

# Izaak Walton League Monthly

*We Pledge Ourselves to do our best to Restore  
to Posterity the Outdoor America of our Ancestors*



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Volume I

JULY, 1923

## The Drainage Crime of a Century is about to be Committed and You Can Stop It. Will You Do It?

By  
WILL H. DILG

**T**HE Upper Mississippi bottoms are America's most prolific spawning grounds for black bass and for all warm water game and food fishes. From this section, during the low water season, millions upon millions of baby bass are annually saved by the Bureau of Fisheries rescue crews from the thousands of land locked ponds, lakes, sloughs, etc. And if this section were properly protected, billions upon billions of game and food fishes would be annually spawned in these bottoms. In truth, here mother nature has set down the greatest natural hatchery for game fishes in the whole world and it runs without cost to the States along the river or to the National Government. If this region were made into a National Preserve the Federal Government could annually supply billions of six inch baby black bass to stock our lakes and streams everywhere and heaven knows all of them need twenty times more stocking than they are now getting.

This region, covering more than three hundred miles, is no less important to the hunter than it is to the fisherman, because here the Supreme Creator of the Universe has made these river lands a paradise for wild water fowl of every species. Nowhere on this earth are there such natural feeding grounds for ducks, brant and geese. Here also are found every specie of our four-footed little animals, such as mink, muskrat, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, swamp rabbit, etc. And last but not least, every kind of song birds by the

countless thousands. Veritably, these river lands offer you and your boy and posterity the greatest sport to be found on this planet.

This is true as things are now—even without decent law enforcement, but with the proper policing this region would be ten thousand times more fertile in fish and game than it is today. But it's going to GO—it's going to be destroyed—these river lands are going to be drained all the way from Lake Pepin, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill. And when these river bottoms are once drained THEY ARE GONE FOREVER. God made them to be just what they are and if man is permitted to drain them they are GONE—just as much as a forest when put "under the ax" is GONE.

Terrible picture, isn't it? It's particularly terrible to me, and would be equally so to you too, if you had

just returned as I have from a tour of investigation all through these beautiful river bottoms, and worst of all, my brother, is the fact that after they do their draining only worthless land is left—useless for farming purposes. I'm not guessing when I make the statement "useless for farming purposes," because so says Dr. A. L. Bakke who has devoted a lifetime to the study of such subjects. This learned man knows what he's talking about. It is his profession, his business, to know all about plant life and farm lands. But how about the suckers who don't know, and give up their hard earned dollars for these bunk farm lands to be? But

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# The Drainage Crime



*A Lotus bed in the Winneshiek*

let's not waste time on the suckers. It's far saner to think of **your boy and the coming generations of boys** who are being **SOLD OUT**.

It's no easy matter to put this important Upper Mississippi drainage proposition to you just right in writing, and so if you are one of those "Who Cares" I must ask you to please sit tight and not rock the boat and give me a chance to put the whole matter up to you the best way I can. Of course, if you and I could sit out on the porch with our pipes and talk it over in the moonlight and if we could then put it up to two million red-blooded sportsmen in the same way, by sundown tomorrow five Governors, ten U. S. Senators, a lot of Congressmen, and a few Cabinet officers, including the President of the United States, would get busy and do something. I say this with the utmost confidence because experience has proven to us here at headquarters that our State officers and our National Government want to do the right thing just as soon as they find out what the people want.

This was proven by our Superior National Forest victory when we stopped automobile roads from being built through the forest and thus saved for posterity the greatest canoe route in the world and the last great forest in the middle west. I'm not arguing now—I'm telling you.

I don't want this article to be a word longer than I can help, but I must seemingly digress for a minute or two and then we'll get back to these river bottoms. I intend to tell you how you can easily save this Upper Mississippi sportsmen's paradise forever, and not only that but make your **HOME SPORT BETTER**.

