

Vol. 1 No. 6 May 1943

# Did Quake Spawn Caddo Lake?

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WHEN I learned of the Indian tradition that Caddo Lake was formed by an earthquake I began to fish for seismic data to see if the Indians were right. The tradition being held in grave doubt by many who preferred the log jam theory I was resolved on having opinions displaced by substantial evidence. In the fishing for facts I soon pulled out some "whoppers," nor did I throw any of the little ones back.

IT WAS ANOTHER "forest primeval," the home and happy hunting ground of the Caddo Indians until crowded out by the white man. They camped along the shores of Cypress Creek, built villages, hunted and fished in the virgin streams and woodlands. For this, no documentary proof is needed. Game and fish were abundant over most of the United States and the Indians left their own testimony in the great number of arrow heads that have been picked up in the Caddo region.

It was in the year 1811-12 that many earthquakes rocked half the area of the United States. One of these quakes was reported by James J. Audubon while riding in Kentucky. The greatest destruction of record was that of New Madrid in extreme southeastern Missouri which is about 300 miles northeast of Caddo Lake. The earth sank, producing Reelfoot Lake and half a dozen others in the region of New Madrid in the Mississippi valley. These quakes continued with more or less violence for one year. (Bulletin 494 U. S. Geol. Survey.)

THE REGION OF Caddo Lake was called the "Trembling Ground" by the Indians, and the tradition is that "a stalwart chief was warned by the Great Spirit to take his tribesmen to the highest hills along the river shores or see



Gnarled trees rear skyward from the floor of the lake and cast their eerie patterns on the mirror-like water.

them drowned in shuddering earthquake and flood."

WARRIORS RETURNING from a hunt were said to have found a lake, Caddo Lake, where an Indian village had stood. Though some have discredited the Indian story, a study of the subject leaves no ground for questioning its truth. The more prosaic explanation has been that the lake was caused by a log jam in the Red River. It is true that log jams, 23 miles away, caused the river, when flooded, to back up as far as Jefferson and to raise the lake level several feet but that did not account for the lake. About the year 1836 and in subsequent years up to and including 1872 river raft was removed by the federal govern-

ment, and adjacent reservoirs which the river had built up by deposits, were drained. But Caddo Lake still stood and remained a large body of navigable water as shown by the tonnage hauled (U. S. Gov't report.) The first removal of raft in 1836 made Caddo Lake waterway into the Red River which continued up to 1872, during which period Jefferson was the distributing point for northeast Texas and the point of embarkation for Texas cotton.

BUT REVERTING TO the low water period subsequent to 1872 we still have some living witnesses on the status of the lake before the Mooringsport dam was built in 1913. Dan Albright, who resides on the lake shore, became a resident in 1908. He says the lake then, though not so deep, was about as wide as it is now, admitting of course, that certain low areas were submerged when the dam raised the water level some four feet.

IT WAS DURING the low water level, probably occasioned by the removal of raft from the Red River, that mussel hunting in Caddo Lake drew pearl hunters from far and wide and the lake became famous as a pearl fishery.

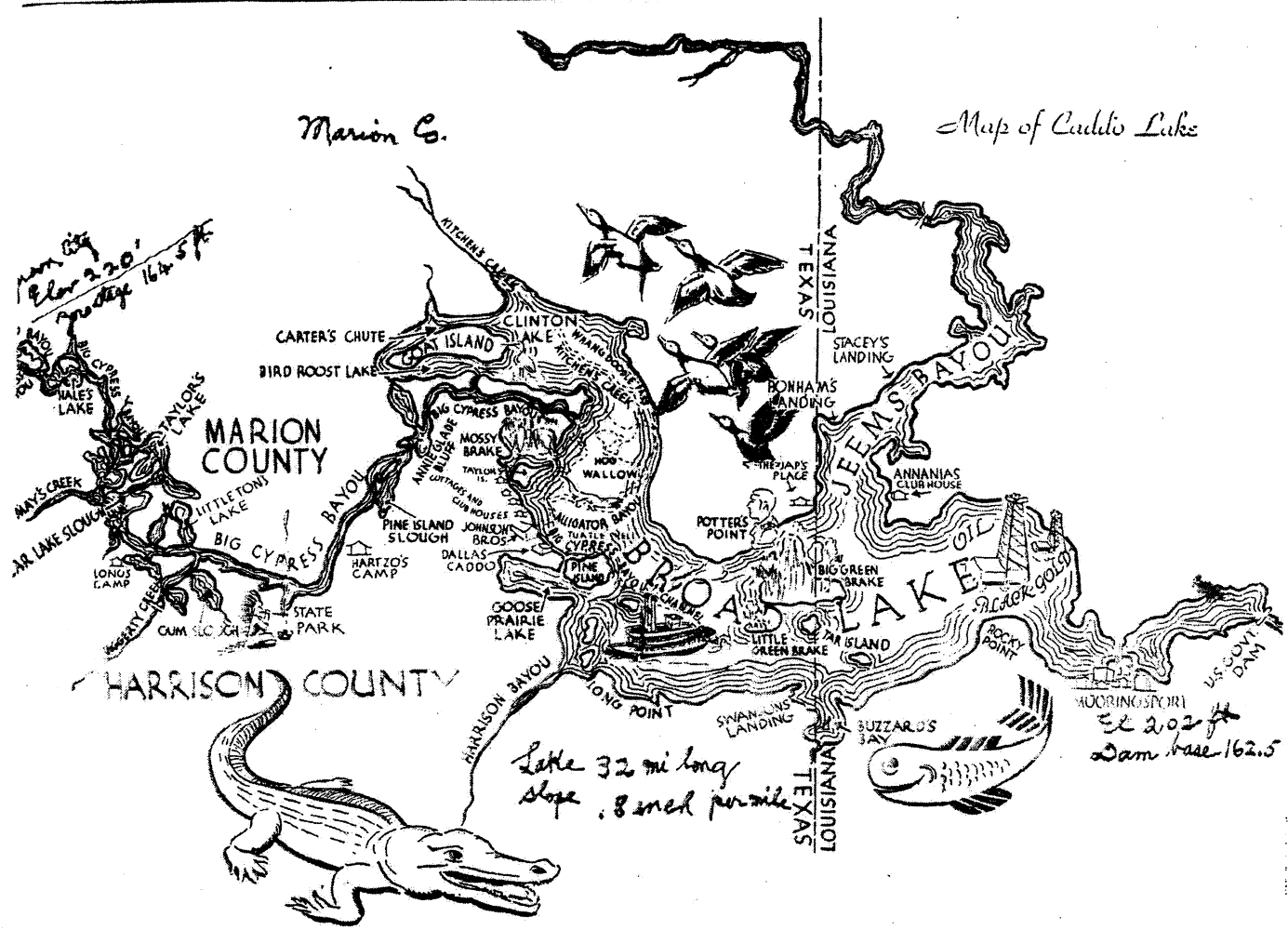
GEORGE MARATA, AN old Japanese who resides on the north shore of the lake, was among the pearl hunters. It was while gathering mussels in the shallows that in 1911 he picked up Indian pottery and arrow heads at points a mile from the present shore line in what is now ten feet of water. This may have been the site of the traditional Indian village. Also many Indian artifacts have been taken from the lake by Professor Don Brown of Centenary College, Shreveport, where he has a notable exhibit in his private museum.

