

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Kansas Reservoirs...series

<u>Series#</u>	<u>Issue</u>
1. A Prairie Paradise (Wilson Reservoir).....	Summer 1968
2. Lovely, Lonely Lovewell.....	Autumn 1968
3. Pomona...Garden Spot for Sportsmen.....	Winter 1968
Kanopolis – It Really Started Something.....	Summer 1970
Milford...Sportsmen’s Total Lake.....	July/August 1971
Tuttle Creek Reservoir.....	September/October 1971
Perry Lake...A Page of History.....	January/February 1972

# A Prairie Paradise

By THAYNE SMITH

Whoever makes the final decision on names for Kansas' ever-growing list of large, man-made lakes, doesn't have much imagination. Most bear the names of small cities nearby—Pomona, Kanopolis, Kirwin, Perry, Elk City and a dozen more. One of the newest is no more spectacular than the others in name, but it's creating attention that the others do not possess and can never duplicate.

It, too, has a small city namesake—Wilson—a sleepy village 10 miles from the reservoir, with about 1,000 inhabitants.

With its new dam still showing the marks of construction and its waters not yet to conservation pool level, Wilson is a lake apart.

It could have been given many names, even with local landmarks considered. For instance, there's the Garden of Eden at the nearby city of Lucas, a tourist attraction of some renown. There's also Hell Creek Canyon, which has taken the role of sinner turned saint to form the most beautiful and scenic arm of Wilson Lake.

However, the best bet for the imaginative mind might have been another little city located nearby . . . Paradise. Wilson Lake truly is that—a paradise in the center of Kansas' rolling western prairies.

Less than two years old, Wilson—sired by a dam just a mile long, located between two tall hills in the vast Saline River valley—has a lot to offer.

New, four-lane Interstate 70 highway—one of the nation's busiest east-west routes extending from coast to coast—is 10 miles away, bringing Wilson many hundreds of visitors daily in summer months.

The area is rich in Indian, pioneer and early west history. The lake is located in the center of the state, giving it a unique drawing card among Kansas residents, as well as tourists. A new, wide and scenic state highway—K-232—connects the lake with I-70 and cities nearby. Crossing the top of the dam, the highway give the first-time visitor an eye-catching, col-

orful and breath-taking panoramic view that he wouldn't believe could exist in the area.

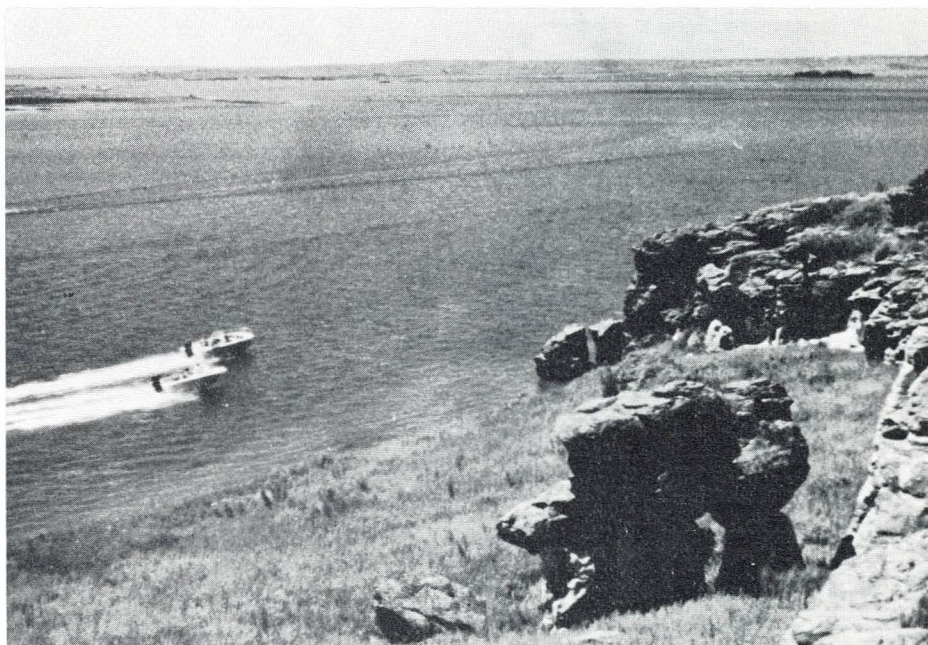
Driving north from Wilson or south from Lucas on the highway, he is surrounded only by flat prairie lands, fields of green sorghums or ripening grain, or lush pastures filled with fat cattle.

Suddenly, the landscape changes, and from either approach, he is confronted with a series of lush, rolling hills. Another mile, as the elevation drops into the ever-hazy and fertile valley, Wilson Lake spreads before him—an azure blue-green, long and narrow body of calm water, nestled between high bluffs and rolling hills, and boasting more than 100 miles of shoreline.

Through the cooperation of several

units of government, Wilson is blessed with five excellent park areas totaling more than 4,200 acres. The most attractive is a 788-acre site on the Hell Creek Arm, developed by the Kansas Park and Resources Authority. The land was leased from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, which constructed Wilson dam as a flood control-recreation-irrigation facility as a cost of \$20 million.

They call it Wilson State Park, but the public long ago dubbed it Hell Creek Park. Regardless, like 17 other parks developed by the KPRA at Kansas lakes, the area provides excellent facilities, including brick and concrete shower-latrine buildings with hot and cold running water, flush-type toilets and modern, clean lavatories; several large "toadstool" concrete picnic shelters with sturdy, newly-painted tables; and wide, concrete boat ramps. Under construction at present are a modern bathhouse, complete with concession, showers and toilets, and a swimming beach; a large trailer park area



**SHEER ROCK BLUFFS** and house-sized boulders along Wilson shores dwarf big speedboats plying nearby waters on north side of lake. Bluff areas, numerous around lake offer excellent fishing.



**HISTORIC CARVINGS**, believed made by members of the Otoe Tribe of Plains Indians, who hunted buffalo in area centuries ago, adorn walls of rock cliff on Wilson Lake's Hell Creek arm. Carvings eventually will be inundated by rising waters.

with water, electricity and sewer connections, more picnic shelters, and many camping sites.

The KPRA, although tax supported, has a \$5 per year resident vehicle park fee, good at any park which it operates, and a \$1 per day out-of-state vehicle charge. Twenty-four hour ranger patrol and daily maintenance of all areas are provided.

Other areas, all under Corps jurisdiction, include Otoe, named after an Indian tribe which often visited the Lake Wilson canyons centuries ago; Lucas, a 1,370-acre park, and Minooka, an Otoe name meaning Good Earth. All provide excellent free camping, picnic and water skiing, swimming and boat-launching areas. Lucas Park has the lake's only concession—a modernistic, large marina, boasting all services—boat sales, rentals and service, snack shop, fishing tackle and supplies, and a trailer park area.

Minimicki Park, a 390-acre site, is reserved for future development.

Although extremely popular with sportsmen, largely because of its

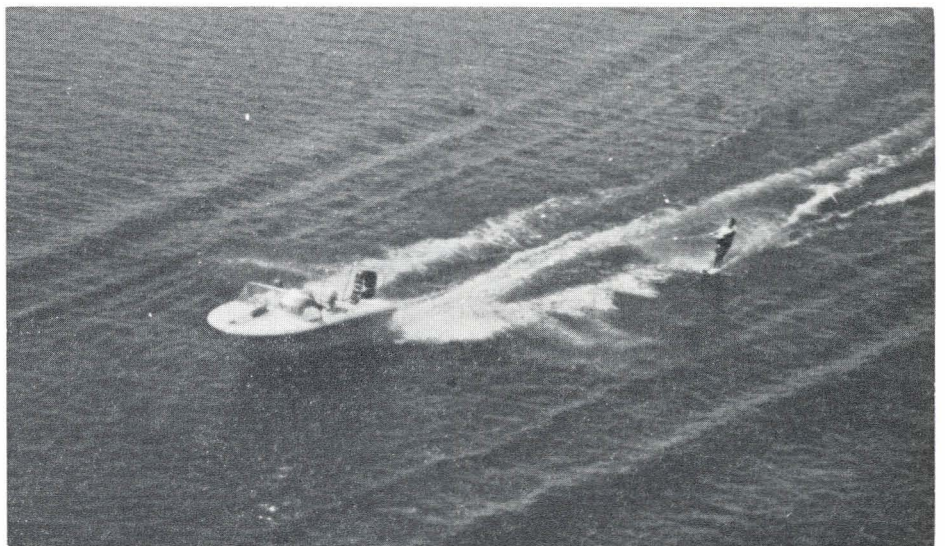
beauty and the fact that camps can be set up at water's edge, Wilson lacks one thing generally associated with outdoor recreation. It has only a scattering of large trees in its parks. There are so few, in fact, that it is often called a "treeless lake." This, however, is a problem which will not

long exist. The Corps of Engineers, through the U. S. Forest Service and Kansas State University, has planted more than 30,000 trees in the area.

The trees are growing rapidly with each passing year. Historians, on studying the problem, believe that trees and the rich buffalo grass in the areas fought a battle for survival for centuries, with the spreading grass finally winning. Some, however, blame herds of buffalo which roamed the area in hundreds of thousands and were hunted by many Indian tribes, as the reason for the "treeless" plains. Others say that raging prairie fires, long before the days of white settlers, devoured the trees and gave the buffalo grass a chance to spread and claim the land.

Wilson can be called unique because of such places as Hell Creek Canyon, too, where in a land dominated by thousands of miles of flat plains, it offers many large, rock-rimmed coves, scenic, red-brown-yellow-maroon sandstone rock bluffs, and many famous Indian carvings.

The carvings, found in spots where the Otoes and other wandering tribes camped while hunting buffalo, are on sharp, steep bluffs. They depict figures of Indian children, a sunrise, and markings symbolic of Indian gods. Many of the carvings have been inundated by the rising waters of the lake. However, some of the most prominent, and most historic, have



**EXPERT SKIER**—Susan Campbell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dave Campbell, Beverly, is a championship skier at age of 10, and spends much of her time during summer on Wilson's waters. Father operates Wilson Marina.

been removed through painstaking work by archaeologists from Kansas colleges and universities, to be preserved as museum pieces.

Some of the carvings remain above conservation waterline, however, and are located in bluffs and rocks which are a short distance from the lake. They may be seen and admired by visitors, although many can be reached only by boat.

There are many other things in the Lake Wilson area to delight the visitor—and especially the sportsman.

Wild flowers abound in the rock

canyons, fertile gullies and grassy pastures.

**Famous stone posts—hand-cut limestone quarried by early-day settlers who used them to hold the barbed wire that turned the plains and prairie into rich cropland—abound. They used stone for fences because trees were not numerous enough for wood posts.**

The many bluffs and rocks are havens for wildlife of many kinds. Often, great horned owls and smaller monkey-faced owls nest in the holes or crags of the rocks, and can be seen

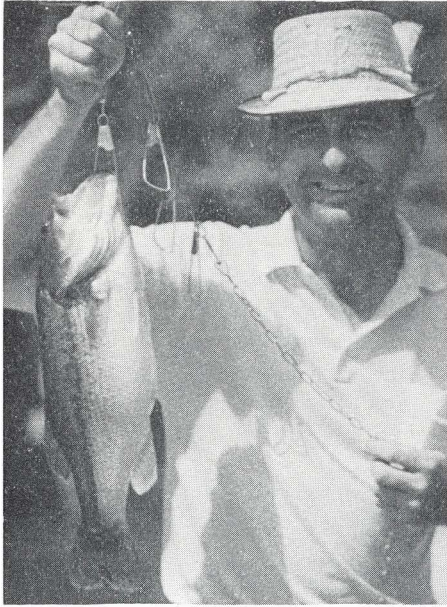
from a boat idling along the bluffs.