I had an hour or more with Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover on March 4th past (he is a member of our Washington, D. C., Chapter). My talk with him will prove to any man of common sense the need of united action on the part of the American sportsman to procure what he wants and should have, and that without

such united action he will not be able to accomplish anything of real and lasting consequence.

While discussing pollution, Mr. Hoover said: "My pollution bill failed to pass, as you know. It never had a chance. Official Washington has but little evidence going to prove that the people give a damn about pollution. **And until the people care and let their State governments and the National Government know that they do care it is useless to attempt to get anywhere with pollution or any Outdoor America legislation.**" Here you have it straight from the shoulder. In those two sentences Secretary Hoover said **IT ALL**.

It must be plain to you therefore that if these wonderful river lands and their fish and game are to be saved from being ruined **FOREVER** united action must be taken. I know this Upper Mississippi country from A to Z. For twenty odd years I have averaged at least sixty days on the Upper Mississippi each fishing season, with the single exception of 1922, and then I was angling for game fishermen instead of game fishes. Nowhere on this earth is there so beautiful a river country—the Hudson River does not begin to match it in rugged beauty. The red man loved this "Father of Waters" country with an undying flame and to him it was just what it is to the white man with a love of sport in his blood—the **happiest hunting grounds of America**. For years the drainage land operators have had their eyes on these Upper Mississippi river lands. Here they see just another golden opportunity to harvest the people's dollars.

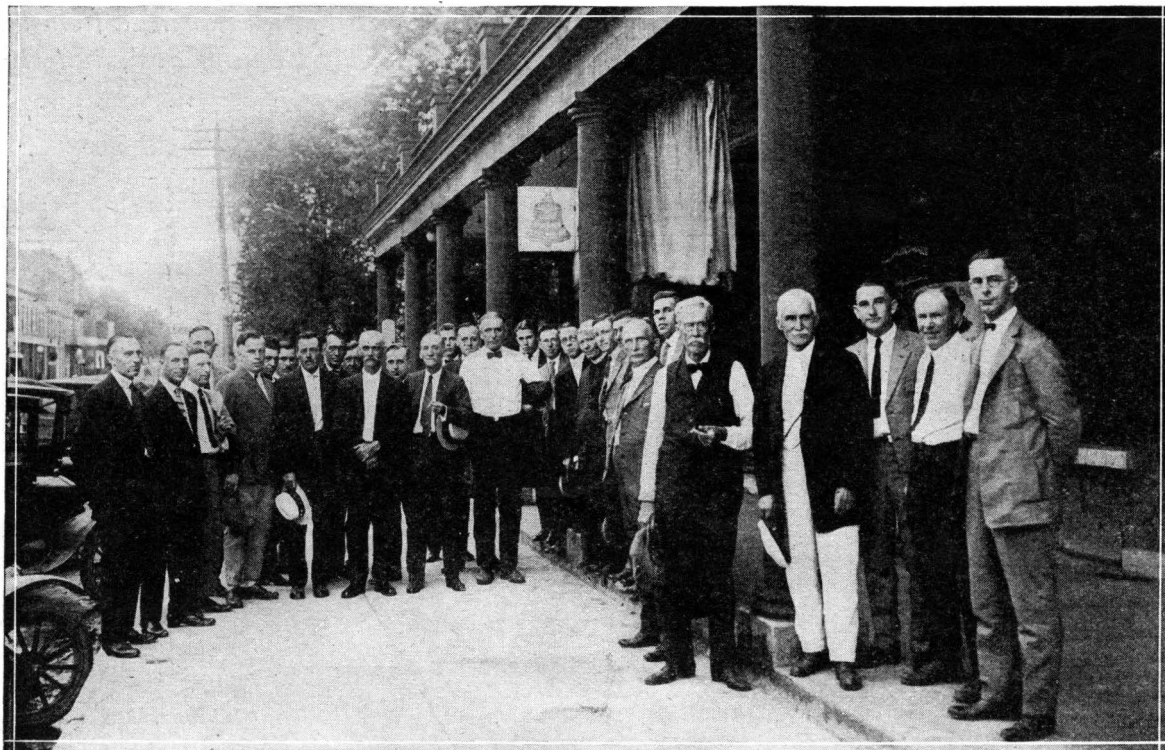
The drainage history of the United States is mostly one long story of swindle. Every community in America has had sad experiences on the drained and reclaimed land question. The "something for nothing" argument worked centuries ago and it works just as well today. I am credibly informed that nine out of every ten drainage propositions have failed to bring forth good farm lands. Every state in the nation has had its bitter

