

Floodwaters and a following drought reveal some history of the Osage Lock & Dam

The Osage River, named after the Osage Indians that lived in the region, is the largest tributary of the Missouri River in the state. It originates in eastern Kansas and flows about 500 miles to the confluence with the Missouri River, 12 miles below Jefferson City.

In 1837 the steamboat North St. Louis ascended the Osage for 40 miles before running aground. It remained on a sand bar island until the following spring rains rose the waters enough to float it off. Also in the spring of 1838, the steamboat Adventure ascended the Osage for 160 miles and returned to St. Louis with little difficulty. The early settlers now saw the Osage River as a potential artery of transportation and commerce, but seasonal navigation was limited. Thus began the efforts to channel the river with rock wing dams and training walls to provide enough water depth for the steamboats to navigate for a good seven months of the year. That was the idea anyway.



#1: Photo taken October 2011: Canon 50D; 1/1500 sec; f/4.0; 35mm; ISO 1250

Approaching the lock from up-river during high water.

The Osage Lock & Dam #1 was completed and first tested on February 15, 1906, but when the lock closed the dam failed under the pressure of mounting water. It took until 1914 for the dam to be fully operational.



#2: Photo taken October 2011: Canon 50D; 1/1500 sec; f/5.6; 90mm; ISO 1600

Much of the lock & dam is now gone; the concrete base still stretches the width, about 280 feet, of the river. In 1917, only three years after the lock & dam was operational, the U.S. Government halted further funding of the Osage navigation project. By the late 1920's the surrounding forests had been depleted of timber, the main commodity sent down the river.



#3: Photo taken October 2009: Canon 50D; 1/350 sec; f/11; 24mm; ISO 800

The river needs to be quite high to safely pass through the lock. The gates were taken down after the lock ended operations.



#4: Photo taken August 2010: Canon 50D; 1/125 sec; f/5.6; 100mm; ISO 200

Picturesque and fascinating, the land and buildings around the lock remain in private ownership and are not accessible.



#5: Photo taken July 2009: Canon 50D; 1/90 sec; f/5.6; 32mm; ISO 100

On the down-river side of the dam, the river gravel is piled to near the top of the concrete base.



#6: Photo taken April 2012: Canon 50D; 1/1000 sec; f/5.6; 500mm; ISO 500

High water, from spring rains, comes over the dam's concrete base. Consistent floodwaters during the summers of 2010 and 2011 severely eroded the banks of the Osage.



#7: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/125 sec; f/6.7; 28mm; ISO 200

Previous floodwaters pushed away the river gravel on the down-side of the dam, and the severe drought of 2012 reveals the rubble that had been buried for perhaps decades.



#8: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/125 sec; f/11; 50mm; ISO 400

During hot summers, many people come to enjoy the cool-clear water below the dam. When covered in gravel, the area seemed fairly safe. It now speaks loudly to beware of what has been unseen for some time.



#9: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/500 sec; f/4.5; 80mm; ISO 200

The force of the river is persistent, and finds ways to break through the decaying timbers and concrete.



#10: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/250 sec; f/4.5; 35mm; ISO 200

The land on both sides of the river is privately owned so the lock & dam is only accessible by boat.



#11: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/250 sec; f/6.7; 70mm; ISO 200

Over a hundred years of rust on what remains of the dam's workings.



#12: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/250 sec; f/11; 130mm; ISO 200

Strange looking contraptions make one wonder their purpose.



#13: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/500 sec; f/5.6; 35mm; ISO 400

Looking into the lock from down-river, the current here is very strong.



#14: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/1500 sec; f/5.6; 200mm; ISO 640

Perhaps to sound an alarm that the lock gates are opening, the bell looks to be freshly painted.



#15: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/1500 sec; f/5.6; 190mm; ISO 640

Water pouring into the plunge pool, revealing a bit of the lock's engineering.



#16: Photo taken July 2012: Canon 50D; 1/1500 sec; f/5.6; 500mm; ISO 640

Officially decommissioned in 1951, the ruins of the old Lock & Dam remain a testament to an engineering attempt at corralling the waters of the Osage River for commercial navigation.

An attempt, it surely was.

Researched from:

http://www.riverboatdaves.com/areas/osage_r.html

<http://extra.mdc.mo.gov/fish/watershed/eosage/landuse/>

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1951&dat=19600324&id=vv5JAAAAIBAJ&sjid=AR4NAAAAIBAJ&pg=821,27497>

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What Does Man Do With Lock And Dam?

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) James N. Rice soon will become the owner of a genuine United States government lock and dam—but dam if he knows what he's going to do with it.

The property is U.S. Lock and Dam No. 1—there never was a No. 2—on the Osage River. It's 14 miles southeast of Jefferson City, near where the Osage empties into the Missouri.

Rice will become the owner because a bid of \$10,500 he submitted proved to be the highest among 20 received by the General Services Administration.

Rice, 42, a bachelor who works for the State Detective Bureau, was surprised when a newsman told him the GSA had accepted his offer.

Dog Bites Child

Patricia Guinn, 4-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Guinn, 1413 Sanford St., Richland, was treated for a dog bite at Kadlec Methodist Hospital Monday. She was released after treatment.

What will he do with his acquisition?

"Dam if I know. I hadn't given the matter any thought because I had no idea my bid would be high enough. I like to fish, and I understand the fishing is real good out there. I guess that's what was in the back of my mind when I bid on it. I might make a resort out of it sometime."

The rundown property includes about 10 acres of park-like land beside the river, three 1d frame houses, and several lesser structures. The concrete-base dam is 17 feet high and 220 feet long. Its lock is 42 feet wide.

The facility was built in the early 1900s to provide water for

shallow-draft barges to make it up the river as far as Warsaw, Mo., 173 miles from the mouth. River traffic in those days was heavy, but construction of Bagnell Dam 25 miles upstream in the 1930s put No. 1 out of business.

The Corps of Engineers maintained No. 1 until nine years ago. Then it tried to lease the property to some civic, fraternal or conservation group—free, except for maintenance costs.

There were no takers. One reason was that there is no way to get to it except by a privately owned road or by the river.

This doesn't worry Rice, who figures he can work an agreement to use the road.

As for paying for the lock and dam, he says he'll do it "n c-sh," "but it will mean scraping the bottom of the barrel."

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