For the sportsman, Wilson offers some of the finest hunting and fishing in Kansas, which has become a top-notch state for both in recent years.

The Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission has leased 6,130 acres of rich land on the upper end of the lake for wildlife management and development. It offers unexcelled hunting for ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail (Kansas is one of the nation's leading quail hunting states), both whitetail and mule deer, coyotes and rabbits. The shallow, upper end



SERENE SETTING—"Toadstool" shelters, which have become a trademark of excellent parks of the Kansas Park Authority, dot beautiful Hell Creek Park on south side of Wilson Lake. Marina cove and big bridge are in background. (Photos by Thayne Smith.)



**LUCKY ANGLER**—Richard Mai, Russell, displays 3½-pound black bass moments after hauling it from Wilson Lake on artificial lure.

of the lake also is an ideal area for waterfowl, and excellent hunting can be had from water-based or shoreline blinds. Primary waterfowl species which frequent the lake are Canada, whitefront and snow geese, mallard, teal, pintail, coot and other ducks.

**Fishing is another Lake Wilson asset. In fact, some Kansas Fish and Game biologists flatly predict that it will be the finest of all Kansas lakes for all-around fishing within the next two years.**

The Commission began stocking Wilson waters with various fish when water was first impounded in 1965. In addition, the river on which the dam is located was "home" to several native species, such as white bass, channel catfish, bluegill and several varieties of sunfish.

Because of its high salt content, Wilson waters have been chosen for a state experiment with striped bass. The striper, of course, is an original saltwater fish which has become adapted to fresh water in some southeastern states. Kansas has secured several thousand striper fry from South Carolina and placed them in Wilson. The experiment is still too young to determine if successful.

Outstanding growth and reproduction have been achieved through the state and at Wilson with two other "foreign" fish species—the walleye

and northern pike. Northern, in less than two years, are now more than five pounds, and some walleye, planted as fry two years ago, are more than three pounds. The lake also boasts black bass to five pounds, large crappie, white bass to two ponds, bluegill, and channel catfish in the 10-15 pound class.

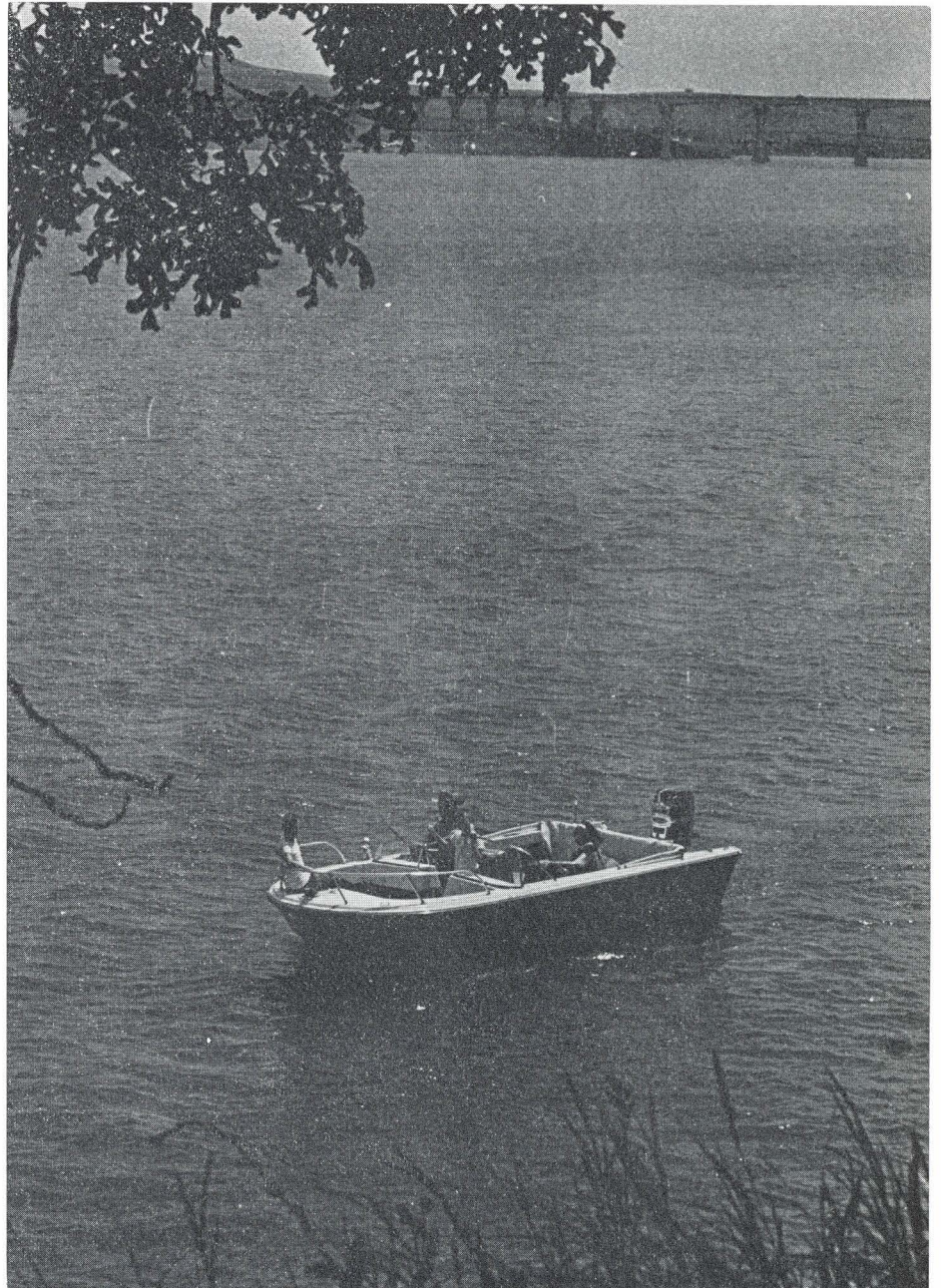
**Many visitors, upon seeing Wilson for the first time, will tell you that it is the most beautiful spot in Kansas.**

Others—but a definite minority, and

understandably most are campers—marvel at Wilson's beauty, but are quick to add that it needs one thing—shade trees.

In fact, there is somewhat of a good-natured controversy going in places like Lucas, Paradise, and the city of Wilson, about whether more trees should be planted around the lake and in the various parks.

Most agree that shade is needed. Some fear, however, that numerous trees might block the view, and spoil all the excellent scenery.



**PICTURESQUE AND TRANQUIL** are the waters of Hell Creek Canyon on Wilson Lake, with big, high bridge in background.

# Lovely, Lonely Lovewell

By THAYNE SMITH

A rainbow of colors from a Summer sunrise danced and skipped on the wake of the big, fast boat as we left the dock and cove at the Lovewell Lake Marina.

A slight breeze chilled the morning air, and a lazy bunch of thunderheads on the eastern horizon played hopscotch with the rising sun.

There were three of us, and we were most eager to round the bend, skirt up the lake quickly and try our luck for walleye at a spot called Blosser Point, named in honor of a man who had constructed a cabin there several years ago.

Our eagerness, really, had been rooted the previous day, late in the evening, when my companion—Doug Boughner of Pratt—answered a ringing telephone in our motel room at nearby Mankato.

“What’s the state record for walleye?” the man at the other end of the line wanted to know. It was Tom Lovewell, operator of the Lovewell Marina. Doug directed the question to me, and I told him it was 10 pounds, nine ounces. Records for state fish are kept and confirmed by my office; therefore, I’m familiar with most of them.

“We’ve got one out here which I think will beat it,” Tom said. “How do I go about weighing and measuring it?”

I told him to bring it to Mankato—a 15-mile drive, and we’d find a state-inspected scales to weigh the fish, and that I would measure it. If a new record, I could confirm it and take photographs on the spot.

In a short time, Lovewell, along with Floyd Stone, Belleville, the lucky angler who caught the big walleye, were pounding on our door. We hustled the fish to the nearby R. K. Shopper supermarket for the final test.

Needless to say, there were a lot of smiles when the big fish pushed the scales to 10 pounds, 9 ounces, an ounce over the old record of 10-8,

held since 1961 by Roy Laster of Hutchinson. Laster’s fish came from the outlet at Kanopolis Reservoir.

The fish weighed and measured, and properly photographed, we visited with Stone for some time about his prowess as an angler, and his luck on Lovewell.

“Far as I’m concerned,” he said, “this is the finest fishing spot in Kansas, and one of the prettiest and best lakes in the Midwest.”

Dr. E. Raymond Galvin, Concordia, Stone’s fishing companion when he caught the big walleye, a man who has fished throughout the continent, agreed. “We’ve taken a lot of fine fish from Lovewell in years past,” he

said, “and this year has been excellent.”

A few days earlier, Mrs. Stone hauled a nine-pound walleye from the same spot Stone took the new record. “I couldn’t let her get ahead of me,” he laughed.

“Yes,” chided Dr. Galvin, “but you would have never landed him if I hadn’t been along to net him for you, and then you wanted to clean him before I talked you into weighing him for a record.” Stone laughed, and nodded, then invited Boughner and myself to come to Blosser’s Cove the next morning to see and fish where “we take the big fish.” We accepted the invitation



**PIONEER MONUMENT**—Tom Lovewell, Jr., operator of the Lovewell marina and concession, looks at monument on lake shore which was erected in memory of his great-grandfather. Entire area around lake is rich in history.

and prevailed on Lovewell to provide a boat for us.

Stone had informed us that the big walleye "are along the ledges, where the depth suddenly drops from about eight feet to 22 feet." You need a depth-finder, he advised, to find the exact spots.

Arriving at the spot, and finding Stone and two companions there ahead of us and fishing, we knew he was right. Back and forth, using a sonar-type, battery-powered depth gauge, Stone maneuvered his boat. We had no way to follow, because he moved quickly and along the rocky edge below.

A couple of hours of trolling in the area proved fruitless for us, but paid off for Stone and his two companions, a nephew, Darrel Stone of Salina, and Jerry Kier. The younger Stone caught a six-pound walleye while we watched, and Kier boated another of about three pounds.

Time beckoned that we return home, despite our strong desires to stay and try to catch one of the big, silvery fishing fish.

We weren't going home empty-handed, however.

Our luck had been good the previous day. In early morning, just as the sun broke on the horizon, we were dropping jigs and small spinners among dead trees and branches in a clear cove on the northwest corner of the lake. We saw only one other boat during a two-hour stint — and its occupant had scored well. He held up two large black bass for us to admire. We did well, too, fishing for crappie.

Using a small beetle-type jig, Boughner landed a hefty one-pounder almost at the start. I followed with one just a little smaller, then connected on a larger one. Lovewell, then Boughner, then myself scored on several in the one-half to one-pound category.

We had chosen this particular time to visit Lovewell for two reasons. The first was because it was Summer and the lake was normal, clear and in all its scenic glory. It is virtually surrounded with endless rolling hills, many of them tree-covered, and bright, green meadows. Coves are

## Second in a Series On Kansas Reservoirs

filled with stately, picturesque dead trees, which provide excellent fishing for walleye, black bass, channel catfish, crappie and white bass. Walleye are often taken, too, along Lovewell dam, and at times of high water release, from the stilling basin below.

