

MORE than 250 years have passed since the first French explorers of the Upper Mississippi nosed their canoes into Trempealeau Bay. No doubt of it, they had their delights in fishing and hunting in those waters, as had the natives for centuries before them. One hundred and fifty years were to pass before the white man came to make a permanent settlement. Then generation after generation supplied themselves with fish and game that abounded in and about the Bay. From far and near came sportsmen to this natural reserve.

Then came a man with an idea, and that idea was to convert the vast tract of bottoms to fertile fields—to commercialize the area, regardless of fish or fowl. Came dredging machines which changed the course of the Trempealeau River, which emptied into the Bay, leaving it but a mud flat.

All was wasted effort. The only result was the ruination of this once popular playground.

In time the sportsmen uprose in an effort to restore the marsh and bay. Years passed, and another syndicate bought the area above the Bay to establish a muskrat farm—perhaps a private fishing ground. The public was barred. Long the controversy continued, finally getting into the courts, and in the end a court injunction was issued forever barring the public, although the Wisconsin Legislature created it a wild game refuge.

The sportsmen were “licked.” All hope fled. And then came Uncle Sam, building locks and dams along the Mississippi. Came the great dam at Trempealeau, the backwaters of which will restore Trempealeau Bay. Came the move to establish an immense government game refuge and Experiment Station, and the acquisition of all the tract so long in dispute. Now the day which sportsmen have awaited a quarter of a century is about to dawn. Trempealeau Bay will be restored.

The first three poems presented here were written at the different periods of the controversy. So many requests have been received for copies that they are now, with the concluding episode, made available.

— THE AUTHOR



TREMPEALEAU BAY IN DAYS OF YORE