



Damming the Osage: The Conflicted Story of Lake of the Ozarks and Truman Reservoir

Leland Payton, Crystal Payton

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Only fragments remain of the native prairies of the upper Osage watershed. It has been two centuries since the warrior culture for which the river is named, and who maintained the buffalo grasslands by fire, was pushed west by displaced eastern tribes and land-hungry Americans. Two high dams have turned the main stem of the river into huge reservoirs. Leland and Crystal Payton find the tale of these transformations compelling, but turbulent. In journals of soldiers, explorers, and missionaries and in old newspaper accounts and court documents, they discovered a cast of passionate and sometimes doomed personalities.

DAMMING THE OSAGE is also a record of banking fraud, slush funds, and governmental misdeeds. Romanticism's penchant for hyperbole, Leland and Crystal Payton found, was not confined to mythic stories of Osage Indians. Brochures put out by the US Army Corps of Engineers laud the sterile, banal landscape created by dams as a natural paradise.

If changed by development, the authors found the present Osage valley landscape expressive. Illustrated with hundreds of color photographs, period maps, and vintage images, this book tells the dramatic saga of human ambition pitted against natural limitations and forces beyond man's control.

Wars have been fought over water since ancient times. *DAMMING THE OSAGE* chronicles efforts to develop the Osage River and the forces, both natural and political, that opposed its improvement. Before the Louisiana Purchase, the French and Spanish were thwarted in their effort to colonize the region by the powerful Osage Indian tribe. When the Americans arrived, efforts through engineering to make the river useful began, ultimately leading to a series of massive dams and reservoirs. This new 304 page book with 435 color illustrations weaves together tumultuous stories of centuries of conflict over how to exploit this important resource. Much of ecological, scientific and cultural value has been lost in the process.

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