

A DAM IS BUILT

The saga of the Kangaroo Lake dam, located at the southeast end of the lake, began in the late 1920's. A dam had been built around 1922, but it had seen better days – it constantly leaked, developed holes and was too narrow. In 1927, lake residents complained that the water in the lake was very low, and it was obvious that holes in the dam needed to be plugged yet again. However, the dam was on private property, and the owner, Mr. M., said that before they could come on his property to make repairs, Heins Creek (which goes from the dam to Lake Michigan) must be cleaned out, trees and brush cut and dead trees removed from the dam to Highway 57. This was accomplished and the flow of water down Heins Creek was definitely improved.

Mr. K. from Baileys Harbor agreed to repair the dam for \$75, plus another \$15 had already been spent on the dam. As there were 30 cottages on the lake, the cost could be covered if every owner donated just \$3. It took a while to get the money, as some couldn't or wouldn't pay anything, but some paid extra and the repairs were made.

Then in 1932 repairs were needed again as the "east wing" was weak. However, Mr. S. and his son had already started to plan and work on having a new dam built on Kangaroo Lake. They wanted the CWA or WPA (federal agencies in operation during the Great Depression) to fund and build the dam. Mr. M., owner of the dam property, didn't want a new dam constructed. In any case, the funding fell through. Meanwhile, the dam was in constant need of repair.

In 1934, Mr. M. was approached again about building a new dam on his property. He said the dam could be built, but that he would own it. The powers that be, said "Uh, uh, not gonna happen! Either the KLA or Baileys Harbor must own it." So Mr. M. said the price of the land under the proposed dam would be \$500. At that time the going price for land on the lake was \$3 to \$8 a foot. But this was, once-in-a-lifetime chance to have a new dam constructed by the federal government, so Baileys Harbor and the KLA decided to go for it. Baileys Harbor would own the property and the dam. The town paid \$200 and the association \$165 toward the land purchase, which left about \$135 still due. Fortunately, Mr. M. was willing to wait a year or so for a final payment from the association.

Finally, in January 1937, the KLA received notice that dam construction by the WPA would begin in several weeks. But the WPA needed start-up money within two weeks or the deal would fall through. Baileys Harbor Township needed to give the WPA "several hundred dollars" and the KLA share was \$200, so members were asked to pay their \$5 dues for 1937 and also 1938, immediately. And they did! The money was raised and the work began. The WPA guaranteed the new dam would last 10-20 years without repairs or attention. A road had to be built from Highway 57 down to the dam in order to bring in supplies. So trees were cut and bark from the cedar trees layered on the temporary road. A tent was put up, near the dam, for use by the WPA. It was thought that winter would be the best time to build a dam, as the water would be down and the lake frozen. A cofferdam was built, supplies gathered and the project was started.

This is "water over the dam" and probably shouldn't even be mentioned, but Baileys Harbor decided that the Baileys Harbor Town Hall should be built by the WPA, first. So work stopped on the dam. Near the end of 1937 or the beginning of 1938 construction began again and the dam was finally completed. Seventy-five years later, it's still in great condition. Information about the dam came from old correspondence and from several senior citizens who watched the goings on when they were kids.