This was also one of those times when water was being received at Lovewell via a canal from the Republican River, and releases for that purpose were being made from the large Harlan County Reservoir in Nebraska.

Constructed by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, Lovewell was com-

pleted in 1957, and was designed primarily as a flood control and irrigation reservoir.

It is located on White Rock Creek, about 14 miles northeast of Mankato, Kansas, in an area which has no large cities. For this reason, Lovewell is not among the "big" and "popular" lakes of Kansas.

Boughner probably described it best when he said it was "lovely and "lonely." However, it wasn't exactly lonely that day at the inlet, where the inflow from the river was dumping through big gates into



"JUST RIGHT FOR THE PAN"—Doug Boughner, Pratt, gets ready to clean stringer of nice white bass and crappie taken from Lovewell cove on jigs.

**the lake, filling it before release for irrigation purposes downstream.**

When this time comes, fishing at the inlet is good—and the word spreads fast. Anglers flock in from miles around, and they were there in force.

Wisely, we visited the area by boat, instead of fishing from the bank. The bank was lined with people, and most of them were catching white bass. Occasionally a walleye or black bass would be taken.

We tried our luck with jigs and spinners in fast water just outside the main shoot of the inlet. Bouncing a jig on the bottom proved the best method, and in an hour's time, we had a good string of white bass in the half-pound to one-pound class. Not big fish by any means, but fine for catching on ultra-light tackle, and a delight in the frying pan.

Fishing isn't confined, either, to the areas mentioned. Gary Heskett, Mankato, game protector for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, pointed out that Lovewell at times is an excellent channel catfish lake. Other coves, especially on the lake's upper end, and some shallow areas provide good catches.

**Lovewell has 38 miles of scenic shoreline, and boasts 2986 surface acres of water at conservation pool level.**

In addition, its appeal doesn't stop with the fishermen. It has one of the finest cabin areas of any Kansas lake, with several units in the multi-thousand-dollar bracket, attesting to its attractiveness and scenic beauty.

There is always activity at the fine Cedar Point area, on the northeast corner of the lake, where the Kansas Park Authority has carried out extensive camping, picnicking, boating and other recreation development since 1965.

The area includes a modern shower-latrines building, several of the famous "toadstool" picnic shelters which are famous in Kansas State Parks, good interior roads, picnic facilities and prime camping spots. The park also has a good water supply, boat-launching ramps, modern toilets, and Lovewell's marina. The marina provides boat rentals, sales and service, bait and fishing supplies and equipment, and

a clean, modern restaurant. The \$5 annual or \$1 daily state park vehicle permit is needed to visit the area.

A native of the area, Lovewell can provide you, too, with some of the excellent history which engulfs the entire area.

**The Lake was named for both the small city of Lovewell, located just a few miles east of the dam, and Thomas Lovewell, the marina operator's great-grandfather, who founded the city and was one of the first settlers in the area.**

The elder Lovewell, in fact, was one of the most colorful figures in Kansas pioneer history—a government scout, Indian fighter, pioneer farmer, gold-seeker, and a man of many other trades. A monument to his honor stands near the concession area.

On a hill at the south side of the lake are graves of several members of pioneer families killed in Indian raids, and nearby is a marker and monument to their honor.

Lovewell also offers some of the finest public hunting land in Kansas. On the upper end of the lake, the Kansas Fish and Game Commission has almost 5000 acres of land under game management, which it owns or leases. The area is excellent for quail, pheasants, ducks, some geese, deer, rabbits and squirrels.

Fish and Game experts classify Lovewell—as a whole—one of the finest all-around areas in the Midwest, and certainly one of the best in Kansas.

About the only drawback to Lovewell is the fact that some of the roads leading to its scenic shores are narrow, rough and hard on camping and recreation vehicles, boats and trailers. Sportsmen in the area reported that they will be improved in time.

There's no doubt, either, that Lovewell will attract more and more attention with the years, too.

It should. It has about everything that the sportsman could ask, including a good amount of peace and quiet.



**HAPPY ANGLER**—Neil Fuller, Concordia, hefts 6¾ pound walleye he caught from Lovewell Inlet on 1/16 ounce jig while fishing for white bass, and smile tells his pleasure.





MORNING PEACE—Sun dances on ripples of water in Marina cove at Lovewell, while it plays through large thunderheads. Lake is considered one of the most beautiful in Kansas. See Lovewell story on page 20. (Fish and Game Commission photo by Thayne Smith.)

S. L. Loewen  
Tabor College  
Hillsboro, Kansas 67063

# POMONA . . .

## *Garden Spot for Sportsmen*

by Thayne Smith

Jolly Frank Custenborder eased the big, flat-bottomed boat up to a large log protruding from the smooth surface of 110-Mile Creek on the north side of Pomona Reservoir, with hardly a ripple showing when he cut the motor with an expert's hand.

"Yesterday," he said, "they were right below here, and if we're quiet we might catch a few."

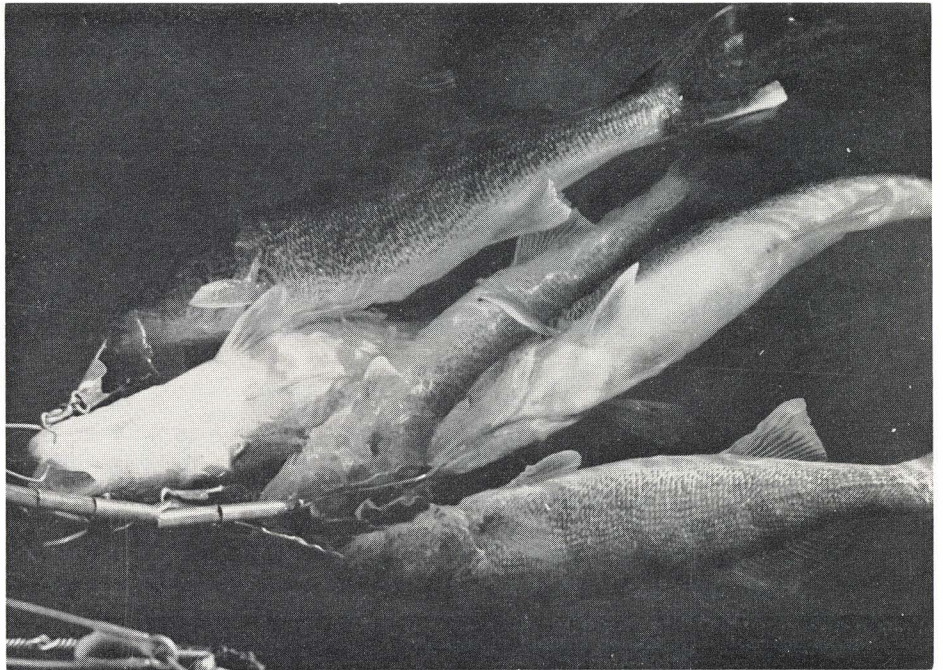
"They" were crappie, and Pomona has some dandies, which we discovered a few moments later when Frank cast a small jig behind the boat, let it sink about 15 feet, and set the hook as something lightly touched his offering.

**"It's a dandy — just like yesterday," he said, reeling in a crappie of about two pounds.**

"Boy, that really burns you up, doesn't it?" he chided, turning to me, as I tried vainly from the other side of the boat to repeat his performance. Then he let out with that famous laugh of his, familiar to fishermen throughout the state as belonging to the one and only Frank Custenborder. It's a sort of Santa Claus "Ho, ho, ho," with a special flower-grower twist. Frank is a florist, a good one, at Topeka. There's only one problem with such a profession, he says, and that's the fact that work sometimes interferes with his fishing.

We left the area a couple of hours later with an excellent string of fish.

That's what Pomona will do for you, too—make you wish that you could fish all the time. It's that kind of lake—and it has probably produced more good, big fish in its short life than any other similar body of water in Kansas.



**REFLECTED GLORY**—Nice string of walleye in clean Pomona waters make an unusual picture.

Nestled in a quiet little valley formed by three swift-running creeks about 30 miles south of Topeka, Pomona is a garden spot for sportsmen. It offers 52 miles of shoreline and 4,000 surface-acres of water, set among quiet coves and tree-filled hills. Its location in rolling eastern Kansas puts it in the center of the state's finest scenery, and Pomona boosters often claim that it is the "prettiest large lake in the state."

A certain amount of the popularity of Pomona can be attributed to its location. Only 71 miles from Kansas City with new Interstate 35 highway to carry traffic within a few miles of the dam site, Pomona has more than

two million persons within 80 miles of its shores.

The lake's dam is near the Marais des Cygnes River, and the lake itself is fed by Dragoon, 110-Mile and Wolf creeks.

Constructed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pomona was started in 1958 and filled for the first time in 1964. It cost more than \$65 million.

The day it filled, Pomona offered something for everyone—every sportsman can find a home on its water or its shores.

**Two State Parks, developed by the Kansas Park and Resources Authority, are among the finest in**

## Third in a Series On Kansas Reservoirs

the state. One—Vassar—on the south side of the lake, sports among many facilities the finest marina in Kansas, developed by the late L. D. Flint of Lyndon. Another fine marina is located just north of the damsite.

At the west end of the lake, where modern US-75 highway crosses Dragoon Creek, there is another fine state park—Carbolyn. Both the Vassar and Carbolyn parks boast hot and cold showers, modern toilet buildings, dozens of modern campsites with picnic tables, fireplaces, barrels and other facilities. Vassar has a large and excellent swimming beach.

In addition to the State Parks, the Corps of Engineers has developed several good parks around the lake—Dragoon, Michigan Valley, 110-Mile and Wolf Creek, all on the north side of the lake.

A \$5 State Park annual vehicle permit, or \$1 per day permit, is required of Kansas residents at Carbolyn and Vassar Parks, while the Corps of Engineers facilities are free.

Camping is a big item at Pomona, and combined with its excellent fishing and boating, accounts for more than two million visitors at the lake each year. Woods around the river and on the upstream side of the dam provide a relatively peaceful atmosphere for campers. The area is filled with clear, running streams, meandering their way through thick, grassy meadows and deep draws filled with abundant walnut and cottonwood trees.

The real beauty of Pomona is seen from the water, sliding over the surface with a fish-eye view of the hills and wood areas so popular with campers. Also, from the water, new lake-side cottages and stately homes with neat boat docks and waterside patios, are visible from many angles.

