

Area Highlights By Doc Williams The Clausen "Still"

Back in the depression, folks had to make ends meet any way they could. Times were tough and a job was hard to come by. Roger Clausen owned a spit of land on the east side of Sugar Lake on what is now the Miller home.



He was an engineer at the University of Minnesota and an inventor of sorts. Sugar Lake was his love and a place where he could go and apply his many talents. Roger constructed a number of buildings on the hillside land. He made his own hand rails and pillars to keep his balance when walking between the structures. Concrete and small stones from the lake, was fashioned around a 2 inch pipe to make the hand rails decorative. There was a boat house down by the lake with a rail and pulley system to launch his watercraft. On top of the boat house there was a wind generator to provide electricity for the house and other endeavors. Roger made two outboard motors for himself and a neighbor. They had a five foot propeller shaft and a grinding stone that doubled as a fly-wheel. Being that Sugar Lake was way out in the sticks at the time, it was a pretty good bet that if someone were to go into the "Moon Shine" business they wouldn't

get caught. Roger built a concrete tunnel connecting the main house to the boat house. It was where he made a

still and stored the beer he produced from it. It would also have become an escape route in the event any revenuers showed up at the front door. The tunnel had electric lights and a powered ventilation system to keep the vapors down and make the air inside breathable. This place was a moon-shiners dream and any government man, had he stumbled onto the still, would have had bragging rights. The bootleg beer was put into stubby bottles and capped. Dick Choate, who was a youngster at the time and still lives on Sugar with his wife Dorothy, was Rogers' right hand man. He ran the capper. Dorothy didn't know Dick at the time and maybe that was just as well. Business was good and



fortunately Roger or Dick never had to use the tunnel to high-tail-it out of there. With the end of prohibition there was no more need for the still. The land was passed down in the family and eventually sold to Tom Miller. All the buildings, including the tunnel, were bulldozed to make room for Toms' new lake home.

Do you know of some history of Sugar Lake? Want it published? Aren't sure if it's good enough to publish? Give Doc Williams a call (I'm in the phone book) and we will get-er-done.

Pictures courtesy of Tom Miller. Upper left picture of the still vent. Picture to the right is the boat house interior with the tunnel entrance in the back.