



*Nebraska History* posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: Historic Sites in Missouri Valley Reservoir Areas

Full Citation: Merrill J Mattes, "Historic Sites in Missouri Valley Reservoir Areas," *Nebraska History* 28 (1947): 161-175

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1947HistoricSites.pdf>

Date: 5/16/2017

Article Summary: The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the creation of over a hundred dams on the Missouri River and its tributaries. This project had important benefits, but it threatened historic sites, trails, and other features that provided a physical record of Nebraska's past. Mattes identifies sites that might be lost or changed as new dams were built.

***Scroll Down for complete article.***

Cataloging Information:

Dams Discussed: Fort Randall, Big Bend, Oahe, Garrison

Keywords: Bureau of Reclamation; National Park Service; Historic Sites Act of 1935; Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Study Act of 1936

Photographs / Images: ruins of old chapel at Fort Randall



RUINS OF OLD CHAPEL AT FORT RANDALL

# Historic Sites in Missouri Valley Reservoir Areas<sup>1</sup>

Merrill J. Mattes

## I

The comprehensive program for flood control, irrigation, and hydroelectric power development in the Missouri River Valley, inaugurated by the Flood Control Act of 1944, and sponsored by the United States Corps of Engineers and the Interior Department, Bureau of Reclamation, is a matter of vital interest to the conservationist, the scientist, and the historian, as well as the ranchmen, farmers, and city dwellers who will be personally affected. The inundation or disruption of a vast acreage of river valley land rich in irreplaceable natural, scientific, and cultural values will be an unfortunate but unavoidable result of the proposed construction of over one hundred large dams on the Missouri River and its tributaries, with the creation of extensive reservoirs and a basin-wide network of canals and waterways. It is not within our province to judge the extent to which predicted new economic values will outweigh existing natural, scientific, or cultural values.<sup>2</sup> It is incumbent upon us, however, to appraise these threatened values, to salvage what evidence we can and to record evidence which may be irretrievably lost.

---

<sup>1</sup>Read at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association at Columbus, Ohio, on April 25, 1947. Published by permission of the National Park Service.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of economic values, the reader is referred to the booklet, *Putting the Missouri to Work*, published by the U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Washington, D.C., July 1, 1945. See also, *The Future of the Great Plains; A Report of the Great Plains Committee*, Washington, D.C., December, 1936.

Biologists, geologists, anthropologists, and others seem duly cognizant of their professional obligations and definite steps have been taken or are being planned to survey the Missouri River Basin reservoir areas in their respective spheres.<sup>3</sup> This paper is concerned with the historian's interest in the program, that is, the survey of historic sites, structures, trails, and other tangible features which will be destroyed or the setting of which will be impaired.

The study of the actual ground or physical remains where the dramas of American history were staged is a vital adjunct to the study of documents. The interpretation of historic sites to the public has an important place beside the writing of textbook history for the student. It gives the vital lessons of American history, so essential to good citizenship, tangible shape and emotional impact. Hence it follows that historic sites, as well as timber, mineral, soil and wildlife, fall within the field of "conservation." No price tag would look well upon Independence Hall, Plymouth Rock, or the House Where Lincoln Died. To the patriotic citizen, the Statue of Liberty against the turreted Manhattan skyline does not conjure up more reverence for America than Mount Vernon or the Alamo. The loftiest snow-crowned mountain range is not more truly a part of America than the little hill called "Bunker's Hill" where our flag received its baptism of blood or the Little Big Horn Valley in Montana where Custer and his troopers rode to their doom.

The National Park Service, an agency of the United States Department of the Interior, is intimately concerned with the conservation of historic sites. Most people

---

<sup>3</sup>The Smithsonian Institution, by agreement with the National Park Service, began a preliminary survey of threatened archeological values in the Missouri River Basin in 1946. Progress of this survey has been reported by Dr. Waldo R. Wedel in two articles: "The Missouri Basin Archeological Survey," *Nebraska History*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January-March, 1947; "Prehistory and the Missouri Valley Development Program; Summary Report on the Missouri River Basin Archeological Survey in 1946," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, Vol. 107, No. 6, Smithsonian Institution. April 23, 1947.

