

977.8

F659

Chicago and Alton Railway.

The Flood of 1903.

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

# The FLOOD of 1903





Alden S. Fowler

American & Co. Washington  
Big in Indianapolis Salt Springs  
Ind.

## THE FLOOD OF 1903

DEDICATED TO OUR FRIENDS, THE TICKET  
AGENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, WHO  
CAN ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE THE DIFFI-  
CULTIES UNDER WHICH RAILWAYS ARE  
SOMETIMES COMPELLED TO OPERATE





977.8

F 657

IN. 402

## THE FLOOD OF 1903

**D**URING the month of June, 1903, the Chicago & Alton Railway passed through the most disastrous flood conditions in the history of the property. High water made its appearance at Kansas City, May 31st, and ended at East St. Louis, June 18th, which covers a period of nearly three weeks. During that time both all-rail passenger and all-rail freight service was impossible between Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City, except by detouring trains via circuitous routes and, notably, by the use of steamboats between Alton and St. Louis. Communication, so far as passenger traffic was concerned, was carried on continuously. It is principally of these successful efforts in keeping the line open that this pamphlet treats, the pictures illustrating conditions at a period when the Chicago & Alton was, in fact,

**“ THE ONLY WAY ”**

## AT KANSAS CITY

The high water at Kansas City made its first appearance in the 12th Street yard, May 31st. The work of getting cars and engines to neighboring points of safety began at once, and met with more or less success, but the water rose so rapidly (about one foot an hour) that ten passenger and baggage cars, 700 freight cars and two engines were caught in the flood. Fortunately, the water did not go completely over the roofs of this equipment, the high-water mark ranging from the car floors to within one foot of the roofs of equipment left in the lowest places. As a result, only a small number of cars were derailed, but the yardmasters', the car inspectors' offices and platforms were floated away or badly damaged.

In the Kansas City freight house the water began to creep over the floor, May 31st, at noon, and by 3:45 the same afternoon over three feet of water covered the floor. Employes left the freight house on a raft at 4:00 P. M., May 31st.

The high water came over the floor of the Kansas City Union Depot at 11:30 A. M., May 31st, and at 9:00 P. M., same day, there was six feet of water

over the floor. One of the illustrations on another page, gives a better idea of this condition than many words. Passenger traffic into and out of Kansas City Union Depot was suspended from May 31st to June 9th, the C. & A. running the first train into the Union Depot, local passenger train No. 61 from Slater, Mo., June 9th, 1903.

At Kansas City the highest point reached by the Missouri River was 35 feet, Sunday night, May 31st, but the principal damage was caused by the Kaw River, which rose eight feet higher than the highest stage of the Missouri.

#### AT GLASGOW

Where the Missouri River flows adjacent to the C. & A. right of way, the roadbed sustained six breaks, as follows:

Break No. 1,	850 ft. long,	7 ft. deep,	5,100 cu. yds. fill.			
“ “ 2,	1,300 “ “	10 “ “	7,800 “ “	“ “	280 yds. trestle.	
“ “ 3,	500 “ “	12 “ “	6,200 “ “	“ “		
“ “ 4,	300 “ “	13 “ “	3,700 “ “	“ “		
“ “ 5,	800 “ “	13 “ “	.....			
“ “ 6,	300 “ “	10 “ “	3,600 “ “	“ “		

All this was in the vicinity of the magnificent million-dollar bridge—a bridge in the approaches and reconstruction of which nearly half a million dollars have been spent during the last two years. The bridge, of course, stood like a rock against the tremendous current of the water, but the approaches and trestle work were ravaged by the flood, and from June 4th to 16th trains were detoured by other lines.

#### **AT LOUISIANA**

On June 5th, there occurred a washout of 800 feet, which ran 60 feet deep—the result of the break in the Sny levee. The C. & A. right of way formed a portion of the levee at this point, the track itself being on the top of the levee. Near this washout the embankment, rails, etc., were completely washed away and out of sight, and it was a case of bridging and piling to cross the washout. This was accomplished June 16th. Passenger trains in the meantime were detoured by other routes

#### **ALTON, EAST ST. LOUIS AND ST. LOUIS**

These three points may be covered as one, for the flood practically covered the entire right of way between these points. The City of Alton, Illinois, there-

fore became the railway terminus and starting point for passengers enroute to and from St. Louis, and this condition existed from Sunday, June 7th, to Friday, June 19th, 1903.

The principal trouble was at East St. Louis, where, on Friday afternoon, June 5th, the water was reported dangerous. Extra freight equipment was started to points of safety, but Saturday, June 6th, prophesy was generally made that the railroad property had little to fear. The falsity of this prediction was apparent when Sunday morning, June 7th, at nine o'clock, a telegram from St. Louis announced that the water was rising and that movement of trains by the Eads Bridge was impossible, and that by night there would be little if any chance of any railway line bringing trains into or taking trains out of St. Louis.