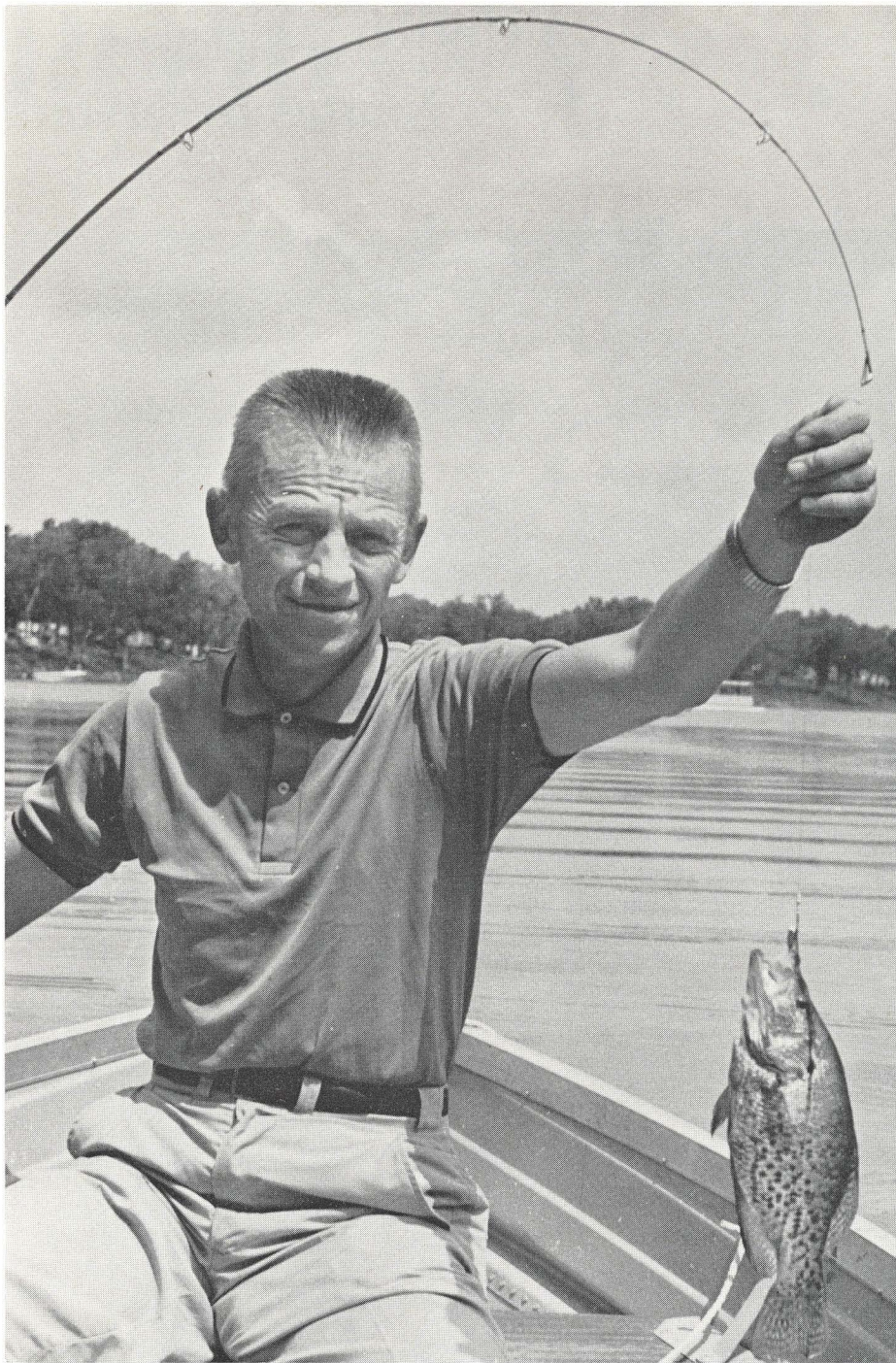
Water of the main pool of the lake is generally calm due to the high hills and woods on the bank, and the fact that the general direction of the three-fingered lake is from east to west.

It's on the water too, that fishermen have found Pomona a haven.

When it filled in 1964, the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission



PRIZED CATCH—Carl Pape, Topeka angler, displays three fine walleye and 2-pound crappie pulled from Pomona. (Photos by Thayne Smith.)



**BIG CRAPPIE** is displayed by Dev Nelson, Manhattan, after being taken on jig from Pomona cove.

promptly stocked it with walleye, bass, bluegill, channel cat and perch.

Since that time, it has gained national renown as a good fishing lake—especially for walleye, black bass and catfish.

Biologists of the Commission, in fact, are continually amazed with the fine growth of the walleye in Pomona waters. Several were caught this year

in the six and seven pound class—excellent for four years of growth. In its second year, Pomona produced many three and four pound fish. Many black bass up to five pounds are caught from the lake each year.

There are excellent spots for the hunter at Pomona, too. Quail, squirrel and rabbit hunting are excellent on more than 3,600 acres of public

land at the upper end of the lake, and the shallow, marshy coves on the Dragoon arm often offer excellent duck and goose shooting. Blinds are allowed through drawings on a first-come-first-served basis, conducted by the Corps of Engineers (office at the damsite) each fall.

**For the boater, Pomona's smooth and generally clear waters are something to brag about, and this, too, contributes greatly to the lake's extreme popularity. On a warm summer weekend, lake is often crowded with boaters and water skiers.**

Although constructed principally for flood control, the recreational aspects of Pomona have been chiefly responsible for the good name, and the high berth, it has won among Kansas' popular and scenic lakes.

Even while other big reservoirs are constructed around it, and nearer to the population centers it serves, Pomona's popularity continues to climb. Perhaps all this comes about because it generally has smooth waters for boaters and skiers, even on windy days; good hunting for the nimrod, regardless of whether he's seeking waterfowl or upland game; excellent campgrounds in any weather, and good fishing for the angler.

Perhaps that's why you'll find folks like Frank Custenborder spending a lot of time at Pomona, too, while others of the family tend his flower business. He's not only a good fisherman, but likes to hunt, water ski and go boating as well.

He doesn't give a hoot for camping, but probably only because he doesn't have the time.

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Ants are capable of lifting 52 times their own weight, which is equal to a man lifting 8000 pounds.

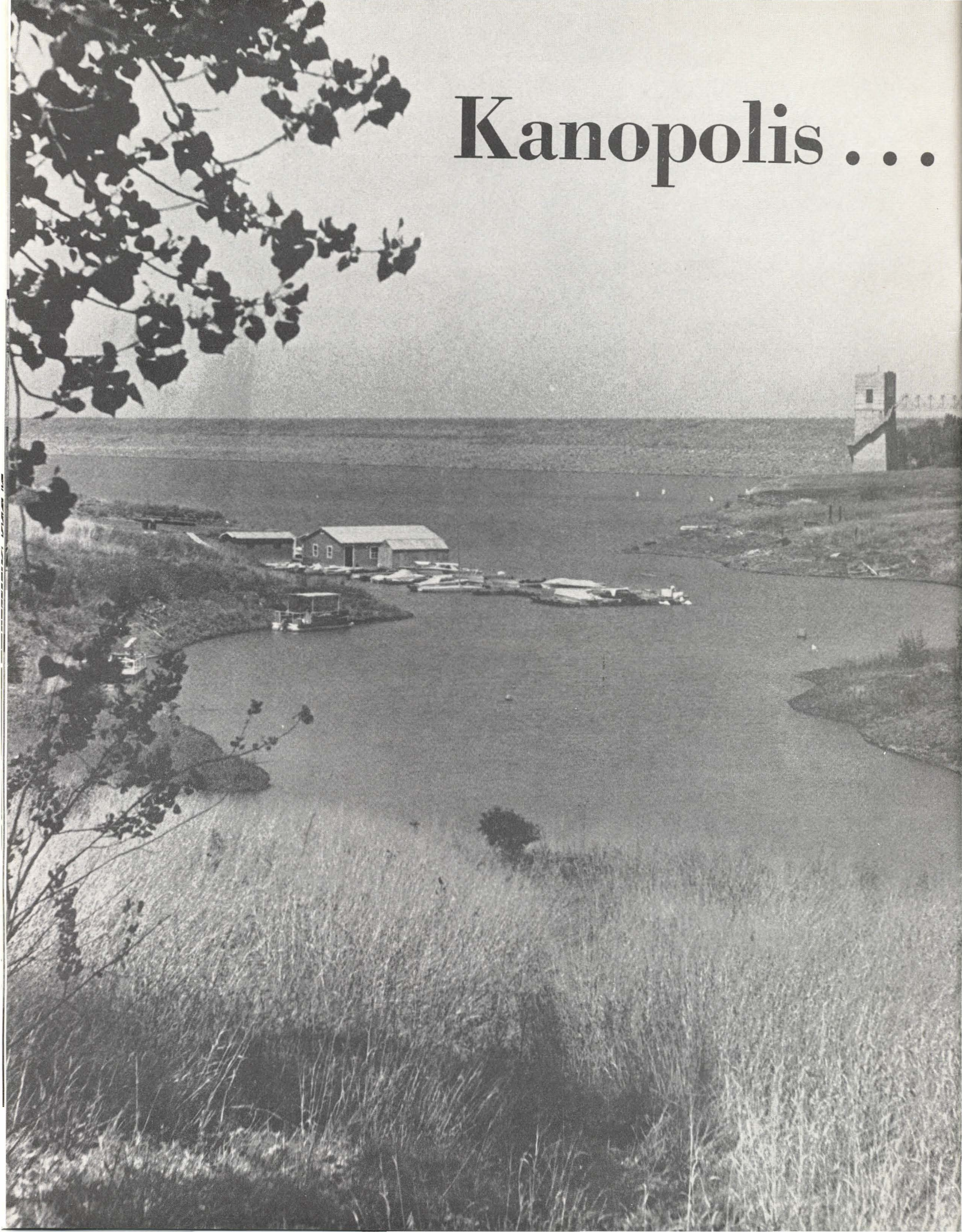
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The purple finch is not at all purple. The male is an old rose color and the female has the general sparrow-like appearance.

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A bird's two eyes often weigh more than its brain. The ostrich's eyes often weigh more than twice the weight of its brain.

# Kanopolis . . .



# It Really Started Something

By THAYNE SMITH

Kanopolis. It really started something!

The year was 1948, and the eyes of many Kansas sportsmen turned to a big earthen dam constructed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers across the beautiful Smoky Hill River valley about 35 miles southwest of Salina.

Built at a cost of nearly \$13 million, Kanopolis became the state's first "big lake."

Constructed primarily as a flood-control structure, it wasn't long until Kanopolis proved its worth. The big flood of 1951 gave it a supreme test, when water backed up in the lake prevented millions of dollars damage to downstream farms and cities, and came within 18 inches of going over the spillway. That was the highest water the first big Kansas man-made lake has seen.

It was soon apparent, even with limited facilities provided by the Corps of Engineers and other agencies, that big lakes were popular among the state's people—and especially the sporting public.

Boaters swarmed from throughout the state to Kanopolis' shores, followed by fishermen and hunters. In those days, the lake offered only native fish species—channel catfish, crappie, black bass, bluegill and other perch, and rough fish. They grew fast in the lake's rich waters, and for several years, Kanopolis was a top fishing spot with native species alone.

Later, with completion of Fall River Reservoir in eastern Kansas, and others coming through the years,

*(Continued on next page)*

## Kanopolis Beauty

**LEFT:** Outlet tower, marina and dam of Kanopolis lake show in view from South Shore State Park area.

**UPPER RIGHT:** Kanopolis attracted nationwide attention in July, 1966, when 10,000 members of National Campers and Hikers Association gathered in a week-long convention at its East Shore State Park.

**LOWER RIGHT:** Big oak trees and rocky shoreline frame view of upper part of lake and Yankee Run cabin area on Kanopolis' south shore. (Photos by Thayne Smith.)



the Fish and Game Commission initiated plans to stock the big reservoirs with so-called exotic fish—species not native to Kansas.

Kanopolis and Fall River received the first Kansas stockings of walleye and white bass. Both have flourished in Kanopolis waters. Today, it is considered an excellent fishing lake, with good walleye and white bass runs coupled annually with still-excellent fishing for crappie, catfish and other species.

Since that time, too, Kanopolis has chalked up a lot of other “firsts.”