think of this organization primarily as the administrator and protector of the fabulous Yellowstone Plateau, the Grand Canyon, Mount Rainier, and other scenic treasures. It is not, perhaps, generally realized that it is also the custodian of over eighty areas which comprise a geographical as well as chronological cross-section of American history. Jamestown, Gettysburg, the First Homestead, Fort Laramie, Fort McHenry, and the Lee Mansion are among the great story spots which have been entrusted to the National Park Service.<sup>4</sup> The protection and interpretation of such nationally significant established areas is its primary obligation. However, there are added responsibilities and commitments, dating from 1935, which brings the Service into the present complex Missouri River Basin picture. These spring fundamentally from two legislative enactments and two basic inter-agency agreements.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 provides legal basis for a systematic inventory of historic and prehistoric sites of national significance, and formulates a policy for the protection of specially designated sites irrespective of ownership.<sup>5</sup> The Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Study Act of 1936, authorized the National Park Service to cooperate with other federal and state agencies engaged in recreational planning. The Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers, while engrossed in construction problems, have shown an understanding of cultural and scientific values which will be impaired by their work, as well as a perception of important recreational possibilities in connection with the new reservoirs. Actual cooperation of the National Park Service with these agencies in the survey of historic, archeologic, and paleontologic sites, as well as in the field of recreational planning, has been enlisted by

---

<sup>4</sup>Alvin P. Stauffer and Charles W. Porter, "The National Park Service Program of Conservation for Areas and Structures of National Historical Significance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, June, 1943.

<sup>5</sup>For a report on progress of the nationwide historic sites survey, see Herbert W. Kahler, "Ten Years of Historical Conservation under the Historic Sites Act," *Planning and Civic Comment*, Vol. 12, No. 1, January, 1946.

cooperative agreements with the Bureau of Reclamation dated January 16, 1945, and with the Corps of Engineers dated March 12, 1945. Both agencies have provided funds to conduct the survey, which is under the general direction of the Regional Director, Region Two Office, of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Missouri River drainage basin, spreading like a huge fan from St. Louis to the Continental Divide, includes all of Nebraska, and substantial portions of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and Missouri, or approximately one-sixth of the land surface of the continental United States. Coursing three thousand miles from the Rocky Mountains, across the great Plains and the rolling prairies, past Indian Reservations, ranchlands, badlands, farmlands, and cities to its junction with the Mississippi, the Missouri River is one of the longest as well as one of the mightiest rivers in the world. The scenic Yellowstone, the fabulous Powder, the picturesque Cheyenne, the mirage-like Platte, and the ram-bunctious Kansas are among the storied tributaries of the "main stem" as it is prosaically called. To those acquainted with the history of the immense territory drained by this river system, it is clear that the so-called "Pick-Sloan" master plan, vastly modifying nature's scheme, will do strange things to the traditional western landscape.

The study of threatened historic values is a disconcertingly huge task, which did not get under way until July 1946. Hence, what we have to report here today constitutes only the faintest outline of a picture which may not be clearly and completely defined for several years.

## II

There is little precedent for the particular type of research involved in the historical analysis of reservoir areas. It is definitely not the same thing as a basin-wide study of major sites. We are given a cluster of areas in each sub-basin, the location of which is determined solely by the recommendations of the hydrologic engineer, and we are asked to determine what sites or features of historical interest, if any, happen to fall within these areas and will be adversely affected; what should be done to

salvage or record the historic evidence; and in what manner historic features might be incorporated in an interpretive scheme or a recreational plan for each reservoir, where public use may justify such development. Several problems arise before we are fairly launched upon the ambitious venture.

Granted that the studies should be limited to sites and features of historical interest, what are the minimum limits of "historical interest?" In its broadest sense, history is the branch of knowledge that records and explains past events, that is, *all events*, however humble, prosaic, remote, transitory, or recent. When a reservoir area is inundated, all traces of the past are obliterated. We do not doubt that an old military post, an old emigrant trail, an Indian battlefield, or an explorer's camp site is noteworthy. But what about the little prairie village, the typical ranch dwelling, the river "ghost town," the abandoned cemetery? Can we rightfully judge that they are not important simply because they are not romantic, picturesque or spectacular; and shall they be obliterated without some attempt at salvage or recording? We recognize the validity of such sites, but the extent of coverage is necessarily controlled by extremely limited funds, personnel, and research facilities, the immensity of the territory to be covered, and the inexorable hanging sword of scheduled dam completions. It may be wise to sacrifice several minor sites in order to do an adequate job on one major site. The role of Solomon in judging what sites must be sacrificed is not a comfortable one.

