

Area Highlights

By Doc Williams

The Sugar Bowl Dance Hall

Back in the dust bowl days of the mid 30's, Sugar Lake was a lot smaller. A farmer on the west side grew corn in what is now Addison Bay. The North Bay was also a lot smaller and rumor has it, that a man could walk from Sunset Point to the opposite shore without having to swim. There were no privately owned lake homes on Sugar at the time, although there were 8 resorts; but that's for another article. The fishing was as good as ever. A man by the name of Herman Kaiser was reported to have speared a 33 pound Northern. Although times were hard, there was still a need for people to get together and have fun. Al Swanberg owned some property, by what is today the north landing. That land is now underwater and part of the lake. He was a wheeler dealer and sensing money to be made, decided to build the Sugar Bowl Dance Hall. It was a place where people from around the lake, as well as Silver Creek, Annandale, Monticello and Maple Lake would gather 1 or 2 nights a week for dances. Sometimes upwards of 150 people would show up. It cost 30 cents to get in and 3/2 beer, which was legal during prohibition, was a nickel. It was also available for wedding receptions. Al had 4 brothers: Ray, Franz, Harry, and Walt. Ray was the band leader and played accordion at the Sugar Bowl. Walt's wife Sis, played the piano and Franz was the drummer. Asa Smith (no relation) was the sax man. Did I mention that Ray was also a wheeler dealer? Besides being the band leader, he ran a barber shop inside the Silver Creek State Bank. When opportunity knocked, he bought the local hardware store, and you guessed it, moved his barber shop over there. The Sugar Bowl only lasted 2 & 1/2 years, before one night, it burned to the ground. This wasn't all bad because the lake had started to rise and Al was loosing land. Undaunted, he headed to Indian Lake where he built yet another dance hall and called it.....the Sugar Bowl. Alas, it burned down in only 2 years. No one knows, or is willing to say, what Al may have been doing in the back room, after hours, to cause the fires, but one can only surmise. So goes the saga of Al and the Sugar Bowl Dance Hall.

Do you know of some history about Sugar Lake that might be of interest to others? Like to see it published in this column? Give Dave (Doc) Williams a call (I'm in the phone book) and I will get-er-done.