**In 1957, with the formation of the Kansas Park and Resources Authority by the State Legislature, Kanopolis was chosen—because of**

**its central location in Kansas—for the state’s pilot State Park project.**

Initial park construction centered on picnic shelters, improvement of existing Corps facilities for swimming, camping and picnicking, addition of a modern shower-latrine building, and a water system on the lake’s East Shore area. Later, a second State Park was added to the south shore, near the dam, boasting excellent camping facilities, a trailer park with electrical, water and sewage connections, a fine marina with sales and service for boats, food and tackle supplies, baits and other items; a large bathhouse and swimming beach, concession stands, and picnic areas.

In addition, the Corps a few years

ago chose Kanopolis for its first extensive Kansas park development, constructing an excellent shower-latrine building, picnic and camping and other public facilities below the reservoir outlet. They recently completed similar facilities in the Venango area on the north end of the reservoir dam.

**Along with its many other assets, Kanopolis also offers some of the state’s finest public hunting areas. The principal acreage is on the upper end of the lake, in the Thompson creek area, and adjacent to the northeast side of the dam.**

The hunting areas abound with Bobwhite quail, pheasants, rabbits, squirrels and deer. Much of the credit for the excellent hunting can be attributed to Emil Kroutil, resident engineer for the Corps at the lake.

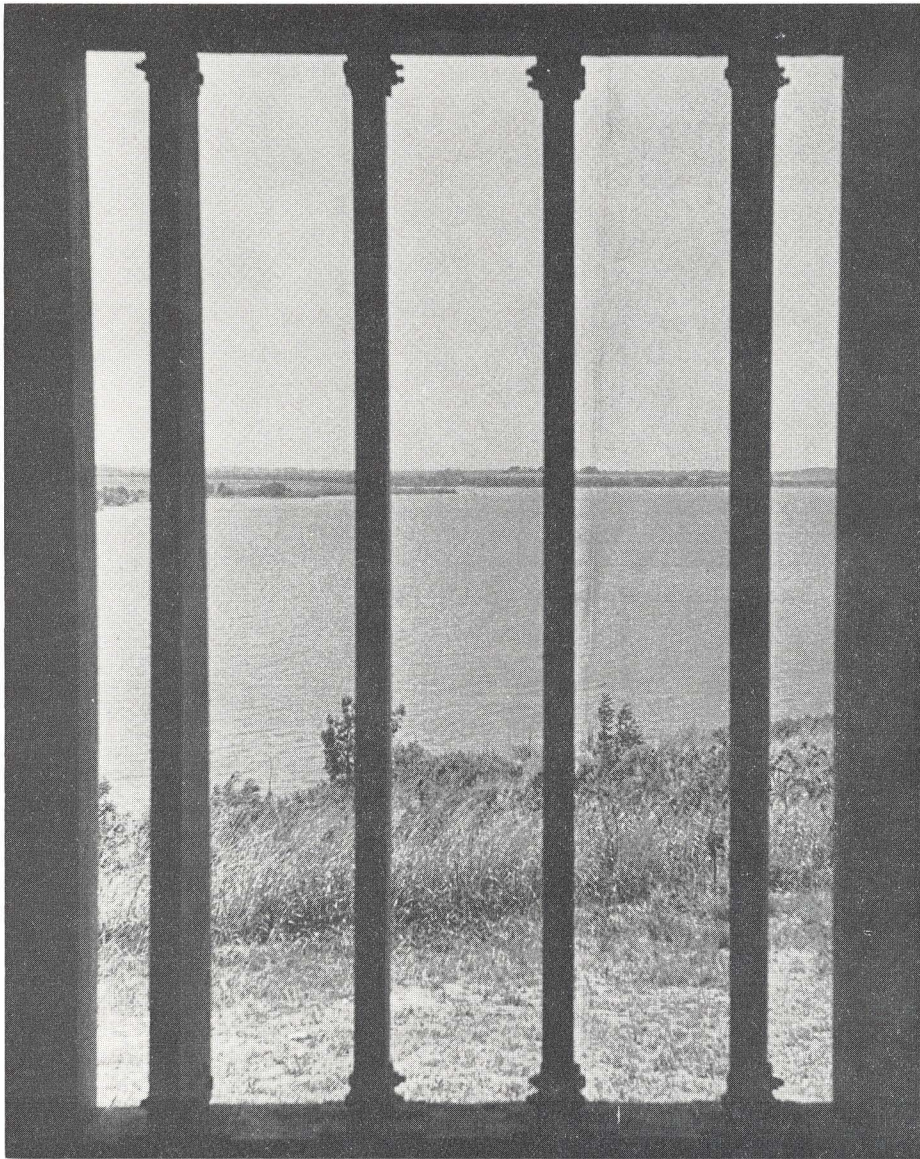
Called the “Pied Piper of Kanopolis” by friends, Kroutil—a biology graduate—knows the value of managing land for game, and has done extensive game management work around the public hunting areas.

He has, through the years, worked game management into the lease agreements of farmers who till and graze the public lands on a percentage basis. He has also planted extensive food plots for wildlife in areas thick with cover which are not tillable.

**Kroutil’s “Pied Piper” title comes from the fact that he is an excellent sportsman, devoting most of his spare time to hunting and fishing. He knows the lake well, and when he goes fishing, many anglers who frequent the lake follow him, knowing that if fish are to be caught, he will find them.**

Kanopolis isn’t large as Kansas lakes go—boasting only about 4000 surface acres of water. Other facilities make up for the small size of the lake, however. The public hunting area totals more than 5000 acres, and six parks—including those operated by both the Corps and the State Park Authority—cover another 2000 acres.

Through the years, development has been kind to Kanopolis. Hundreds of trees have been planted around its parks and public areas, and have flourished to give it added beauty.



Window in Corral Shelterhouse, sitting high atop a hill on north side of Kanopolis, offers excellent view of upper end of lake and surrounding area.



Attractive stone monument and plaque, located in Kanopolis East Shore Park, commemorates National Campers and Hikers Convention held there in July, 1966.

Many unusual rock formations dot the lake's shore, and canyons leading from it, make it a treasured spot of scenic beauty.

Horse Thief Canyon, on the north-east side of the lake, sports famous Indian Rock, which is covered with many Indian petroglyphs (rock carvings). Other rock formations in Horse Thief and Red Rock Canyons bear Indian writings along with the carved initials of such early and notorious figures as the Younger brothers, soldiers who served at nearby Fort Harker, an historic early-day frontier Army post at the city of Kanopolis, and pioneers. Horse Thief also offers the excellent Buffalo Track nature trail, developed by the Kansas Park Authority. It is a haven for rock hounds and fossil collectors.

Since becoming operable, Kanopolis has prevented flood damages of more than \$16 million, and has provided a steady, flowing water supply for cities downstream.

It's future is bright, too, from many standpoints. It is living proof that big lakes in Kansas can continue to provide—year after year—good fishing, boating, hunting

and camping for the sporting public.

Sometime in the next few years, it's a good bet that a long-sought irri-

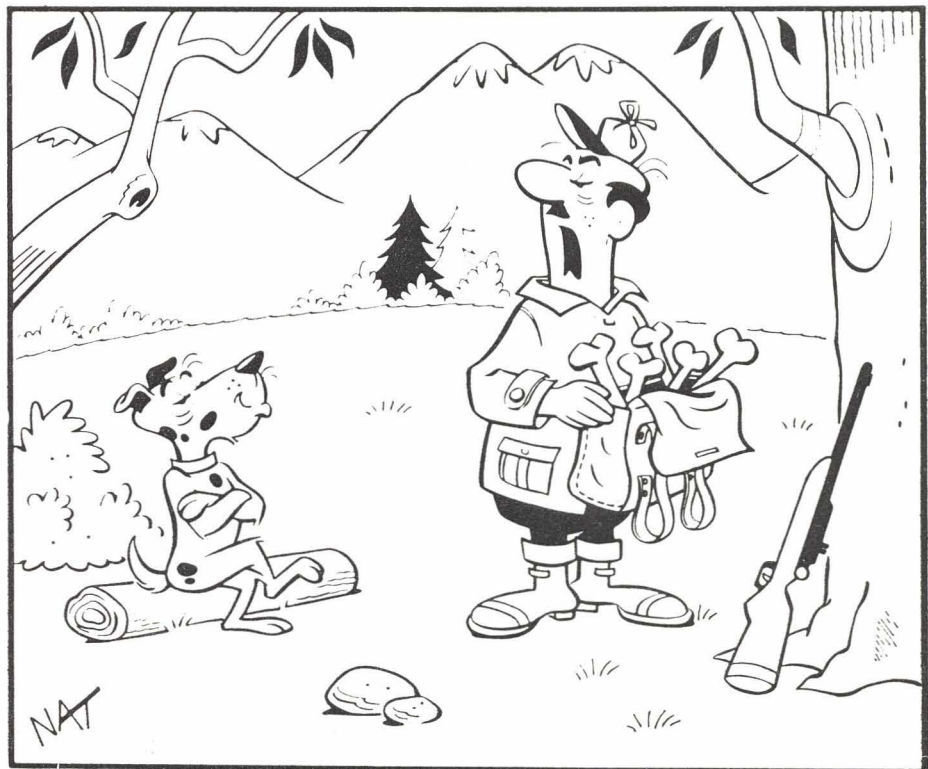
gation district below Kanopolis will become a reality. When it does, the lake will be authorized to hold another 20 feet of water, swelling its surface area from the present 4000 acres to more than 8,200. Additional public use areas will be developed for the larger pool, to keep pace with public needs and demands.

Kanopolis, as man-made reservoirs go, isn't large. In fact, it's somewhat on the "small" side even in Kansas, when compared with the state's 18 other reservoirs.

It's had many days of glory, however, including the hosting of the National Campers and Hikers Convention in 1966, an event that brought 10,000 campers from throughout the nation to its shore for a week in July. A large, attractive plaque on a stone monument at the lake's East Shore Park now commemorates the event.

With its central location in Kansas, close proximity to Interstate 70, good fishing and hunting, excellent camping facilities, natural beauty and historical surroundings, Kanopolis will hold a favored spot in Kansas for many years.

And there's no doubt about it, it really started something!



"NEXT TIME, I'LL PACK THE FOOD!"



# MILFORD . . . Sportsmen's *Total* Lake

By VIC McLERAN

"Milford Lake — Kansas' Largest and Bluest."

So billed by the Junction City Chamber of Commerce, Milford is much more to many people than just a big, blue lake. In fact, to quite a few sportsmen, Milford is the "total" lake. Total because it provides them with nearly all they could ask for in outdoor recreation.

Located four miles northwest of Junction City, the lake was constructed primarily as a flood control project but soon emerged as a major recreation area.

Construction on Milford began in 1962 and was completed in 1966. This 16,189 acre lake—largest in the state—controls runoff from 3,796 square miles down the Republican River from Harlan County Reservoir in Nebraska.

Milford has something to offer almost every sportsman, but to fishermen, it is exceptionally generous. Prior to the dam's construction, area anglers who wanted to fish close to home were limited to creeks, rivers and a few farm ponds. There was also a limit to the species for which anglers could fish. Milford has changed all that!

Jim Kidd, executive secretary of the Milford Lake Association and owner of a bait and tackle shop in the Rolling Hills area of the lake explained, "The construction of Milford

Lake has not only provided us with more fishing water, it's given us a great deal of variety in our fishing. Before the lake was here, most of us fished for catfish, bullheads, a few crappie and an occasional farm-pond bass. Now, in addition to those, we've got walleye, white bass, northern pike and plenty of crappie and bass fishing. It's kind of like having your cake and eating it too."