Analysis of historical values within "X" reservoir area or in "Y" sub-basin is a process quite the reverse of investigating a given historic site "Z" of known importance, location and chronology. Here is a jagged spot on the map, possibly a few thousand square acres, possibly hundreds of square miles in extent, where the existing terrain will be blotted out by a dam, a man-made lake, a chain of canals, pumping stations, syphons, laterals and related works. If the spot is on the North Platte River we may suspect associations with the Oregon-California Trail. If it is on the Missouri River we can be fairly sure that Lewis

and Clark are involved. But, as a rule, unless your historian is a man of ubiquitous knowledge, a glance at a map fails to summon up a very useful picture. Quite possibly reservoir "X" out there in the wilderness has no important or worthwhile associations, but if it is going under water we had better make sure. It may turn out to be an historical bonanza. In any case the research worker has a job ahead of him.

We do not hesitate to draw data from the established fountains of knowledge such as the state historical societies, which have been uniformly and cheerfully cooperative, even when we come up with such dubious inquiries as, "Do you know of anything that ever happened here?", figuratively pointing at some spot out on the Great Plains. Eventually we hope to enlist the aid of local organizations and university groups. Thus far, however, we have had to fall back upon our own resources, a process which involves considerable locomotion, that is, to search for and examine the basic source materials, and to visit the actual scene. General Land Office township plats, Geological Survey quadrangles and base maps, War Department maps, ground-plans, structural data and documents, and archives of the Office of Indian Affairs are among the aids available in Washington, D. C. Government documents, state atlases, encyclopedias, general histories, local histories, biographies, bibliographies, published collections and quarterlies, manuscript and newspaper files, available in varying degrees of incompleteness in various state, municipal and university libraries, require considerable laborious tracing and combing. Finally, armed with maps and research notes indicating what he might expect to find in the neighborhood, the historian sallies forth to the reservoir area or areas, combining as many as possible on one trip. Courthouse records invite inspection, local historians and "old-timers" enjoy being interviewed. Conscience requires that the perimeter and one or more cross-sections of the prospective lake be travelled with one's eyes open, that is, depending on the existence and negotiability of the local road system. A notebook, a camera, and a measuring tape are handy accessories.



Having theoretically completed his studies and his reconnaissance of the area or group of areas, our investigator prepares a preliminary statement on the historical values involved, and makes recommendations concerning their salvage, further recording, or utilization in a recreational development program. The term "salvage" may be interpreted to mean the actual preservation of physical remains, such as relocation of a structure above the high water line, or an excavation project to recover cultural objects and to plot sub-structural data. The process of recording involves, of course, not only the gathering and correlation of documentary evidence but photographs, measured drawings and exact maps. The threatened values may not be of sufficient magnitude to justify any subsequent interpretive device on the ground, but frequently some recognition is warranted, at least a sign or marker or roadside exhibit at some point where visitors will congregate. Occasionally if the history involved is highly dramatic or an excavation yields an impressive assemblage of historical materials, more extensive interpretive facilities such as an exhibit building or museum or historic house may be the logical and ultimate goal.<sup>6</sup>

Eventually, depending on the factor of relative historic importance or the prospects for heavy visitor use, or both, it may be desirable to prepare detailed narrative reports, amply documented and illustrated, of a given site or group of sites which will serve as a guide to the interpretive planner or simply as a permanent record to be placed at the disposal of students, archivists, antiquarians and state historical societies. The possibility of publishing the Missouri River Basin studies individually as they are completed, or ultimately in combination, always beckons, but the exigencies of basic research work and the prepara-

---

<sup>6</sup>A further object of the historic sites survey in the Missouri River Basin is to supplement the records of the Historic American Buildings Survey, where there may be instances of well preserved notable or typical structures which will be destroyed by inundation. See John P. O'Neill, ed., *Historic American Buildings Survey; Catalog of the Measured Drawings and Photographs of the Survey in the Library of Congress*, January 1, 1938.

tion of the aforementioned preliminary reports, even now far behind construction schedules, place such thoughts for the moment in the realm of reverie.

Although the philosophy and the mechanics of the historical phases of the Missouri River Basin Survey are legitimate topics of discussion, the title of this paper implies that we will get down to specific cases, and reveal to a breathlessly awaiting audience some of the "jewels" which may be lost.

