

Title: Washed Away by Progress
Producer: Jim Krause

Overview & Treatment (Revised 11/15/02)

Overview

Do you think you know Lake Monroe? Maybe you're one of the thousands of Hoosiers and tourists who enjoy leisure time on or around the water. But underneath the jet skis and fishing boats lay the remains of a town that was washed away by progress.

This story is about the "lost" town of Elkinsville. This once peaceful farming community in Brown County was displaced by construction of Lake Monroe. In the 1960s despite protests from the residents, the Army Corp of Engineers used the power of eminent domain to buy their buildings, homes and farms.

Through an extensive collection of photos and interviews with former residents, the town of Elkinsville is being brought back to life. Accompanied by period music we'll hear from some of the residents, see where they used to live and work, and get a unique glimpse of Indiana history seen through the eyes of a group of people who can never go home again.

In telling the story, the video will explore ideas of home and heritage, eminent domain, and look at what we hold dear to us and why.

Treatment

Act I – 10 minutes

Scene 1 - Introduction

Fading up on low aerial shots of Lake Monroe and the surrounding terrain, a voice over describes it as a jewel of southern Indiana. The camera brings us down to lake level showing boaters, swimmers, water skiers and hikers. A series of short sound bites from these people help outline the fact that Lake Monroe is more than just a water supply and flood control project; Lake Monroe is a major source of recreation, income, and represents a heightened quality of life for residents and tourists in southern Indiana.

But nothing comes without a price.

Scene 2 - Conflict

Over an acoustic guitar playing in a minor key, a series of black and white images show portraits of people outside their homes, children, families and farmers and people working. Bill Miller and Bob Cross describe the people's emotional pain and how against their wishes these people we see were forced to leave their homes. The last sound bite explains how the move was one of necessity ordered by the Army Corp of Engineers.

Act II – 30 minutes

Scene 3 – The necessity

From an aerial viewpoint we see the scenic hills and community of Bloomington as David Cable and/or Chuck Parrish of the US Army Corps of Engineers review the problem the region faced in its quest for a water supply in the 1940s. We cut from the interviews to Leonard Springs and Twin Lakes, two failed attempts at reservoirs. The interviewee tells us that public officials were getting desperate to find an adequate source of water in a timely manner. They tell us that after extensive surveys it was determined that the Salt Creek watershed was the area's best hope for a water supply. During the last sound bite they explain that unfortunately several communities had to be displaced by the lake, including the town of Elkinsville.

Scene 4 –Elkinsville lives and stories

We revisit some of the black and white images accompanied by old-style instrumental folk music. Dissolving from picture to picture we move closer in as voiceovers describe some of the town's former residents. Pausing on one still image we dissolve to an interview with the person in the present day- some 50 years after the picture had been taken. Using this same technique- dissolving from a black and white photo to the present day interview, we visit another former resident. Cutting between the interviews, we hear of what kind of homes, schools and buildings they grew up in. Both interviews end on what they felt when they heard they had to pack up and move.

Scene 5 – Eminent Domain

"No one likes to force people to move from their homes," marks the beginning of this brief segment exploring the idea of eminent domain. An interview with a public works official or city attorney, Linda Runkle is juxtaposed with an Elkinsville resident, "Leaving my home was the hardest thing I ever did."

Scene 6 – Construction begins

File footage of excavation shows construction of the dam and demolition of trees and buildings. If possible we will insert a segment from a news story run from a Louisville or Indianapolis TV station in the 1950-60s. A sequence of map graphics shows the region as it was, and the lake filling in up to the normal pool level. We see that Elkinsville wasn't the only community affected by the lake.

Scene 7 – It could have Been Avoided

On camera, Bill Miller explains the true tragedy: there was a mistake in the elevation estimates. After the residents had packed up and their homes destroyed, someone realized that Elkinsville didn't have to be moved.

[Fund drive break]

Bill Miller explains that there was a variance in the lake's estimated water levels. Standing near what used to be the center of the town of Elkinsville, Bill points out that even during the highest flood stage, when water flows over the spillway, the high water level is still clear from the center of town.

Scene 8 – Moving day

The black and white photos introduce this short sequence where the Elkinsville residents recall moving day and their various destinations.

Scene 9 – A lake is formed

News file footage and pictures from the Army Corps of Engineers show the gradual filling in of the lake. This is punctuated by remarks from Elkinsville residents, describing their reaction upon seeing the valley filling with water. This segment ends on an interview clip, "My goodness, seeing all the roads, trees, buildings. They were all gone. I'd never seen anything like it before."

Scene 10 - Myths and legends

Through interviews with local historians and former residents we learn that while the town is long gone, Elkinsville has become a place of myths and legends. Sightings of Bigfoot, UFOs and a miniature Stonehenge atop Browning Hill keep Elkinsville a place of mystery and intrigue.

Act III – 10 minutes

Scene 11- Lake Monroe today

Similar to the beginning, we see aerial footage of Lake Monroe as we quickly take stock of all the lake offers. Shots of the dam, the Fourwinds Inn & Marina, Deam Wilderness, and the numerous state recreational areas serve as the backdrop for a series of quick clips from people involved in various aspects of the lake.

Scene 12 Reunion & resolution

The Elkinsville reunion sets the stage for the last interviews. We hear that though deeply saddened to have to move, the former residents hold no grudge. While they miss their homes, they understand the necessity of an ample water supply and the benefits the lake provides to all of the citizens. At the end, our last interviewee tells us “ Lake Monroe is a thing of beauty and a great benefit to southern Indiana but Home is precious and will be forever missed.”

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