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Sudlow's among Lake Wawasee 'pioneers'

By MARTHA STOELTING
Staff Writer

The Sudlow family that Anna Rex became a part of when she married Johnny Sudlow has experienced quite a history at Lake Wawasee. His grandfather, Charles A. Sudlow, was one of the earlier residents of the lake and was developing Papakeechie Lake just before his untimely death.

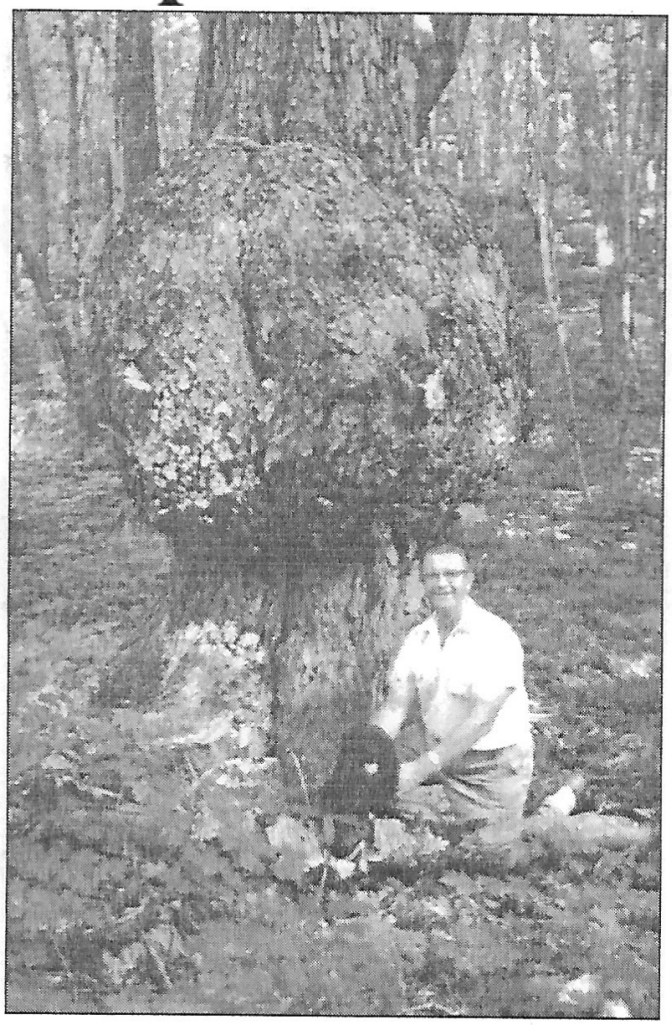
He had purchased the land just east of Col. John Vawter's property along what is now Vawter Park Road. It extended well into what is now Highland View Gardens. The family's summer home had been the Markey farmhouse, which sat upon the property now owned by Mike DeWitt, while Russell and Mary Anderon's house is where the carriage house was. The farmhouse was one of very few located on the lake and was purchased by Sudlow in 1890.

Eli Lilly in his "Early Wawasee Days" has this to say about him, "The man who built the (Papkeechie) dam and created this beautiful little lake, and who was also largely responsible for building the little Episcopal church on the south shore of Lake Wawasee, was Charles A. Sudlow, who had been born in Surrey, England coming to the United States at the age of nineteen."

According to Anna Sudlow, the patriarch of the Sudlow family in the United States was a prominent businessman who settled in Indianapolis where he was an executive for the Interstate Life Insurance Company. He came to Wawasee with the Lilly and Vawter families, and others from Indianapolis and other central Indiana towns, who were considered "pioneers" of lake living.

Sudlow and his fellow investors had big plans for Papkeechie according to Anna Sudlow. After the dam was built making one larger lake from several smaller ones, plans were in the works for an 18-hole golf club to be built adjacent to it. Lots were to be much larger than what they ended up being.

Unfortunately, Charles Sudlow died unexpectedly at what is now considered a young age. The other partners split the property into smaller lots. However, his vision is evident to anyone who views the picturesque Papakeechie.



CREATIVE INSPIRATION — John Sudlow is shown next to an oak tree with a large burl he crafted into spectacular doors when he remodeled the home he and Anna purchased in 1965. (Photo provided)

Arthur Sudlow, John's father, helped to build what she calls "the state house" and ponds for the fish hatchery. Husband John loved the lake his whole life. His family had come to live at Wawasee year round, which is why he was attending Syracuse High School where he and Anna met.

Sudlow and the second Eli Lilly were friends. Lilly even mentions him in his book as follows, "His (Charles') grandson John Sudlow is the prominent and helpful contractor and friend of many cottagers around the lake."

John Sudlow helped Lily with his book and Anna Sudlow has a treasure trove of materials, photos, deeds, abstracts and other historical items stored away. She refers to it as "Johnny's things" and her grandson John Heckaman, who shared an interest in local history, will one day have them. "I don't get into them," she adamantly exclaims.

Of Eli Lilly, she notes he was one of several who stopped by the pier shop from time to time to visit. "We had some very good business mentors. Mr. Lilly was so nice, humble and gracious and dedicated to his friends," she explains.

The young couple had gotten into the pier business because John had come up with a new idea on how to make piers. Today, it is in its third generation of family ownership and is known to all as Sudlow's Pier Shop.

Next installment will visit with some other people pertinent to local lore that Anna Sudlow knew.