### III

The history of the Missouri Valley may be conveniently, if arbitrarily, divided into three major phases: exploration and the fur trade; emigration and the Indian wars; exploitation and settlement.<sup>7</sup> Significant historic features related to all three phases have been identified, notably within four giant reservoirs totalling over 500 miles in length along the Missouri River proper in the Dakotas, which was the first great transcontinental passage westward. The numerous smaller reservoir areas on the tributary streams do not contain such an impressive catalog of threatened sites, but the historic-geographic sequence of the Great Plains and the Rockies is regrettably to be blotted out at intervals, like shot-gun holes in a "No Hunting" signboard. Even though subsequent hydrologic studies may determine that several of the proposed reservoirs will not materialize and that the total obliteration of certain sites may be avoided, the total Missouri Valley setting will be, for the historian, startingly and in many instances painfully transformed.

At least 50 percent of the significant historic sites affected by water development in the Basin lie within or

---

<sup>7</sup>No major historical work dealing with the Missouri River Basin in its geographical and chronological entirety has yet appeared. There is an extensive bibliography of works relating to the various phases mentioned and to the various limited regions, political subdivisions and river valleys in the Basin. However, the current survey reveals many gaps in the published literature and points to the need for a basin-wide synthesis of studies usually limited by arbitrarily fixed dates or arbitrarily fixed political boundaries.

on the border of the Fort Randall, Big Bend, Oahe, and Garrison projects where colossal earth dams rivalled only by the existing Fort Peck Dam will regulate the flow of the Missouri River in the Dakotas. Except for segments in the neighborhood of Pierre and Bismarck, the immediate Missouri River Valley in these two states will be largely obliterated. The disastrous effect on important local and regional historic and cultural associations along the main channel cannot be over-estimated. The sum total of the loss goes beyond the inundation of individual sites to the disappearance of islands, streams, bluffs, the natural valley itself, America's first continental westward route, which saw the colorful procession of explorers, fur traders, missionaries, soldiers, explorers, emigrants, and settlers who followed by dugout, keelboat, and steamboat in the wake of Captains Lewis and Clark.

If ever a tourist route some day follows the Missouri River northwestward along the margins of the reservoirs, it will, if historical justice and logic prevail, bear the designation, "Lewis and Clark Highway." These explorers are preeminently associated with the Missouri River, the "Big Muddy," the "crazed, irresponsible Titan," the "ruthless, unpredictable Caliban," which ingenious man now proposes to tame and harness. Their epic story will be henceforward confined in large measure to the written record. In South Dakota alone over fifty Lewis and Clark camp sites which have been identified will soon lie many fathoms deep. This is, of course, similarly true of innumerable ancient Indian villages, some of them fortified on an imposing scale, where these and other explorers made the first contacts with the aboriginal inhabitants of the Great Plains. There will be a dampening effect as well on the terrain trod and the landmarks beheld by the Verendryes, Lisa, the Astorians, Catlin, Prince Maximilian, Kenneth McKenzie and other large dimensional and shadowy figures of the past.

The several fur trading posts which were strung along the Missouri in the early nineteenth century have disappeared. The majority of the known sites will be inundated and should be explored before it is too late. Among the

more prominent sites are Loisel's Post above Big Bend, the farthest white man's advance found by Lewis and Clark; Fort Manuel just below the North Dakota line, Manuel Lisa's Post which played a mysterious role in the War of 1812; Fort Recovery on American Island, below Chamberlain, erected in 1822 by the Missouri Fur Company; Fort Kiowa above Chamberlain, a rival establishment of the American Fur Company; Fort George below Fort Pierre, a project of Fox, Livingston and Company in 1842; and Fort Lewis, later Fort Vanderburgh, at Mannhaven, the approximate location of the Garrison Dam. More significant perhaps than any of these posts is Ashley Island above Mobridge, South Dakota, the scene of the Ashley-Leavenworth-Arickara Battle of 1823, which diverted the Rocky Mountain Fur Company traders overland up Grand River, and ushered in a new era of Western exploration.

The Missouri was not only "the main highway of the West. It was also the boundary of the West. It was the base of operation for the long battle which at last won the West." During the mid-nineteenth century, a chain of military posts extended up the river, centers of occupation in territory newly wrested from the Indian. Again time has erased most of the visible evidence, but each site, each one-time symbol of Federal authority in a lawless land, awaits the inquiry of the historian and the archeologist. Fort Abraham Lincoln (1872-1891), Fort Rice (1864-1878) and Fort Buford (1866-1895) will be spared. Fort Yates (1874-1903) may be adequately protected by a dike; but Fort Berthold (1865-1891), originally a trading post, Fort Stevenson (1867-1883), Fort Bennett (1870-1891) and Fort Sully (1866-1894) together with several other minor posts, will apparently be inundated. Fort Randall (1856-1892), established by that hard-boiled campaigner General William S. Harney, and adorned by the presence of the illustrious prisoner Sitting Bull in 1882, will repose un-comfortably at the foot of the mammoth Fort Randall Dam. A few building sites will be buried. The main parade ground area, however, and the lonely picturesque ruins of a chapel building will be safely enclosed while dinosaur-

ian shovels and trucks go about the business of blockading the Missouri.