Since lake fishing differs from stream fishing, many local anglers had to learn to fish all over again when working the large lake.

"A lot of us who had fished the

streams with trotlines and limb lines had to re-orient ourselves to lake fishing," said Kidd. "This was especially true with regards to the new species which were introduced since there's a lot of difference between fishing for walleye and fishing for catfish."

Rush Lang, Junction City, game protector for the Fish and Game Commission, indicated quite a few anglers prefer the larger water. "There's definitely been a shift in fishing pressure from ponds and creeks to Milford Lake," he observed. "When checking fishing licenses, I find fewer anglers fishing the smaller waters than there were before the lake's completion."

Dick Cole (left) game protector for the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, and Jim Kidd, owner of a bait and tackle shop in the Rolling Hills area of the lake, admire some large flathead catfish taken from Milford on set lines. (Photo by Leroy Lyon)



The presence of Milford has done a lot toward keeping Sunflower anglers fishing in Kansas. "Before the lake was in, guys around here were always taking fishing trips to Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma," said Darrel "Doc" Rittgers, Junction City sporting goods dealer. "But now, most of 'em are doing their fishing at Milford."

Rittgers also believes the lake has re-created a great deal of interest in fishing. "I know fellows around here who hadn't fished for years that are now avid anglers. This is especially true of some of the farmers."

For the benefit of cold weather anglers, there is a heated fishing dock located at Thunderbird Marina in the Curtis Creek area of the lake. It features chairs for anglers, a snack bar, table space and a supply of live bait.

Under fisheries management of the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, Milford has been stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, northern pike, walleye, crappie and white bass. Stockings such as these coupled with periodic test nettings to determine fish populations, insure Kansas anglers of a balanced fishing lake.

The rolling hills, wooded valleys and fertile river bottoms of the area have always provided excellent habitat for game. Consequently, the hunting was always good around Junction City. However, the construction of Milford and subsequent game management practices by the Fish and Game Commission have improved an already excellent situation for hunters.

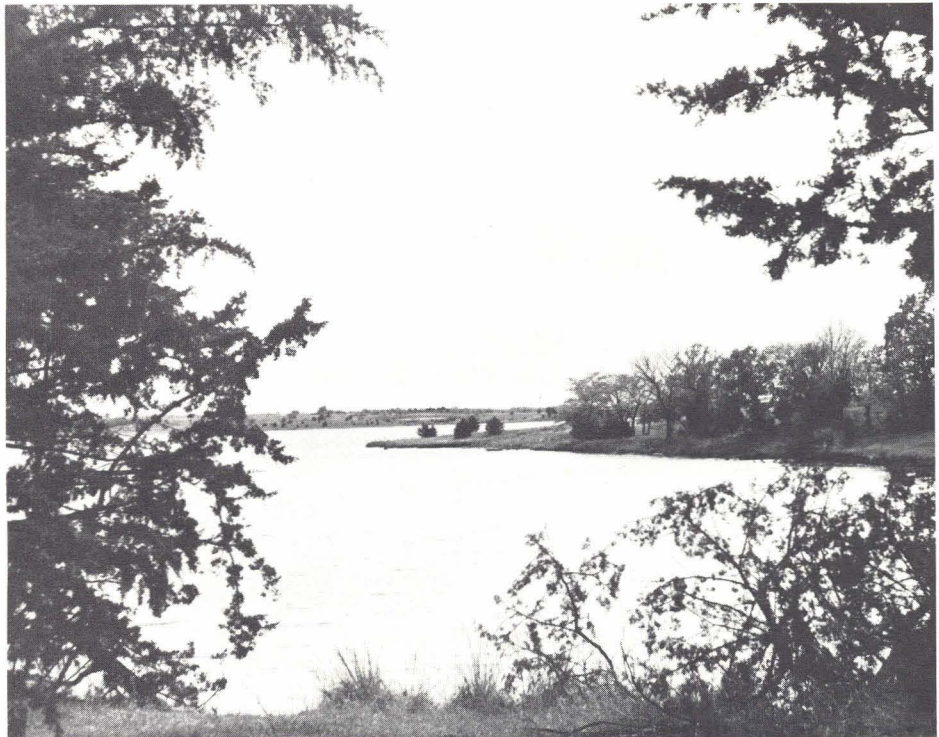
Waterfowlers especially, enjoy good hunting because the large body of water consistently attracts large numbers of ducks and geese. Kidd, a lifelong resident of the area, said, "There is no comparison to the duck hunting now and to hunting before the lake was here. We used to 'jump-shoot' the

farm ponds and sloughs along the river but the ducks were hard to bag. Now, most of the waterfowl hunting in this area is done from blinds over a big spread of decoys. Then, too, a heck of a lot more ducks seem to be staying later in the season due to more feed in the area.

The Commission has set aside 1,073 acres as a waterfowl refuge. By providing protected feeding areas as well

pheasant, quail and prairie chicken in season. Open fields with strip cropping, hedge rows and other game management practices by the Commission make the area a "mixed bag" favorite of many hunters.

"The acquisition and management of this area by the Commission has meant a great deal to hunters," noted Carl "Red" Gray, Junction City businessman and president of the Geary



Shaded, tree-lined coves such as this, offer excellent angling as well as a chance for campers and picnickers to "get away from it all." (Photo by Vic McLeran)

as resting and roosting sites, the refuge helps retain large populations of migrating waterfowl on the area for a longer period of time. The refuge area is closed to all types of hunting and is clearly marked with signs.

A public hunting area for upland game, encompassing 11,000 acres, is also provided by the Commission, at the upper end of the lake. Hunters may take deer, rabbit, squirrels,

County Fish and Game Association. "This is especially true in terms of quail and pheasant hunting since there now appears to be more prime habitat for both species than before."

Availability of this public hunting land has reduced pressure on private farm lands. After obtaining control of this area, the Commission initiated an intensive wildlife management program of habitat development. Tall

grasses, legumes and shrubs were planted around and through crop fields to provide additional nesting cover and travel lanes. In addition, several food plots were established in grassland areas.

For nature enthusiasts like members of the Kansas Ornithological Society, an organization of amateur and professional bird watchers, the lake's completion has meant more and varied avian species in the area. Bob La-

Shelle, member of the board of directors and publicity chairman for KOS, said, "Since the lake was finished, we've seen species like pelicans, cormorants and certain types of gulls which weren't here before. The 1967 KOS spring convention was held here at Milford and a record number (155) of different species was observed. This record still stands," LaShelle added.

Pleasure boating and related water sports have been given a boost by the

construction of Milford Lake. "The lake's completion opened up several new areas of water sports like skiing and sailboating which weren't formerly available to most of us in this area," said Dan Moske, Junction City, former president and now on the board of directors for the Milford Lake Water Sports Club. "It's actually been quite a challenge since few of us knew much about water skiing and other water sports," Moske said. The water sports club sponsors a sailing regatta on Memorial Day and an annual water-ski show on Labor Day.

**Like lonely sentinels, solitary windmills stand watch over deserted farm lands adjacent to the lake. Much of this land is under management of the Fish and Game Commission where the planting of tall grasses, legumes, shrubs and hedge rows are aimed at improving habitat for upland game. (Photo by Vic McLeran)**

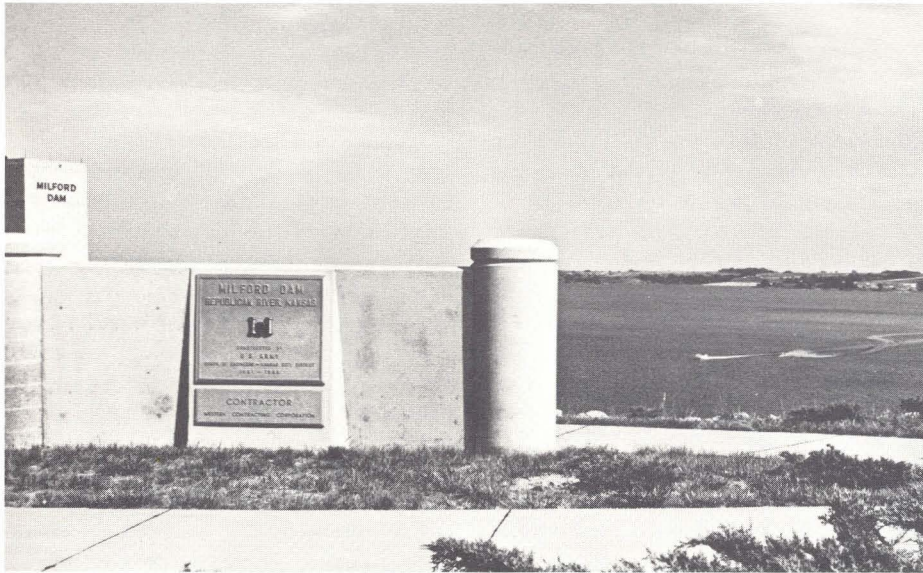


For the benefit of boaters and fishermen, the lake has three marinas: Thunderbird, located at the southwest end of the lake in Curtis Creek; Wakefield, next to the town of Wakefield; and Big K, recently completed in the Pleasantview State Park area.

For swimmers, a large sand pit in the downstream recreation area immediately below the dam features a 1200 foot sand beach, modern change houses, fresh water supply, toilets, black top roads and a parking area.

Another group on which Milford has had quite an impact are the campers. The lake is surrounded by 980 acres of park land containing large wilderness areas. There are nine parks which contain all the facilities necessary for camping. Pleasantview, located just off the north end of the dam, is the only park which requires a Kansas State Park Permit. Campers who use Rolling Hills campground are charged a one dollar user fee by the Corps.

In addition to the public park areas, there are also, two commercial camping areas on the lake. Wakefield Holiday Camp is located in the town of Wakefield while Flag Stop Camp Ground is situated in Milford City Park. Facilities such as these were instrumental in Milford being chosen to host the 1971 Outdoor Writers of Kansas convention.



Water skiing, boating and related water sports were given a boost by the construction of Milford, the state's largest lake. (Photo by Leroy Lyon)

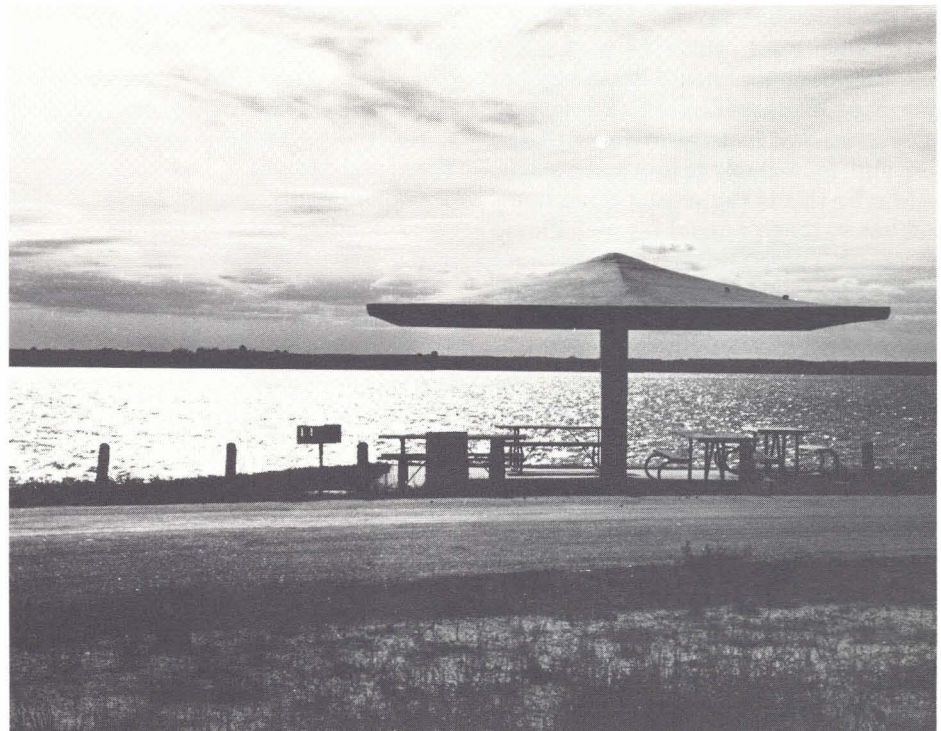
Bob Price, president of the Junction City Lakers camping club, indicated his organization is happy with Milford's camping attractions. "We think it's great and most of the other camping groups we've talked with say the same thing." The Lakers, affiliated with the Kansas Campers and Hikers Association, hosted a campout at Milford during the summer of 1969 and had more than 3,000 campers in attendance. "We feel this large turnout is indicative of the enthusiasm which campers have for Milford and its facilities," Price added.