IN THE SAME area, and other parts of the lake in ten feet of water, are large cypress trees, some of them three and four feet in diameter which must have begun to grow before the inundation.

All this points to the probable sinking of the earth, by an earthquake, submerging the village and the aged cypress trees many of which are rotting away (There is an abundance of younger cypress, in shallow water, which apparently started on exposed areas during the low water period.)

IN FURTHER EVIDENCE of the great catastrophe the lake is not an eroded basin cut down by floods. On the contrary it has been filling up. Judge H. T. Littleton of Marshall in 1910 made numerous soundings from Jefferson Mooringsport and reported that a dam would improve the navigability of the lake would not be necessary if deposits of Big Cypress were cleaned out. He





feet. At old Port Caddo where the State Park is located an old pier has the inscription "50 feet deep." The present depth is 30 feet, according to Mrs. Esther D. Webb, manager of the park, who says the sign appears to have been placed there a long time ago.

THE LOWER END of the 32 mile lake bottom is only about two feet lower than the upper end, as shown by zero elevations furnished by the U. S. Geological Survey of Louisiana. In reverse, there is a gradual fall of the lake bottom westward to the Annie Glade Bluff where the depression is 30 feet lower than the base of the dam near Mooringsport. The original depression of the lake bottom was perhaps much greater if the fill-in of 20 feet at old Port Caddo can be taken as a criterion.

GRANTING THAT AN earthquake did it, how do we know but that the earth disturbance occurred far back in geologic times? Here are some facts to the contrary: Wm. Darby in a guide book written in 1818 says that around Natchitoches, La., several lakes were formed near the Red River by deposits thrown up (such as log jams) and forests were submerged and the ruins of cypress trees are abundant but nothing is left but the "stems" or stumps. Here we have real antiquity but many of the old cypress trees in Caddo are still to be seen in full foliage,

while others are resisting the slow processes of decay.

REELFOOT LAKE, formed in 1811, has many living trees standing in deep water as shown by Wilbur Nelson in the National Geographic of January, 1924, and he says that Reelfoot was not the only lake created by the earthquake. "Large areas of northwestern Louisiana were partly submerged and some small lakes were formed."

Brother lakes are Reelfoot and Caddo

**WILDLIFE STAMPS OUT**

For the sixth consecutive year the wildlife conservation stamps of the National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D. C., are available to outdoor enthusiasts and stamp collectors. The National Wildlife Federation has for years been teaching the doctrine of conservation, particularly conservation of soil, water, forests, and wildlife, all of which now have become paramount to winning the war. Individuals or groups can be of material help to the conservation movement by purchasing a set of 1943 wildlife conservation stamps. These 64 stamps, available at a dollar per sheet, are reproductions of paintings by America's outstanding nature artists. They may be secured by writing the National Wildlife Federation, 1212 Sixteenth Street, NW, Washington, D. C.

with very similar forested features. It is time for the log jam advocates to fade out of the picture.

CADDO HAS BEEN a wonder lake for fishermen for a hundred years. It has an area of 70,000 acres, the largest natural fresh water lake in the south as indicated by "Gazetteer of Texas Streams."

An Ohio poet, C. H. Griffiths, Jr., of Cleveland visiting the lake is inspired by the enchantment of the thick, foreboding stillness of this place and he says:

*"Be warned! this is an ominous domain  
Of stealthy shadows, furtive stuff of  
dreams,  
Of forms grown twisted under ancient  
pain."*

*"When thin new moons sift down their  
ecrie light  
These shrouded forms assume a ghostly  
guise;  
Deep in the husbed seclusion of the night,  
From out these brooding waters phantoms  
rise."*

*"Such times, this is the stage of dark events  
As writhing shapes in pantomimic sway  
Rehearse primeval rites 'til dawn presents  
The sober disenchanting glance of day."*

*"Then fades the grim primordial pageantry . . .  
Be warned, this is an ominous domain!"*