

. . . AND SOMETIMES THEY EVEN NAMED THEIR BOATS (PART II)

Like their cottages, the Douglas Lakers also gave names to their boats, whether these boats were stately Chris-Crafts or everyday row boats. And, once again, multiple sources of inspiration for those names can be found.

More than a few Chris-Crafts have plied the lake through the years, well-loved boats that have brought many years of pleasure to the families of their owners. Two of the earlier ones, which belonged to the Todds and the Colbys, next door neighbors on Bentley Point, dated back to the 1930s. The Todd's Illinois was acquired in about 1930, just about the same time as John Colby purchased his own, which was called the Indiana, a title that called to mind the name of his cottage, named the Indiana Cottage after the family's home state. Not too many years thereafter, in about 1941, William Fleming, Jr. added yet another such boat to the Douglas Lake fleet. In time, both the Colby and the Todd boats were replaced with newer Chris-Crafts. The second Colby boat was acquired around 1950 and was dubbed, not all that surprisingly, the Indiana II, a pattern continued by the Todds in about 1960, when the Illinois II came to the lake. The Todd boat has since been sold. However, the Indiana II is still owned by the Fangman family, although it has remained in storage the past few years. So, too, does the MEE MEE, the affectionate nickname given to the Fleming/Mercke/Eberhardt boat in memory of Jeanie Lou's Aunt Jean Foster Fleming, the sister of her mother Louise Fleming Mercke. Although not used this past summer, it has cruised the lake for most of the summers that it has belonged to the family.

Many of our lake families have used wooden launches, which have tended to have varied and interesting names. A not-uncommon pattern was to name a boat after a member of the family, as was the case with one of the earlier launches on the lake belonging to Bill Hill, who had sold his summer cottage to Fred Colby in 1917. Fred acquired the Hazel Hill, named for Bill's wife Hazel, at the time he purchased the cottage. Later, however, his son John Colby, Sue Fangman's father, sold that boat to Fritz Robert's family, who continued to use that name during their ownership of the boat.

Betty Young, in her interview some years back, recalled another piloted launch named The Peggy, which, according to her, had belonged to "Grandpa [William] Fleming," whom she described as "the Commodore of the Douglas Lake Fleet."

Charles Nutting, who had built one of the earlier north shore cottages in 1912, was another owner of a wooden launch, this one having been named Old Gold, in honor of the University of Iowa, where he had been a professor of zoology.

Some years later, the family of Graham Paton acquired an inboard launch that they named the Marion, presumably in honor of his mother, who shared that same first name. Another wooden craft, this one a Thompson, was also named for members of a family --- the Butler family -- using the first few letters of each first name to create the Be-Su-Ja-Sal honoring daughters Betsy, Jane, and Sally. The source for the “Su” designation was not identified, however.

Two of Sue Rockwood’s wooden boats have also joined this list. According to those who knew her, she had a penchant for naming just about anything, including her boats. One was her wooden Lyman, which she christened The Rocky, based upon her last name. The second boat, this one a Thompson, had the much more fanciful moniker of Lemonade. According to a neighbor, this latter boat was so named because of its bright yellow color.

Even row boats could not completely escape the naming trend, as witnessed by The Orange Crush, owned by the Berleskey family. Although not explicitly stated, one has to suspect that its color was orange, which is only a guess. No such guessing is necessary regarding the Bypass IV, a Thompson rowboat that was repaired, repainted, and refitted by Graham Paton during his recovery from open heart surgery. It is pretty clear where that name came from.

Two of my favorite stories relate to a couple of the older boats on this lake. The first of these two was also a Paton boat.....a steel-hulled row boat named Mike that may have rusted a bit over the years but somehow managed to stay afloat, even after having the motor ripped from its rear in a towing incident while rescuing a stranded boater. Although the motor was never recovered from its watery tomb despite the heroic efforts of neighbor John Colby, the boat remained in service until it was finally disposed of by Howard Brill. The second galvanized steel rowboat had been acquired by Bob Waggener and was dubbed Old Ironsides. As explained by son Joe Waggener, Old Ironsides had seen service at North Woods Camp many years earlier. Once in Waggener hands, however, it was fitted with a sail and used to sail about the lake in its second incarnation.

Other sailboats were also tagged with interesting and imaginative names, as with The Red Submarine, an old wooden Lightning purchased by Linda Orlow's father. When describing that boat some years back, she left the distinct impression that the name chosen had something to do with the fact that the boat, which was red, tended to leak and required rather constant bailing.

Another Lightning belonged to the Halls, the uncle and aunt of Jim Osgood. At the time, their fiberglass Lightning was part of a sailing fleet that eventually numbered 11 or 12 vessels owned and operated by various north shore families, including the Halls, the Eddys, the Cranes, the Patons, the Youngs, the Olsavers, the Peters, and the Osgoods, who participated in regular Saturday races during the summer months. The Halls had named their Lightning Ursa Major and the accompanying dinghy Ursa Minor, a totally charming reference to celestial navigation, since Polaris, or the North Star, used by northern hemisphere sailors, can be found in Ursa Minor [the Little Dipper].

Although there was not much information available concerning this next boat, it was clearly one of the fastest racing boats on the lake in its day. The name of the boat was The Red Devil and its driver, Irving Crane, brother of Rick Crane, was himself a bit of a dare devil. In time, it was sold by Irving to the Gardners.

One final boat comes to mind when speaking of named boats around the lake. It is The Island Queen, a name that may be reminiscent of a certain ferry in Martha's Vineyard but which also quite accurately describes its home base, on Pells Island, where it spends its summers ferrying owners Greg and Chris Ruda back and forth to the mainland or around the lake for pleasure.

And one final thought on the naming trend. As it turns out, cottages and boats were not the only entities that were accorded names through the years at Douglas Lake. From time to time, even lowly outhouses were deemed worthy of such honor. The names of a few of those interesting outbuildings have been identified from time to time. For instance, the Pattison family named its outhouse Uncle John. And the Miller family (the relatives of Joann Miller Hiles) dubbed theirs Aunt Sadie. But one of the funnier ones belonged to the Todd family. According to Ferris Todd, their outhouse was

referred to as the room without a phone. One suspects, however, that none of the above mentioned buildings is currently used for its original purpose. Not so on the island, however, where electricity was not uniformly available. The Ruda family, with two outdoor “facilities” plus an indoor version for the little ones, have named their three bathrooms Billy, Bob, and Billy Bob, respectively. Since real deal indoor plumbing is on the agenda for next spring, however, one suspects that Billy, Bob, and Billy Bob will soon be only distant memories.

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