Evidently the popularity of Milford with campers has reached beyond the state's borders since Price said the lake is being considered as the site for the National Campers and Hikers convention in 1972. This event would draw about 35,000 campers.

Why all the raves and popularity? Size, beauty, facilities and accommodations are all undoubtedly part of the answer. But Leland Brown, reservoir manager at Milford, probably came closer to pinpointing the answer when he said, "I think the key to Milford's popularity lies in its versatility and accessibility. By versatility I mean its capacity for accommodating the interests of so many different groups.

Then too, our excellent highway system makes it possible for many distant sportsmen to reach the lake quickly and easily."

Looking like giant toadstools, conveniently-located lakeside shelters offer picnickers relief from the sun. There are nine major park areas located around the lake. Pleasantview is the only one which requires a Kansas State Park permit. Campers who use Rolling Hills campground are charged a one dollar user fee by the Corps. (Photo by Vic McLeran)



Webster's dictionary defines total as "entire, complete, concentrating all available personnel and resources on a single objective." Although Webster's doesn't specifically mention Milford, it's a pretty fair definition of the lake since Milford is nearly complete in what it has to offer so many different outdoor groups. It's total because its administrators—the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission and the Army Corps of Engineers—concentrate all available personnel and resources on a single objective—that of making Milford Lake as desirable as possible to all sportsmen.

So regardless of whether your thing is hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, birding or boating, when you take your next outing, give Milford a try. Like they say in Junction City, "Milford's got it all—a total lake."

# Tuttle Creek Reservoir

By R. ROSS MANES  
Photos by Ken Stiebben

Tuttle Creek Dam, a 7,500 foot long, 157 foot high mound of earth, stone and concrete, is located just six miles north of Manhattan, Kansas. The capitol city, Topeka, is only 60 miles to the east, and another state's capitol, Lincoln, is 130 miles north. For the thousands of people residing in these cities, and in the surrounding countryside, access to Tuttle Creek Reservoir is a simple matter. State highway 13 crosses the dam itself, and K-16 crosses the lake at Randolph, about 18 miles north of the dam.

The waters of Tuttle Creek Reservoir come down Fancy Creek, Swede Creek, Carnahan Creek, and other tributaries with equally fascinating names, but for the most part the water comes down the Big Blue River from southern Nebraska. Beneath the surface of this 16,000 acre lake the rubble of several small villages now provides homes for bass, crappie, channel catfish, and "yellow" catfish so big that even pictures of them are too heavy to carry. Visitors to the area can tramp a scenic nature trail, fish tree studded coves or rocky shores, wander among the mouldering ruins of an abandoned town, and later take a shower at deluxe facilities that enhance some of the campgrounds liberally scattered around the lake.

The reservoir derives its name from Tuttle Creek, a tiny drainage that enters the lake on the west side, just above the dam. Water now covers the floor of a narrow valley walled by steep sloped hills and occasional limestone bluffs. The valley was created by the random meanderings of the Big Blue as it wound its way to the Kansas River. Some of the old meanders of Blue River and the channels

of feeder streams can still be traced, here-and-there, using the skeletons of the great elms, oaks and cottonwoods that grew along their banks.

Many of the people that lived in and around the small towns along the Blue River drainage left the area, moving to cities or to farms in other parts of the state. The people who stayed near-by can tell you about the towns of Cleburne at the mouth of Swede Creek, Stockdale, submerged in Stockdale Cove, and Randolph. Randolph was situated at the mouth of Fancy Creek and was, of course, quickly covered with water when the flood gates were closed. Actually, there's little left of these villages, since they were demolished before flooding occurred. Randolph, however, was rebuilt on a hill above the lake and is now a town with a fine school, neat homes and as good a custard pie as I've ever found in a restaurant. There are half-a-dozen other small towns in

the lake, each with something to contribute to a person's thoughts while dozing in the sun on a grassy hill overlooking the water.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir came into being because Blue River was, according to a publication of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "—one of the largest contributors to floods in the Kansas River." Although the project under which Tuttle Creek Dam was constructed was authorized in 1938, construction did not begin immediately and the dam was not completed until 1962. A part of the Kansas River Basin reservoir system, the reservoir is unquestionably of great value for flood control, but for more than a million people residing within a hundred miles of the area it is probably more important as a source of recreation.

At conservation pool, or multipurpose pool, there are nearly 16,000 surface acres of water backed-up ap-

**Crappie are always favorite fish and Tuttle Creek Reservoir, located six miles north of Manhattan, has been a crappie hotspot for years.**





Excellent marina facilities at Fancy Creek and Spillway provide boat rental, boat storage, bait, gas and food.

proximately 23 miles above the dam. More than 110 miles of rugged, scenic shoreline surround the lake. To meet the terrific recreational demand created by the lake, 12 public use areas have been developed. Facilities at these areas range from nothing more than toilets at Overlook public area to virtually "shopping center" proportions at Fancy Creek. Located on U. S. highway 77, Fancy Creek area is so well developed and convenient that visitors from Nebraska sometimes outnumber the Kansans there.

Showers are available at River Pond, Spillway, Fancy Creek, Randolph and Stockdale areas. Marinas at Fancy Creek and Spillway provide boat rental, boat storage, supplies of bait, gasoline and picnic foods, along with most all other requirements. Nearly all the areas have a boat ramp, picnic tables, a water supply, and camping facilities. Areas which were developed and are administered by the State Park Authority require the payment of a nominal fee. Amounts are posted at the entrance to the State Park areas.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir offers an abundance of swimming, boating and fishing. Because of the excellent boat

storage available, lots of open water and reliable breezes, the lake has become a favorite spot of Kansas and southern Nebraska sail boaters. Their colorful sails can be seen almost anywhere on the lake throughout the warmer months.

Sailing, motorboating, fishing, water skiing, camping, picnicking and swimming—all are popular at Tuttle Creek.



The Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission has stocked Tuttle Creek with walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, white bass, crappie and bluegill. With little or no competition for the vast expanse of newly flooded fish habitat, these species should have thrived to compliment existing populations of flathead and channel catfish. In fact, excellent catches of crappie have, and do, occasionally come from the lake. But, fishing has not been all that was expected, and Commission biologists say that the waters of Tuttle Creek are troubled.

Blue River, the primary source of the lake's water, carries a heavy burden of silt from southern Nebraska and northern Kansas farmlands. First time visitors to the lake are likely to be excited by a distant view of sparkling ripples, only to be disappointed by the murky water a closer inspection reveals. Unfortunately, the lake is rarely clear.

Populations of many species of game fish remain low, severely limiting fishing success. Silt suspensions, better known as muddy water, can exert several influences on game fish populations. If the condition is se-

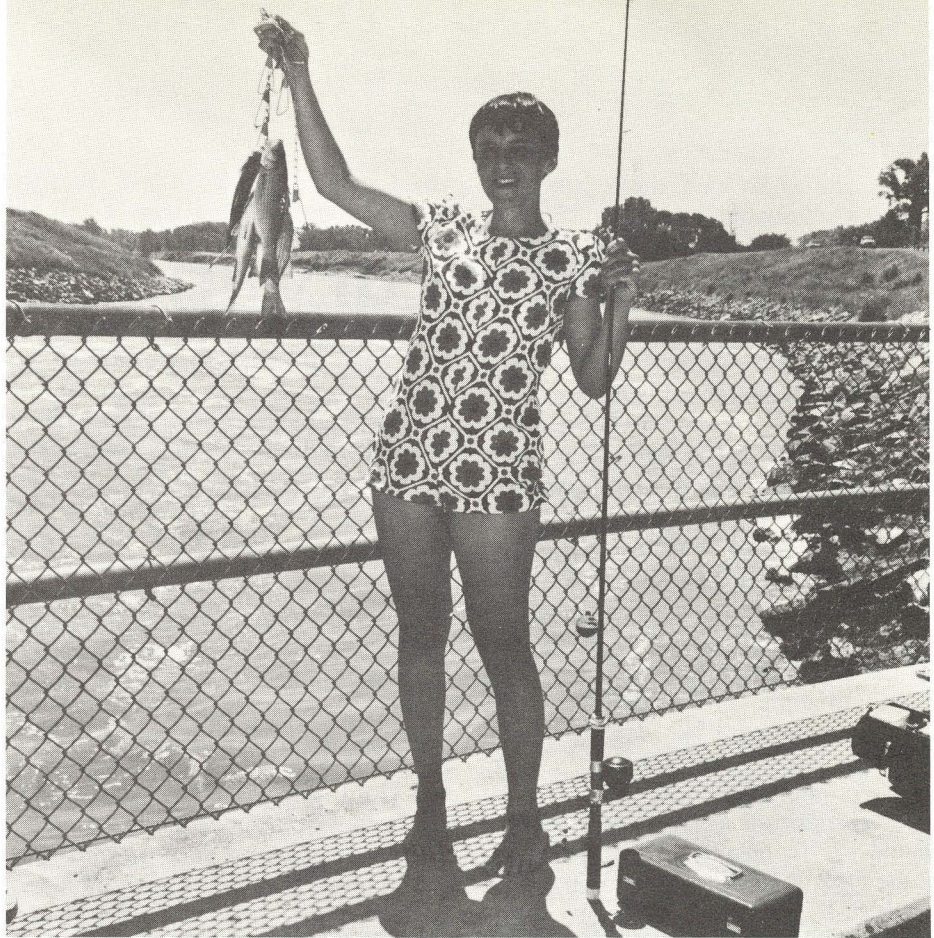
vere, the effects can be direct. Silt settling to the bottom may cover and suffocate the eggs of bass and bluegill. In really severe cases, adult fish may be killed by suffocation when their gills are coated by clay particles. In other instances the effects may be indirect. Long periods of dingy water prevent the growth of microscopic plant life by keeping out essential sunlight. This plant life, called phytoplankton, feeds tiny forms of animal life called zooplankton, which are fed upon by very small game fish. Forage fish such as shad require excellent numbers of plankton, and without them can't survive and reproduce to feed schools of white bass and crappie. Test netting of Tuttle Creek Reservoir has indicated that some of these conditions may exist in the lake.

