moak passed away in 1942!

From the quaint little village of Tustin on the north shore of Lake Poygan in Winnebago County, a German immigrant has left a legacy of hunting decoys that will last forever on the shelves of decoy collectors.

According to Warman's Duck Decoys by Lewis (ca. 2006), Moak decoys are valued from \$1000-\$10,000 depending on species and condition. A Moak canvasback Drake was listed as sold at auction by Guyette & Deeter in 2017 for almost \$10,000! (Wisconsin waterfowl association)