**It Is Important That YOU Read Cover Editorial**



# of a Century

*Continuation of  
Cover Editorial*



*Some of the members of the McGregor Izaak Walton Chapter who raised \$400.00 to fight the Winneshiek Drainage*

lesson, especially Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. We can cover that part of this question in one sentence by stating that the farm land experts, including such national celebrities as Dr. H. C. Oberholser and Dr. L. H. Pammel, declare that the drainage of these river lands **WILL NOT BRING FORTH GOOD FARM LANDS.**

The scheme is to drain both sides of the river all of the way from Lake Pepin, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill., as the crow flies an area of more than three hundred miles. It is said up and down the river that the promoters behind the plan have pledged seven million dollars and expect the next National Congress to foster this gigantic proposition and to pass an appropriation of fourteen million dollars of the people's money to make it a good job—something which in the years to come will smell to high heaven.

Now here is where you come in and you must draw cards **right now** and play 'em too. There is no other way—this is not a case of what we sportsmen would like to do or want to do, it's gone beyond that and is now a plain case of what we must do **IF we really mean that we are lovers of sports afield and astream.** I'm not arguing with you, my brothers—I'm telling you.

The river sportsmen of Wisconsin and Iowa are in particular distress at this hour at the threatened immediate drainage of a strip of bottom lands on the Wisconsin side, lying between Lynxville on the south and De Soto on the north, about twenty miles in length, or approximately fifteen thousand acres, known as the Winneshiek bottoms. Now, while it is hard to pick out a best section along the river, still like everything in this world there is always a best and this best is represented by the **Winneshiek bottoms.**

The War Department has issued a permit to drain the Winneshiek bottoms and one of the Wisconsin lower courts, after giving the matter a hearing, authorized the drainage. You must understand right here that the

sportsmen along the river knew little or nothing about the whole matter until suddenly it became known that the War Department had issued a permit and a Wisconsin court had consented to the drainage. At once the sportsmen along the river were in a panic and got busy, especially the Izaak Walton Chapter of McGregor, Iowa. Now, McGregor is not a large town but our Chapter there raised four hundred dollars between sun-up and sundown. They at once engaged Wisconsin attorneys and started action in the Supreme Court of Wisconsin because **they knew that would gain time and stop immediate drainage.** Then they appealed to headquarters and asked that I come to McGregor and make an investigation. I agreed to come if they would have a farm land expert accompany me and so it was arranged to secure the best man in Iowa for such a purpose, Dr. A. L. Bakke, of the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, plant physiologist, Iowa Exp. Station, Ames, Iowa. Dr. Bakke's report will be found on page 619 as it is too lengthy to be printed here.

The investigation was made under the most favorable conditions. Mr. Fred G. Bell, a sportsman most of the time and a grain operator some of the time, brought us to Lynxville in his sixty-foot cruiser "The Arbutus" a splendid and comfortable boat on which we lived during the cruise. The crew consisted of the learned Dr. Bakke, Ed. Prior, President of the McGregor Chapter, Dr. J. E. Webb, and our host Fred Bell, all friends of mine I hope for life.

Lynxville is a tiny village resting on some high ground in the Winneshiek. The sportsmen there turned out to a man and offered us the use of their launches and gave us every conceivable help. We spent three busy days in the Winneshiek country.

