

The area that is now Treampealeau Refuge at one time formed the major part of the Treampealeau drainage district, which was organized in 1911 by H.E. Clark, a wealthy engineer associated with the LaCrosse Dredging Company. Its purpose was to drain the area for farming. To do this, the group constructed an immense dike seven miles long from Marshland to Trempealeau Mountain, and routed the Trempealeau River around it in a new channel built at that time. The Burlington Railroad dike

completed the enclosure constructed to keep water from the agricultural fields. Two large pumps were installed to pump the area dry so crops could be planted. However, the project was only partially successful; because the water level was only lowered two feet. Seepage equalized the pumping at that point; and thus not all of the land could be farmed. By the late 1920's the project proved economically unfeasible and the drainage district went bankrupt. However, the dikes proved invaluable in maintaining a high quality marsh within its boundaries.

Pt. 1

When the Trempealeau drainage district went bankrupt, about 5,000 acres of marshland within the district were purchased by Mike Lipinski and some 30 other persons 1927 to form the Delta Fish and Fur Farm, Inc. More than a dozen artesian wells were drilled; and this water, along with springs and local runoff flooded much of the former drainage district. This fine marsh area, unaffected by pollution and silt from the Mississippi, became an excellent habitat for waterfowl, furbearers and fish, while some of the higher ground was still

utilized as pasture for dairy and beef cattle. The corporation's purpose was to raise fish and harvest furs of muskrats. Carp were shipped alive in railroad gondola cars filled with water and equipped with air compressors. As many as 20,000 muskrats were taken in one year, but the construction of the big dams for towboat navigation in 1932 raised the water three feet and had an adverse effect on fish and muskrats.

In the early 1930's, the U.S. Biological Survey, the predecessor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recognized that this area was furnishing some of the better waterfowl habitat in the river valley; and that it would make an excellent wildlife refuge. Consequently the Trempealeau Migratory Bird Refuge was authorized in 1934 by executive order, including both upland tracts and the marsh area of the Delta Fish and Fur Farm. The purchase of the 708 acre upland was made immediately, but when condemnation proceedings were made to acquire the Delta, court awards exceeded funds available and the project