On Sunday, June 7th, arrangements were perfected with the Eagle Packet Company to turn over their two boats, the Spread Eagle and the Bald Eagle, for use in handling passengers, baggage, mail, milk and express between Alton and St. Louis, in connection with the Chicago & Alton Railway trains. Passengers from Chicago and Kansas City arriving at Alton on trains Monday morning were transferred to the boats and landed in St. Louis only twenty minutes

later than the usual schedule for the regular all-rail route. Simultaneously, the service northbound was opened, passengers from St. Louis being taken to Alton by boat and transferred to the Alton Limited and Kansas City Limited trains, for Springfield, Bloomington, Chicago and Kansas City.

The arrangement with the Eagle Packet Company proved an exceptionally satisfactory one. The boats were placed in charge of C. & A. representatives, who accompanied each boat on each trip during the entire flood period and looked after the comfort and convenience of all passengers.

At Alton the transfer between the boat and the train was made without the slightest inconvenience to the passengers, for the water in the Mississippi rose to such a height that the boats threw their gang planks right onto the railway station platform within six feet of the trains.

The landing at St. Louis, a floating dock house, conveniently adjusted itself to the varying heights of the water.

The Mississippi had overflowed its banks and the back water, extending for miles beyond the usual confines of the Father of Waters, presented a truly magnificent spectacle. As the boats passed the point where the Missouri flows into the Mississippi, new and great interest was awakened, and again

when the boats, with lowered stacks and watchful look-outs, passed under the Merchants and Eads bridges, barely having room to clear, all on board cheered with the crowds of spectators who crowded the bridges and approaches. While the trip on the boat had these pleasurable, novel and exciting features, the devastation and suffering wrought by the flood was always in evidence. But, upon the whole, the diversity from the old, established rail route was distinctly welcome; so much so, in fact, that since the flood many requests have been received to continue the boat service to the extent of giving passengers via "The Only Way" the option of journeying between Alton and St. Louis by rail or by boat.

The volume of baggage, mail, express, milk, etc., was simply enormous, as for days at a time the Alton route was the only one in operation, and the C. & A. and the Eagle Packet Company handled not only their own traffic, but the traffic of other railway lines which were detouring their trains via Alton. The casual observer who saw those surging crowds of excited, hurrying passengers; those tremendous piles of Uncle Sam's mail pouches; the mountains of baggage and truck after truck of express traffic, and the endless lines of negro roustabouts, each negro carrying his shining milk can in the quick shamle up

and down the gang-planks, would imagine there was little order in all this seeming confusion, hurry and bustle. But if any one went away with that impression, he was wrong, for all was governed by a perfect system.

The close observer noted the practiced methods which prevailed; how long years of experience in steamboating, the loading of miscellaneous cargoes, fitted into the flood conditions, and resulted in maintaining a service creditable to the C. & A. Railway and to the Eagle Packet Company.

The Eagle Packet Company, whose roomy and handsomely equipped river packets were placed at the service of the Chicago & Alton Railway during the two weeks of the flood, is the oldest steamboat line operating from St. Louis. It was founded in 1861 by Captain William Leyhe, its President, and Captain Henry Leyhe, its General Manager. Its first boat was named the "Young Eagle," and its builders were the captains themselves, who cut, hauled and sawed the timber of which it was constructed. For tiller ropes these enterprising young boat-builders used the bed-cords of their mother's bed. The first boat was built on the wharf at Warsaw, Ill., was 14 feet wide and 80 feet long, and ran between Warsaw and Alexandria and Keokuk.



In 1865 the business of the company had so prospered that a second boat, the Gray Eagle, was built, also at Warsaw, and added to the service. A third boat, the first Spread Eagle, was built in 1872, for the trade between Keokuk and Louisiana.

In 1874, the company removed to St. Louis, since which time it has enjoyed continuous and increasing prosperity, until to-day it is operating four magnificent steamers and building a fifth, which will be the largest and finest of all. The names of the four are the "Spread Eagle" (the fourth of her name), the "Bald Eagle," the "Grey Eagle" and the "Cape Girardeau." The two former were the boats that did such heroic service during the big flood, the Spread Eagle, under the command of Capt. Wm. Leyhe, carrying over 24,000 passengers between St. Louis and Alton, without accident, delay or inconvenience, and to the general satisfaction of all. The Bald Eagle, which was commanded by Capt. Harry Leyhe, made a close second.

This little history of the flood of 1903 would be incomplete, did it not contain unstinted praise for Mr. Russel E. Gardner, of St. Louis, Mo. Mr. Gardner, who is president and principal owner of the Banner Buggy Co., a successful, profit-sharing institution, also owns the private yacht "Annie Russell," the pret-

tiest craft afloat on the Mississippi. Although devoted to pleasure, the boat was put into splendid use during the flood. Day and night steam was kept up in her boilers, the crew was continually on duty during that trying period, and Mr. Gardner himself directed the work of saving the unfortunates, whose retreat was cut off by the merciless waters. Mr. Gardner, with his yacht, took care of no less than 2,500 flood sufferers. From the first signal of distress up to the time the waters receded Mr. Gardner devoted himself to the work and repeatedly risked his life and his yacht to save the unfortunates. Time and time again it seemed as if the boat was unable to withstand the raging torrent of water. At one time it had to be lashed to the harbor boat Mark Twain, and both crafts came near to being dashed to pieces against the piers of the Eads bridge.



