

PORTAL

to the Past

Exploring the Depths of Lake Murray

By Williesha Lakin

Beneath the rippling waters of South Carolina's Lake Murray, beyond the wake of a passing pram, is a history as rich and deep as the lake itself. Young sailors rounding a set of buoys may be unaware of the tales this manmade lake holds.

Originally an 18th century Dutch settlement, Robert E. Lee's Confederate Engineering Corps planned to dam this farming land off during the Civil War.

In the early 20th century, ideas of what to do with the area came and went with the Saluda River breezes. After the ownership of area power companies merged, the dream of engineer William S. Murray came into being. His goal was to harness the power of the river to create hydroelectric power in the Dreher Shoals region.

With some coaxing, the project relocated 5,000 residents. Construction

began in 1927, providing much needed work during the Great Depression. Eager laborers from across the country were paid 50 cents a day in the pre-bulldozer era to create what would then be the world's largest earthen dam.

Murray, a Utica, N.Y. native with a towering presence at six feet, eight inches tall, designed railway passages and barges using hydraulic hoses to move the sand and timbers needed. Three years later, the 1.5-

25 - didn't make it through these training exercises and were lost in the murky depths. In September 2005, a dive team retrieved one aircraft 62 years after it was lost.

Also buried beneath the waters are graves and Indian artifacts, fossils dating from 175 million years ago, and 44 different species of turtles, along with more than 30 varieties of fish.

As slowly as a South Carolina summer's day, the activity grew around the lake. Folks rented boats to cruise or brought their own to race. The first regatta for what is now the Columbia Sailing Club launched on Labor Day weekend in 1957.

Five decades later, the area is known for million-dollar homes and a buzzing summer season. "We try to maintain more stable levels for people to live on and people to recreate on," Yannity says.

The original dam is now used as a reserve dam by SCANA. A recent multi-



Today, Highway 6 between Lexington and Irmo runs on top of this gate structure

SCANA Corp.

By the Numbers

- 14 - Miles in width of the lake at widest point
- 41 - Miles in length
- 53 - Weight in pounds of record striped bass caught in lake
- 99 - Acres the dam itself covers
- 358 - Feet mean sea level at its highest
- 520 - Miles of shoreline
- 2,323 - Number of graves removed to make room for dam
- 50,000 - Acres of land the lake covers
- 100 million - Feet of lumber used to create original dam
- 763 billion - Gallons of water the lake holds

mile long, 208-foot wide Saluda Dam was complete and the waters of Lake Murray slowly elevated to 290 feet.

Initially, there were few recreational activities in and around the lake and the area's 64 islands, mostly due to the wavering lake levels. Many of these islands, even today, are uninhabitable.

"Back then we didn't control the lake levels as we do now," says Robert Yannity of SCANA (www.scana.com), current operator of the dam and the area's electric and gas utility. There may have been fishing and boating in the area, "but people had to be well aware of the fluctuations that could happen."

A local sailing club was founded in the 1930s but disbanded during World War II when B-24 and B-25 bomber pilots used the area's islands as practice targets. Several planes - some estimate as many as

This arch conduit under the dam's largest tower carried the Saluda River's flow during construction



SCANA Corp.

Timeline

- Early 1800 - Rock House built to divert early riverboat traffic around the 20-foot rapids and as a residence for the canal's lockkeeper
- 1912 - Talks of building a dam begun but abandoned to create one at the Bear Creek site on Broad River
- 1925 - With power changing hands in the industry, engineer William S. Murray proposes a combined Bear Creek/Dreher Shoals project
- Sept. 21, 1927 - Construction on the "world's largest earthen dam" begun
- 1930 - Construction completed and first 10,000 kilowatts of electric power delivered to Duke Power
- 1957 - Columbia Sailing Club founded
- 1958 - McMeekin Station, a coal-fired plant, begins using the lake to cool water for its turbines
- 2004 - To keep up with the latest earthquake protection standards, construction of a \$275 million back-up dam begins
- 2005 - Work on the back-up dam completed and B-25C bomber retrieved from the depths

million dollar upgrade to maintain earthquake standards included a back-up dam that has significantly altered the landscape of the area.