Boys, oh boys, oh boys, how I wish I possessed the genius to properly describe this wonderful Winneshiek

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# The Drainage Crime of a Century

(Continued from page 601)  
country and the paradise it is for the fisherman and hunter. God never made anything more beautiful. He made it, my brothers, for men like you and me. He intended it to be just what it is—a playground for His children forever and now the nickel and dime chasers would drain off all those running waters—

No wonder Capt. C. F. Culler, Superintendent of the Rescue Crews of the Bureau of Fisheries, actually wept when he heard that the Department of War had issued a permit to drain the Winneshiek country. Only last year he and his men rescued along the Upper Mississippi three hundred and thirty-nine million food and game fishes, and he

writes, **mostly game fishes.** Capt. Culler knows that the Winneshiek is the queen pearl of the Upper River and like every decent sportsman along the river he burned with helpless indignation when he learned that the Winneshiek country was to be **crucified.**

Now, my brother sportsmen, please keep in mind the League's Superior National Forest victory and do not forget the advice Secretary of Commerce Hoover gave us. I'm going to repeat his words here—they follow: "And until **THE PEOPLE CARE** and let their State Governments and the National Government **KNOW THAT THEY DO CARE** it is useless to attempt to get anywhere with pollution or any Outdoor America legislation."

Of course, I know **every red-blooded man of you** wants to help the Izaak Walton League of America stop the drainage of the Winneshiek bottom lands and to register his protest against all drainage along the beautiful Upper Mississippi river.

It will cost you a two cent postage stamp—a



*Lost Man's Slough in the Winneshiek.*

those ponds and lakes and all those scores of little rivers. Think of the most beautiful lowlands your mind can picture. Dream of every kind of wild swamp flower, including the lotus beds, and don't forget the wild rice fields and the waving swamp grasses billowing in the breezes. Think of the rushes and the willows and the water trees and the wild grape vines, and above all the birds—not forgetting the black birds with their soft flute-like wake up notes as morning breaks. But what's the use, if you love a swamp just as does every hunter and fisherman ever born, then you know just what I mean—one can feel such places as is the Winneshiek but one can't describe them. Even as no man has ever been able to adequately picture the Grand Canyon in words so no man can describe the Winneshiek.



*The Arbutus, owned by F. G. Bell, in which we made tour of investigation.*

## Letter To the President

President Warren G. Harding,  
White House, Washington, D. C.  
Dear Mr. President:

Please do what you can to stop the drainage of the Winneshiek bottom lands which lie along the Upper Mississippi river between Lynxville and De Soto, Wis.

Please also do what you can to urge our next National Congress to purchase all of the Upper Mississippi river bottom lands lying between Lake Pepin, Minn., and Rock Island, Ill., so that they may become forever a National Preserve. These regions are, as your Commissioner of the Bureau of Fisheries will tell you, the most prolific breeding grounds for all warm water food and game fishes (especially black bass) in

our country. Should these river lands be owned by the nation and then properly protected **billions of game fishes would annually result and these could be used to restock our lakes and streams everywhere.**

The Upper Mississippi country is a natural feeding ground for all kinds of wild fowl. It is also a paradise for song birds and for all species of fur bearing animals.

I ask this not so much for myself as I ask it for the youngsters of today and for the boys of the future—who represent our country's **TOMORROW.**

With all best wishes,

Yours for Outdoor America,  
Signed.....

Address.....

sheet of paper—an envelope and five minutes of your time. I want you to write a letter to the President of the United States so that he may know just what the American sportsman thinks of this drainage scheme. President Harding will be glad to hear from you, I know. No man is too great, nor too little, nor too rich, nor too poor, nor too busy to respond to this appeal. If you are too busy to write, clip out the letter in the box on this page and mail it to the President, and get every man and woman you know to do the same. **"Let George Do It"** won't do this time, you have got to do it yourself **OR IT WON'T BE DONE**—again, I'm not arguing with you, my brothers—I'm telling you.



**Do It Now!**