Normally a large reservoir serves to clear the water of a muddy stream. Meeting the backwaters of a lake, the stream is forced to slow, stop, and eventually drop its load of silt. The upper end of a lake frequently becomes an area of mud flats and shallow water, but the main body of the reservoir remains clear and productive.

Fish and Game Commission biologists have suggested that the flow of water through Tuttle Creek be controlled to permit clearing, as is done in some other lakes. The idea is not to eliminate fluctuations, but to regulate the flow so that there will be extended periods of higher, clearer water. Actually, some fluctuation is desirable in most impoundments since pulling the water below shoreline vegetation occasionally makes forage fish more available to game fish. This not only encourages rapid growth in the game fish, but also helps control populations of rough fish which tend to expand too rapidly.

There is some disagreement among representatives of the Corps of Engineers and fisheries biologists regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of controlling water levels in Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Commission biologists maintain that it has worked elsewhere and should be tried here.

If the fishing picture is not as bright as it might be at Tuttle Creek, the



Fishing at the dam's spillway is popular and productive too, as this young anglerette proves. In addition to crappie and white bass, the lake's fish population includes channel and flat-head catfish, walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass and bluegill.

area has still more to offer. Two years after completion of the dam, the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission negotiated a 25-year agreement with the Corps of Engineers giving the Commission control of over 12,000 acres of land and water. As a result, north of the K-16 bridge, Kansans with an inclination to go hunting will find numerous black and yellow signs reading "Public Hunting Area." These signs designate large areas of government land which are open to public hunting. With the exception of three public use areas and two waterfowl sanctuaries, all clearly marked, all the government land on the upper lake is available to hunters. Hunting pressure on the public areas is frequently very heavy, but game populations continue to be generally good. Like most other good things, fine hunting is no accident.

Under the terms of the agreement with the Corps of Engineers, the Fish and Game Commission in 1964 initiated a wildlife habitat program on the licensed wildlife lands. The program utilizes a share-crop arrangement with

local farmers which, in effect, gives wildlife the landowners share of various beneficial crops. In addition to the food left standing in the fields, additional cover is established by planting field borders to grass-legume combinations or woody plants. Cottontail rabbits and bobwhite quail really prosper under these conditions, along with a few smart old ringneck pheasants. Whitetailed deer and fox squirrels inhabit the wooded areas surrounding agricultural fields and with the seasonal visitors such as dove and waterfowl make up a variety guaranteed to delight any nimrod.

Game animals are not the only ones to benefit from the Commission's habitat improvement program. An assortment of shorebirds and a colorful array of songbirds enjoy the area, inviting bird-watchers to bring binoculars and observation records. Wildlife photographers will find the area particularly rewarding.

Boaters, fishermen, hunters, photographers, amateur historians, or those seeking solitude, all will find something at Tuttle Creek.

# Perry Lake

## . . . A PAGE OF HISTORY

By R. ROSS MANES

Slowly, almost reluctantly Perry Lake began to waken. An unfelt breeze brushed carelessly at wisps of ground fog to expose dark water and grotesquely protruding trees. Far across the lake the sun began to paint the hardwood-covered hills with soft yellow and rose pastels. A covey of quail began to talk as I poured the last coffee from a small Thermos, or perhaps they were the ghosts of a Kaw raiding party, still prowling their hills. In the distance I heard the low chuckle of an outboard motor, an early morning fisherman, and the spell was broken. The lake was ready now—ready to teach children the delight of catching an eager bluegill and ready to entertain several hundred weekend guests.

People throng to the clear waters of Perry Lake on hot summer weekend afternoons. Most of them haven't far to come. The huge earth-fill dam that holds back the waters of the Delaware River is only a mile or so north of U. S. Highway 24, approximately half-way between Topeka and Lawrence. Kansas City is less than an hour's drive away and fun loving folks from as far away as Wichita or Lincoln, Nebraska, make the trip in three or four hours. Visitors from points west can travel Interstate 70 most of the way. State Highway 924 crosses the upper lake area, intersecting U. S. Highway 59 a few miles to the east. All-weather roads parallel the shoreline around much of the lake, providing convenient access.

The surrounding area is so strongly tied to Kansas history that a trip there is like looking back in time. About ten river miles below the point where the dam now juts skyward, Daniel Morgan Boone, third son of that famed Kentuckian, strived successfully to help start the Kaw Indian Agency in 1827. Boone established the first settlement in Kansas in what is now known as Jefferson County.

The next major development in the county was the opening of a military freight road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley in 1854.

The Grasshopper Falls townsite, which is now Valley Falls with a population of 1,200 people, was surveyed in 1855. The father of Buffalo Bill Cody, Isaac Cody, built a saw and grist mill at Valley Falls and later was elected Jefferson County Representative to the State Legislature.

About the time Grasshopper Falls was being surveyed, Dr. James Noble staked his claim to land where the present town of Oskaloosa now stands. Sam Peppard invented a "sailing wagon" is Oskaloosa in 1860, but readers with an eye on the women's liberation movement may be more interested in knowing that in 1888 the town elected a woman mayor and five councilwomen. That would be news even today.

The Kansas Pacific Railroad was responsible for the survey and platting

that started the town of Perry in 1865. A little later, in 1872, the town of Meriden was surveyed and built itself a post office.

Construction of Perry Dam and reservoir began in 1964 under the supervision of the U. S. Corps of Engineers. The dam and a large portion of the reservoir are located in the old Delaware Indian Reservation, and relics of early Indian activities are found along nearby creeks. The project was authorized by Congress in 1954 as a unit of the Kansas River and the Missouri River Basins Comprehensive Plans for flood control and related water resources development. Situated on the Delaware River approximately five miles above its confluence with the Kansas River, the dam permits control of water that might contribute to flooding. Construction was essentially complete by late 1968 and filling of the reservoir was begun in January, 1969.

Quiet little coves scattered along the timbered backwater tributaries of Perry Lake, offer true solitude for the camper.

*Photo by Ken Stiebben.*





The lake is conveniently located to attract summer visitors and it is well endowed with the features required to make it a recreation hotspot. At multipurpose pool, 12,000 surface acres of beautiful water invite fishermen, swimmers and boaters. Gently sloping, grassy points; steep, rocky hillsides; and deep, densely wooded coves make up some 160 miles of shoreline. The broad basin spreading just above the dam provides a vast expanse of deep, unobstructed water for high-speed boating and skiing. The main body of the lake narrows rather abruptly about 12 or 14 miles above the dam, but boaters with an inclination to explore can follow the winding channel of the Delaware several miles farther north. Quiet little coves come one after the other as you travel up the lake, and the twisting, timbered, tributary backwaters of Big and Little Slough Creek, Rock Creek, and Duck Creek offer true solitude during the week.

Visitors who prefer a little more convenience in their outings will appreciate the developed facilities that are liberally scattered around the lake. Well kept, attractive public use areas are easily accessible at Sunset Ridge, Rock Creek, Paradise Point,

Old Town, Longview, Slough Creek, Perry, Outlet, and Thompsonville. The Old Town area is particularly interesting because it overlooks the lake from the old Ozawkie townsite, hence the name. The original Ozawkie had the first post office and was the first seat of Jefferson county government. The present town is on the west lake shore across from the public use area. Two state parks, Jefferson Point and Delaware, have been established on either side of Rock Creek.

Excellent picnic table, shelters, camping pads, and shower-latrine buildings are available at most of these areas, and good launching ramps have been provided at all lakeside areas. A deluxe marina, located just north of the dam on the east side, offers boat storage, gasoline, groceries and tackle, as well as a restaurant for a quick snack.

Although the lake is still relatively new, and probably hasn't yet reached its peak, it has produced some terrific fishing. Fine catches of channel cat, crappie and bass have been brought in, and walleye made up some spectacular strings during early fall this year. While most walleye taken were not large, limits were the rule rather

than the exception. Of course, only experts catch fish consistently, but the lake's woody coves and rocky points are enough to make anyone reasonably successful.

Although Perry Lake is still relatively new, it has produced some terrific fishing for species like crappie, channel catfish, largemouth bass and walleye.

*Photo by Thayne Smith.*



At a spot near Valley Falls I stopped to let the dog exercise car-stiff legs. He stretched and shook himself, sneezing repeatedly as if trying to clear his nose of accumulated city odors. It was growing late in the afternoon and the air contained just a hint of the chill that bird hunters wait for impatiently each fall. Yellow lettered signs proclaimed the place a "Public Hunting Area."

Although the Perry Lake Game Management Area is still in developmental stages, the fertility of the land and existing arrangement of crops with isolated patches of cover is already producing fair upland game populations. The bobwhite quail is, of course, the chief game bird in this part of the state. His cheery call is heard in the early morning throughout the spring and summer. Very few pheasant make a home so far east, but more can be expected as habitat conditions are improved. Numerous cottontails inhabit the field borders and squirrels are plentiful in the timber. The numbers of deer in the Perry Lake vicinity have been described as "surprising" by local residents.

Share cropping agreements have been negotiated with regional farmers and strips of unharvested crops will alternate with harvested areas to provide near ideal hunting conditions this fall. Prospective hunters should be aware that private lands may lay adjacent to public lands. Ownership should be checked and permission obtained before crossing unmarked fences.

As is true of most intensively farmed



Perry Lake's convenient location should make it a recreational hot spot. At multi-purpose pool, 12,000 surface acres of beautiful water invite fisherman, swimmer, boater and water skier. The broad basin just above the dam provides a vast expanse of deep, unobstructed water for high-speed boating and water skiing.

*Photo Courtesy Evinrude Motors*

lands, cover is the primary deficiency in agricultural areas. To the average person it must appear that the dense vegetation growing along numerous small drainage systems would provide all the cover needed. Indeed, it probably would if properly distributed. Game managers learned long ago that arrangement is the key to optimum habitat.

The dog romped excitedly ahead of me, forgetting in his joy of release that he was supposed to be a professional. From the corner of my eye I saw a covey of quail burst from his feet as he tried vainly to establish a point. The birds flew strongly, finally settling in a small pocket of trees far out in the milo field. The dog was all business now as we made a gradual turn back toward the car, but I paid little attention to him.

As time permits, Fish and Game Commission personnel will plant strips of grasses, legumes and woody vegetation in and around farmland to break up large fields. They will also open small areas in existing brushy or timbered sites and plant food plots. It all takes time, probably five years

before the area begins to reach its potential. In the meantime, it will provide a good bit of hunting where little existed before.

Waterfowl hunting should also improve in coming years. Perry Lake is already an attractive place for teal, pintail, mallards and some of the smaller geese. As marshy lowlands are developed next to cropland they will come in greater numbers and remain for longer periods of time. Some waterfowl area has been developed and local hunters have noted an improvement.

The dog sniffed the ground as we made our way back. Faint impressions in the soft earth told of rabbits playing in the moonlight, and raccoons that prowled the fields, stealing grain. Deer had come this way too, their tracks much more distinct. The tracks were fresh and I half expected to see the deer dash from cover as I crossed noisily through a brushy draw. No deer came, but I followed the tracks along, watching the ground, and stooped to pick up a piece of flint that caught my eye. It wasn't an arrowhead, but it might have been, or a spear point to send a man's mind wandering back through the pages of history.

*Photo by Leroy E. Lyon*

Through a leased agreement with the Corps of Engineers, the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission recently obtained control of 11,000 acres of land for game management purposes. Nearly all of this is open to public hunting.