Crossing over the bridge that links Irmo to Lexington only gives a brief glance of the beauty of the lake and its dam. It takes a bit of digging - or diving - to reveal all of its secrets. 🚧



Action from last November's Lake Murray Sailing Club fleet championships

Club Corner

CSC Easter Regatta Sails Into Fourth Decade

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The 50-year-old Columbia Sailing Club hosts its 40th Easter Regatta April 5-8 on Lake Murray.

For the past two decades, the regatta has been raced in J/24s, growing into one of the biggest annual events of that international class. Last year, boats entered from a dozen states. This year, the race may prove even more popular. Not only will it be the J/24 Southeastern Regional Championship and a qualifying regatta for the 2008 J/24 World Championship in Porto Rotondo, Italy, but many teams will use it as a warm up for the April 18-21 U.S. National J/24 Championship in Jacksonville, Fla.

As the first team to ever win the back-to-back Easter Regattas, the Rochester, N.Y.-based team aboard Mike Ingham's boat Brain Cramp will again be the one to beat.

Two dinners, happy hours and various other social race events will take place in the CSC clubhouse, described by members as exuding "shabby warmth." Those members voted to demolish the clubhouse after this year's race and build a new one to go with the new docks installed in the past two years.

Visit www.columbiasailingclub.org/easter for full details of the event.

Cool Products and Book Reviews

By Gadget Girl



Water Filter



Camco's CX90 filters can be connected directly to a water hose, allowing you to filter as you fill your water tanks. With a high flow rate of 2.5 gallons per minute, this won't take long. The see-through exterior mount filter allows you to see when it is time to clean or change the element.

The renewable ceramic cartridge surrounds a bed of activated carbon and a copper-zinc element for bacteria control. This eliminates chlorine, cloudiness, bad tastes and odors, filtering contaminants down to .9 microns. The element is contained in an unbreakable UV stabilized canister. The cartridge can be cleaned with a light scrub from an abrasive pad or replaced as needed and lasts up to one year. Costs around \$45 with replacement cartridges \$23.

Because the filter eliminates chlorine, if you do use it for filling your tanks you should add bleach to them. A teaspoon for each 10 gallons of water is recommended.

Also available is the CX300 filter (around \$90) for interior use between the tank and sink. It includes faucet and mounting hardware. By eliminating the need for bottled water, it could lead to big savings in the long run. Designed for RVs, these filters may not be available in marine stores yet. Visit www.camco.net for details.

Camco is based in Greensboro, N.C.

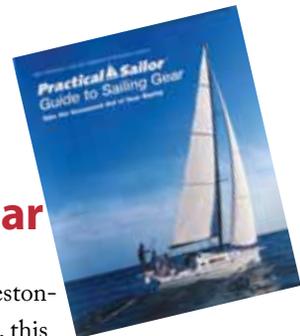
Water Music



Freestyle Audio's waterproof MP3 player could be the answer if you've been wondering how to safely jam to Jimmie aboard your sunfish or in the cockpit on a damp day. Shockproof and submersible to 10 feet, the lightweight unit actually floats and is supplied with waterproof earbuds.

They are just about fool-proof to operate, as the simple controls harken back to the days of the Sony Walkman with stop, play, forward or back. There is no display other than a status LED, which does mean there is no way to change the play order once you've uploaded the files to the player. The sealed internal battery is charged by connecting to your computer using the supplied USB cable. Starting at around \$140 for 256 MB. Visit www.freestyleaudio.com for details.

Practical Sailor Guide to Sailing Gear



Edited by Charleston-based Dan Dickison, this book stands out for a few reasons. The contents are compiled from years of reviews in Practical Sailor magazine; prices are quoted for the reviewed items, so the reader can take cost into account; and Practical Sailor's policy of accepting no commercial advertising means they focus exclusively on