Indian reservations take up large blocks of land bisected by the Missouri. The impoundment of waters will radically transform the bleak and indolent setting. Substantial strips of land, including agency headquarters, settlements, cemeteries, ceremonial lodges, missions and schools will be affected at the Crow Creek and Lower Brule Reservations at Big Bend, the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations above Oahe, all populated by various branches of Yanktonai and Teton Dakota Sioux, and the Fort Berthold Reservation on the Garrison project, populated by remnants of the Arickara, the Hidatsa and the Mandans. Standing Rock Agency at Fort Yates is apparently safe, but Fort Thompson, Lower Brule, Cheyenne Agency, Promise, Wakpala, Nishu, Elbowoods, and other picturesque Indian towns may have to be relocated. Several surviving Catholic and Episcopal Missions, dating back to the 1870's, are among the historically significant structures which are involved. Notable among these are the Oahe Episcopal Mission above Pierre for which Oahe Dam is named, Calvary and St. Stephen's Missions at Cheyenne River, the St. Benedict and Cannonball Missions at Standing Rock and the Sacred Heart Mission near Elbowoods.

There is a long list of abandoned or "ghost" towns along the Missouri, relics of frontier boom days when steamboats provided the main link with civilization. Many of these sites may soon disappear. LaBeau and Evarts were once prosperous and wide-open cowtowns and shipping centers. White Swan opposite Fort Randall, Forest City opposite Cheyenne Agency, and Winona opposite Fort Yates were typical river resort towns which offered compensation for the severe restrictions of military or Indian reservation life. The site of Whetstone Agency represents an early abortive effort by the government to pacify and domesticate the Plains Indians, who did not take the reservation idea seriously until after the blood-letting of 1876. And we cannot overlook the innumerable steamboat landings, and the well-beaten trails and stage roads which con-

nected the forts, towns, and missions, paralleling the river, or the trails from the East which halted at the Missouri, or those which "jumped off" to the Black Hills and other points West. It is difficult to judge at this time what part, what small fraction, of these structures, ruins, and trails can be properly recorded before the dams are completed and the impounded waters rise.

If history can be interpreted to include that of the present which will soon fade, we cannot leave out of account existing Dakota towns like Wheeler and Oacoma, above Fort Randall, and Sanish, at the foot of Verendrye Hill, or such outstanding ranching layouts as Scotty Phillips' Buffalo Pasture, and the Sutton Ranch, both above Pierre. Neither can we ignore the hundreds of salient geographic features which will disappear, each with their distinctive story or legend. What about the Black Dave's Island, Martha's Island, Dorion Island, Whiskey Island, Farm Island; or Scalp Creek, Garrison Creek, Hermaphrodite Creek, Okobojo Creek, or Big Bend, Little Bend, Mulehead Point, Medicine Rock, and Peoria Bottom? Each and every feature tells of an incident in the journey of Lewis and Clark, or an Indian superstition, or an outlaw rendezvous, or a steamboat wreck, or an obscure bit of violence. Here indeed is material for dozens of theses which will never be written if not undertaken now.

#### IV

We have been discussing the Missouri River and four major reservoirs thereon. That still leaves over one hundred reservoirs in the rest of the Missouri River Basin and the history thereof unaccounted for. At this time, we can afford only a glance at some of the major sub-basins.

Some twenty reservoirs are in prospect on tributaries of the Kansas River. Tuttle Creek Reservoir on the Big Blue will take out a good section of the Oregon Trail. Kanopolis and Cedar Bluff Reservoirs on the Smoky Hill impinge upon the sites of Forts Ellsworth, Harker, and Downer, the Butterfield stage road to Denver, and the Fort Zarah Road, all features of the 1860's, and they contain

many interesting structures composed of native limestone, which appeared in the 1880's. Kirwin Reservoir on the North Fork of the Solomon involves the site of Camp Kirwin (1865) and Fremont's expedition of 1842. Harlan County, Culbertson, Oberlin, Bonny, Enders, and others in a group of reservoirs in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado, on the Republican River and tributaries thereof, have been identified with the route of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express of 1869, the Battle of Prairie Dog Creek in 1860, the Sioux-Pawnee Indian Battle of 1873 at Massacre Canyon, the Cheyenne escape from Oklahoma in 1878, the "last great buffalo hunt," and several military trails and expeditions. Little Republican City and certain interesting homestead structures which will be submerged testify to the interest of the social historian in the reservoir program.

