



## Augustus “Gus” Aaron Wilson

*(1864 - 1950) South Portland, ME*

The best-known light keeper at Spring Point was Augustus Aaron Wilson, known as Gus, born in Tremont on Mount Desert Island on September 8, 1864. At age fifty he entered the lighthouse service and was assigned to Goose Rocks Lighthouse in Penobscot Bay in March 1915. In 1917 he was assigned to Two Lights Station in Cape Elizabeth, one being Marshall’s Point, but a few months later he was re-assigned to Spring Point Ledge Lighthouse. He retired in the Fall of 1934 after twenty years of service and died in Gray, Maine, in 1950.

For sixty some odd years, (ca. 1880-1940) Gus Wilson was a prolific carver of decoys and became known for the quantity and variety of his output. Wilson drew many different patterns on paper that were often dropped on the workshop floor, swept up and eventually burned. Most of his decoys was stream-lined and solid and features flat bottoms with carved eyes. His decoys were renowned for their detail and for the highly varied head and wing positions, a sharp contrast to decoys carved by other Main carvers, and contemporaries. In addition, he carved detailed bills and wings in relief. Paying very close attention to detail is further extended through the positions of his birds; some are sleeping or preening while others are spreading their wings. Remarkably Wilson often made decoys with mussels in their mouths.

Wilson’s carvings were not limited to waterfowl decoys but spanned a range from smaller species of marsh birds frequently seen on the Maine coast to Baltimore orioles, blue jays, crows, tigers and even a snake made their way into Wilson’s repertoire. Wilson frequently sold his decoys for 75 cents apiece to the Walker & Evans sporting goods store in Portland or gave them away to friends. Many of his decoys were carved while wiling away the hours on watch at Spring Point.

Beginning around 1940, Wilson’s pieces became collectors’ items. Although some decoys found their way into museum collections, many of them were highly sought after and demand sent prices soaring.