"Lake Texoma," Kerr recalled, "was born of suffering."

And it was not born easily. Oklahoma Gov. Red Phillips fought the project all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where a landmark decision established the responsibility of the Corps in public power projects.

Kerr tells of the beginning of the project, from one angle:

"The Red River in seven raging floods beginning in 1843 all but drowned the border town of Denison, Texas, as well as the bottom-lands. Nearly thirteen million acre-feet of flood-waters swept down the Red River in the angry flood of 1908. A young Texas legislator who lived just ten miles south of the river at Bonham decided there must be a way to stop these periodic rampages. From the day he came to Congress, Representative Sam Rayburn fought for flood control on the Red River. Finally, in the mid 1930s, long before he became Speaker of the House, Rayburn won approval of this mighty project to harness the river, hold back its waters, and generate electric power." [4]

Even World War II could not stop the construction of Denison Dam, which continued from 1940 until 1945 despite the cry of critics (including opponents of the Rural Electrification Administration) who wanted the construction material diverted to defense work. Proponents argued that the project would provide power for wartime use.[5]

Before the dam could become reality, however, events would conspire to make it the focal point in a historic confrontation over public power in the southwest.

1944: Corps' workers stocked Lake Texoma generously with fingerling bluegill fish (inset photo). A year later, eager fishermen were flocking below the dam.