

Relocation from the Bottomlands

Within a few years the Three Tribe's members were obliged to move to new homes. Relocation and salvage procedures established by the Corps proved unsatisfactory. Private movers contracted by the army were unreliable, and tribal members were denied permission to cut most of their timber prior to inundation. Flooding of the bottom lands rendered the residual reservation useless. Settlement payments were too low to provide full reestablishment of most families. The uprooting of kinship and other primary groups destroyed the community life so fundamental to the Indians' culture. Farms and ranches were liquidated, unemployment rose as high as 70 percent, and many tribal members were driven to a life of despair in nearby urban centers.

Millions of dollars in federal funds were pumped into the reservation to counteract social and economic damages. After a generation of hard work the tribes began to show signs of recovery, but psychic scars from the ordeal remained evident today. (Lawson, p.61-62). The tribal members' concern was to find sites for wells in the area to which most of them were going to move. In April, 1950 actual test drilling began. By September 27, wells had been drilled in the Western Segment, and possible home sites were being selected.