

Time tracs

by Jim Ingram

The Lake Orion Dragon

Editors Note: Long-time Lake Orion resident Jim Ingram has studied the history of the area for many, many years. He will be writing a frequent column sharing his research.

Watch out for those dark waters. Legend has it that a sea serpent lives in the depths of Lake Orion.

The hair-raisin' tale began in the spring of 1894 when two ladies first spotted the monster while fishing from a dock. As the weeks went by it was seen again and again. And as the story grew, so did the sea serpent.

It was finally described as being black with a head as large as a yearling calf. No ears were visible, but in their place was a pair of jet black horns -- its slimy, scaly body being 30 to 40 feet in length.

The citizens of Lake Orion took a great deal of kidding from the Detroit daily newspapers who advised them to drink more well water in the future and lay off the hard stuff.

The serpent continued to be sighted by a variety of people. One of those was Mrs. Vincent Brown who sighted the monster while fishing from a rowboat with her two young nieces.

When the creature appeared, the brave Mrs. Brown fought him off by beating him on the head with a board. This didn't discourage the dragon and she rowed frantically to shore amid the screaming terrors of two frightened girls.

The real story...

The real story is told by Mrs. Gladys Van Wagoner who bought the house at 312 South Broadway (now the Georgetown Professional Building across from LS Foods) in 1942.

It was told to her by John Miller, the son of the family that owned the house in 1894. John swears it was his younger brother Charles "Tut" Miller who being bored in the summer of 1893 began thinking of what he could do to cause some excitement in Lake Orion.

He worked laboriously sewing heavy cloth that would cover wire rings which attached to the wooden base of a sea serpent. The body was then filled with cotton and newspapers and then painted to resemble a dragon.

The base was attached to railroad coupling links and the monster was lowered into the lake with a wire leash attached. It could be raised or lowered about 200 feet from shore by "Tut" concealed in the Miller's boathouse.

Whether this story, which has been told in Lake Orion for almost 100 years, is fact or fiction is up to you to decide.

No doubt "Tut" Miler would smile more at its longevity than he did when he instilled fear in the hearts of unsuspecting residents.

Today, the Lake Orion High School sports teams are named the "Dragons" for the monster of the lake.