No serious damage to history will apparently be done on the Platte River itself. The main route of the important Oregon-California Trail, the Mormon Trail, and the Pony Express will not be seriously disturbed except by the Kingsley Reservoir in western Nebraska, where the damage has already been done. Fifteen reservoirs in the neighborhood of the three Loup Rivers, draining into the Lower Platte, will affect a few cattle, military, and emigrant roads of minor importance, early homestead installations, and branch line railroads. Amherst Reservoir on Wood River will cancel out the picturesque little village of Amherst. Loretto Reservoir on Beaver Creek will flood the valley where Logan Fontenelle, half-breed chief of the Omahas, was killed by the Sioux in 1855.

Box Butte, Angostura, Deerfield, and other reservoirs in the neighborhood of the Black Hills are tied in with the exploration, the Indian wars, and the gold rush associated with that colorful locality. Blue Horse, Broncho, Heart Butte, and other areas on the Moreau, Grand, Cannonball, Heart, and Knife Rivers in the Dakotas have affinities with the overland Astorians, Hugh Glass, Jedediah Smith and other notable fur traders, several military expeditions against the hostile Sioux, the Bismarck-Deadwood Trail, and incidents of later cattle range and reserva-

tion life. Devils Lake in North Dakota, which is to be restored to an earlier level, is of special interest because of the ring of human settlements, such as Fort Totten, Minnewauken, St. Michael Mission, and Devils Lake City which were originally built on the lake-shore and have been now left "high and dry" by the lake's recession.

In Wyoming and Montana, the Kortez, Anchor, Medicine Lake, and Oregon Basin Reservoirs are among several which will lie in summer grazing country with drastic alterations to the primitive setting which would make the early cow-punchers rub their eyes. "Mountain men" who explored, trapped, and held rendezvous in the high green valleys will be, we hope, remembered when the Popo Agie, the Wind River, Clark's Fork, the Yellowstone, Shield's River, the Beaverhead, the Judith and other streams familiar to them are dammed, this time not by beavers but by men. Jim Bridger and his associates would be surprised, too, to find the Big Horn River down which they once launched their rafts and bullboat flotillas, blocked by the big Boysen Dam. Red Cloud's war-bonneted tribesmen, and soldiers once stationed at perilous old Fort Philip Kearney at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains, would be equally amazed to learn what is planned for nearby Powder River, Piney Creek, and the cobalt blue waters of Lake DeSmet. The survivors of the Hayfield Fight at Fort C. F. Smith would wonder at the huge Yellowtail Dam which will arise nearby at the mouth of Big Horn Canyon. The miners of Diamond City and Confederate Gulch, east of Helena, would hardly recognize the place after the Missouri River is dammed at Canyon Ferry below the Three Forks.

The historian may feel inclined to suggest a policy of selecting reservoir names on the basis of historic or geographic logic. Fort Peck, Fort Randall, Oahe, Heart Butte, and Cherry Creek are happy coincidences. The old "Pathfinder Reservoir" on the Upper North Platte reflects considerable historical imagination; but the "Tiber Reservoir" area in Montana does not adequately suggest the exploration there of Captain Meriwether Lewis in 1806, or



the savage massacre of the Piegans in that neighborhood by Col. E. M. Barker's cavalry in 1870. The field of nomenclature holds out an opportunity to perpetuate some soul-stirring western traditions.

Thus we may paint, albeit crudely and with broad strokes, the role of the historian in the Missouri Valley reservoir program. He appears less like a scholar than a volunteer fireman, sprinting from one blaze to another, in an effort to control the conflagration which is gradually enveloping historic sites. Perhaps we exaggerate. Perhaps the unrecorded disappearance of historic landmarks and guide posts (together with prehistoric, scientific, and scenic features) is a minor thing compared with the benefits of flood control, irrigation and power; but in view of the fact that what is lost will be lost forever, we believe that these things are important and that they offer a challenge, not only to students and specialists, but to all Americans who prize their heritage.