

By George Anderson

In the December 16th article on Lake Shady we concentrated on the eighty-two years of its early life — the time between the building of the first dam and the present dam. This brings us up to 1937. We are using this date as the beginning of the "Present" day story of the lake because the dam that now impounds the lake is the same dam that gave it birth in 1937. We hope this series of articles will increase interest in the preservation of this historic treasure.

We noted in the last article the changing role of the dam from a producer of water power to a producer of a water reservoir with recreational possibilities. Lake Shady is still designated as a "recreational lake" but parts of it are now taking on the character of a wet land.

A major change in the new lake, created by the "37" dam, was the plotting of the land around the lake for permanent year round homes as well as summer cottages. Of the roughly fifty homes; with lake access today, only two are still summer cottages.

In 1967 the county assumed responsibility for the park and dam operation.

Another change has been a rapid speed up of the siltation process in the last three decades. In areas of the lake which once permitted water skiing, the depth will no longer allow even small power boats. These areas are especially noticeable when the lake is lowered two feet in early November so that a shallower winter lake will,

theoretically, ease the possibilities of spring flooding. This process is somewhat controversial with lakeshore property owners.

At the present, time the main channel of the river is still four to nine feet deep when the lake is at summer level. There are a few spots, near the dam, where it is ten and eleven feet deep. The summer depth in the main body of the lake varies from two feet to six feet. The gradual filling in of the lake has been going on from its beginning, but changing farming practices and more pressures from urban developments have speeded up the process.

Gordon Yaeger, an early Post Bulletin outdoor writer, moved onto the lake in 1945. At that time he noted some spots that were 20 feet deep. Even then many people didn't think the lake would last more than ten or fifteen years.

The present lake is best suited for canoes, row boats, small sailboats, paddle boats and wind

surfers. Fishermen still try their luck, especially below the dam. There are no swimming areas or boat rentals at the present time but the park is a very busy place. The winter brings cross country skiing, ice skating and snowmobiling on the lake.

The wealth of trees around the lake, which inspired the original name Lake Shady, has been well preserved and still affords it a rich natural setting. Some of the large, old elms and weeping willows have died but with natural regrowth and some planting of evergreens the lake has retained a heavily grown shoreline. The park is heavy with foliage and affords a beautiful spot for hiking and picnicking. It is still a very "Shady Lake."

The parts of the lake on the west side of highway 52 have suffered most from the heavy siltation, as evidence by the large cattail islands forming there. This section of the lake is now taking on the characteristics of a "wet land." Lake Shady has a very large water shed as the two branches of the Zumbro River draw from 350 square miles in parts of Olmsted, Dodge, Goodhue and Steele counties. For every acre of lake there are 1,200 acres of water shed.

Olmsted County is unfortunate in that it doesn't have a natural lake. The four lakes in Olmsted County: Lake Florence in Stewartville, Silver Lake in Rochester, Lake Shady at Oronoco and Lake Zumbro are all man made reservoirs created by dammed up rivers. They all struggle with similar problems of excessive soil erosion. These are all county wide problems. Like many other things in our natural environment society must come to recognize their value and conscientiously work towards their preservation.



