

# OUR LOCAL ICON

*by Andrew Kraft*

Today, everyone knows about our local icon, Willie the Walleye. What many don't know, however, is how he came into existence and how his reputation has grown to what it is today.

One day a local fisherman decided to take a day off from work to spend a day out on the water. It was a glorious day with the sun shining and the water as calm as glass. The fisherman, Lake Woods, was known for his superior fishing abilities and his knack for being out on the water. Woods thought that he would try an old fishing hole that he had visited every day since he was a small kid. He usually had pretty good luck while fishing in this hole but nothing spectacular had ever been caught.

As he approached the hole, Woods rigged his line with a small jig and a shiner. He lowered the anchor and released the bait to the lake bottom and waited patiently. After fifteen minutes or so, Woods had a couple of bites, nothing too big. Half an hour had gone by and Woods was becoming impatient. As he thought about leaving to return home for lunch, Woods felt something brush up against his line. Woods thought nothing of it at the time. He assumed that it was just a log passing beneath the boat.

As Woods began to grab for the reel to head out, the pole jerked tremendously. With one hand on the pole, Woods barely managed to hold on. The line started peeling from the reel as the large object darted off in the distance. Woods immediately pulled the anchor and started up the motor. He knew that in order to land the monster he would have to tire it out by chasing after it.

As Woods caught up to the enormous fish, the dorsal fin surfaced from the water. Woods couldn't believe what he was looking at. This fish had to have been 40 feet long, thought Woods. How could it be possible?

Woods was fortunate enough to get the monster to the side of the boat to get a good look at it. With no camera, Woods admired the fish and looked in its eye. The fish appeared to have winked at him, as Woods stared in amazement.

Woods sped off to town to tell of the magnificent occurrence. When he reached town, Woods explained to as many people as he could about the once in a lifetime catch, but nobody believed him. Years went by and Woods continued to hold the memory as if it had happened only yesterday.

Then in the year 1959, reports began emerging about sightings of a large fin protruding from the lake's surface. No one could believe this mysterious occurrence. In order to hold the memory and excitement of the local beast, the townspeople decided to construct a replica of the wall-eye and decided on a fitting name, Willie. Ever since, Willie has continued to swim the waters of Lake of the Woods.