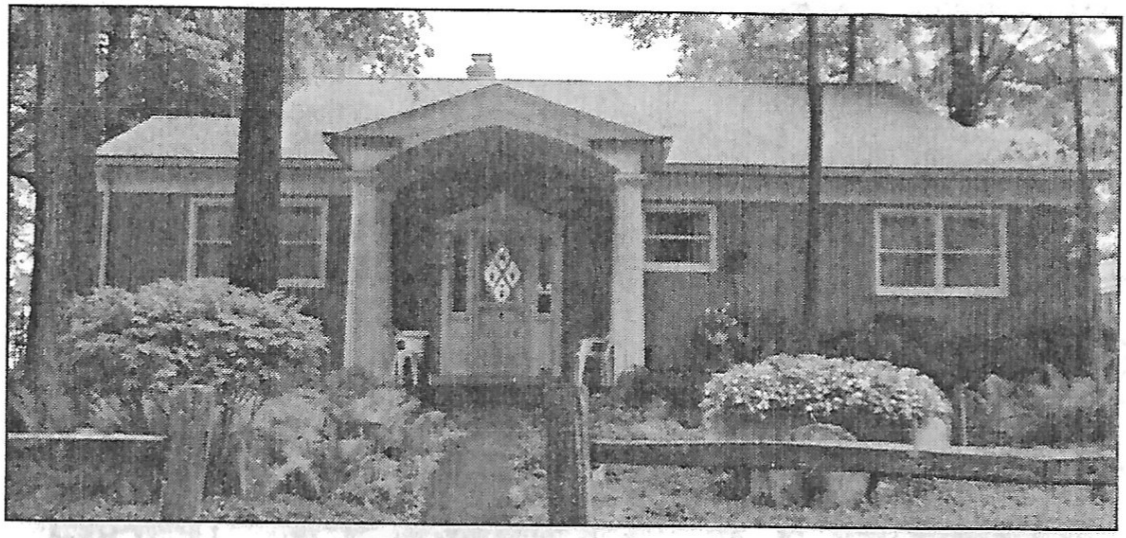

FAMILY HOME — This is the home of John and Anna Sudlow as it appears today. Much remodeling was done by the couple when they purchased the dwelling in 1965. (Photo by Martha Stoelting)

Fifth in a series —

Sudlow's home, sweet home

By MARTHA STOELTING
Staff Writer

Many people think where Anna Sudlow lives has been in the Sudlow family a long time. Since the Sudlow family had been coming to Lake Wawasee since the late 1880s, the 40 plus years John and Anna Sudlow and then Anna have occupied the home doesn't seem to be so long.

The original property was further on down Vawter Park Road near All Saints Episcopal Church. The current Sudlow home was acquired through what might be described as fate or divine intervention.

It was among the first cottages built in what was called Vawter Park Village by Ovid D. Butler. Indianapolis's Butler University is named after his father. The elder Butler was the major person in getting what was originally known as North Western Christian University started.

In his book "Early Wawasee Days" Eli Lilly noted other early pioneers of Vawter Park were the Cowgills, Oran Dunn, the Fargo family, Dr. Graystone, Harry and Sherman King, the McCullochs, E.C. Miller, professor N.F. Morrow, the Lutz family and James and Carrie Norris. She was a Vawter and a cousin of the developer John T. Vawter.

Others who settled in the area included the John Ragsdales, Fred P. Rusk, I.N. Ritchie, the Stits and, of course, the Charles A. Sudlow family.

The younger Butler was the treasurer of the group who formed the Syracuse Water Power Company, which kept Wawasee and Syracuse lakes from being drained to much smaller sizes. Again according to Lilly, this idea had surfaced with a group of farmers in the 1880s. They owned swampland around the lakes and to drain it and use it for farming. They had attempted to get control of the dam at Syracuse. By 1895 the water company was formed by the B & O Railroad, some citizens of Syracuse and the lake protested to prevent that from happening. Eventually, the town took over this company.

Butler also won first place in the very first regatta of the Wawasee Yacht and Canoe Club which was held in June, 1890. His boat is reported to have been made of cedar wood and was 11 feet long. The next two runners-up had vessels of sassafras and split bamboo.

One day in 1965 according to Sudlow, the owner of the cottage in question called John Sudlow and said to come over and to bring Anna. She was Mrs. Carlos Rucker and she was the younger Butler's daughter. When the couple got there, Rucker asked if they would like to buy her house.

"We were shocked and amazed and so touched," explained Sudlow. John verified no one in the family wanted the property and within an hour all the details were worked out. Local attorney Laucks Xanders came out and drew up the paperwork.

Xanders, who just recently died, will be remembered by many as quite the character. Talk about someone with great stories. He lived in Syracuse all his life. His children Chris Trame and George Xanders are still Syracuse residents, Chris year around and George divides his time between Cincinnati and Bonar Lake.

Work began on redoing the place. The floor plan was changed. "If I was going to be in the kitchen, I thought I should have a lake view," Sudlow chuckled. Both the Sudlows did much of the work themselves and it was a labor of love. She kept an album of the remodeling process.

"Johnny just loved it here and his wish to die at home was fulfilled on Nov. 3, 1993," explained Sudlow. His handiwork is still evident throughout the home. One of his last requests was Anna stay in the house. "So far, so good," she said, knocking on wood.

Next week will bring the final installment in this series.