Kansas City, Mo., June 1, 1903. Interior of Union Depot, Waiting Room and Ticket Office.



Kansas City, Mo., June 2, 1903. High-water mark in front of Union Passenger Station.



Union Avenue looking west from veranda of Union Depot, Kansas City, Mo., June 2, 1903. High-water mark



Kansas City, Mo. The Gondolier in Union Avenue.



Kansas City, Mo. Sink hole on Santa Fe Street, two blocks from the Missouri River.

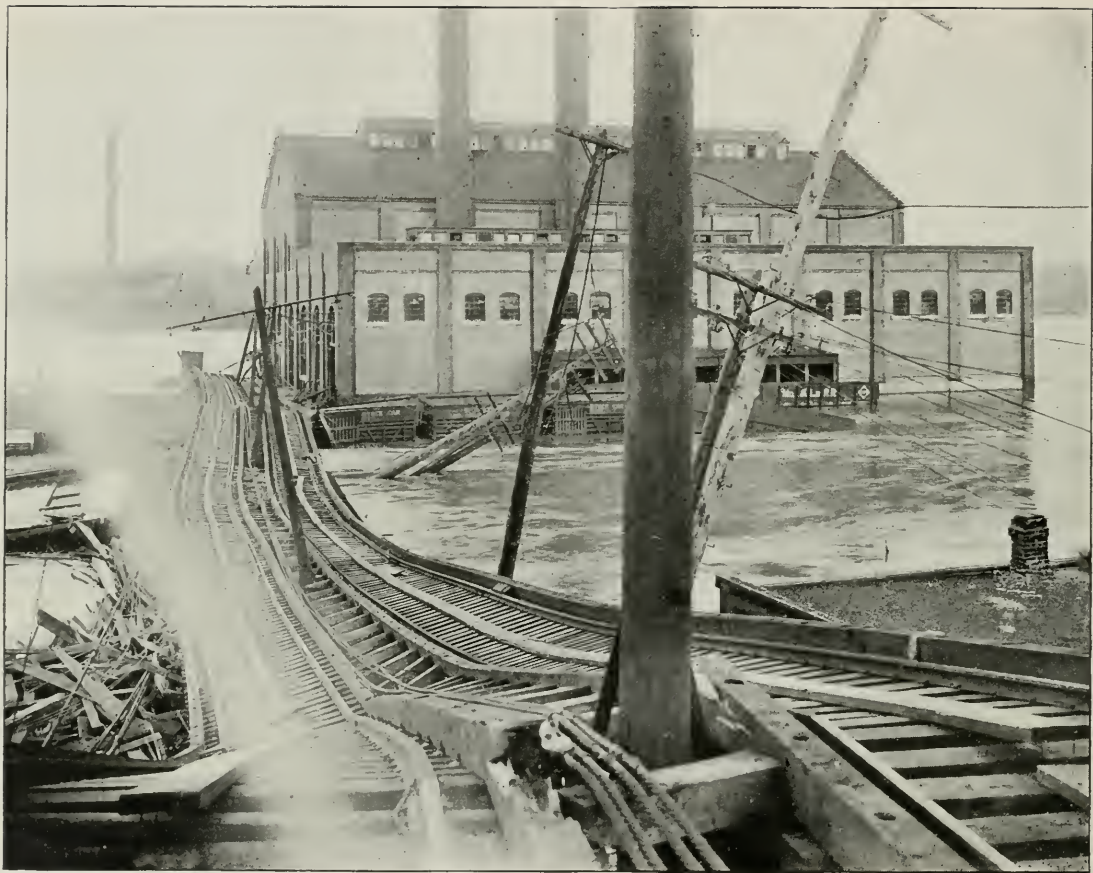


Kansas City, Mo. On Southwest Boulevard. Choice of land or water routes.





Kansas City, Mo. A street scene in the Stock Yards District.



Kansas City, Mo. Electric Power House and Elevated Railway Bridge on the Kaw



Kansas City, Mo., June 2, 1903. C. & A. Freight Depot at high-water mark



Kansas City, Mo. C. & A. freight house after the water had receded.



Kansas City, Mo. C. & A. ice house after the water had receded.



Kansas City, Mo., June 2, 1903. High-water mark 12th Street Viaduct.



Kansas City, Mo., June 1, 1903 High-water mark in Railway Yards C. & A. ice house in foreground.



Kansas City, Mo. A break between tracks and bridge.





Kansas City, Mo. East Bottoms, at early stage of flood.



Kansas City, Mo. Near the Stock Yards



Kansas City, Mo. Havoc in the Railroad Yards.



Kansas City, Mo. In the Railroad Switching District



Kansas City, Mo. Wreck of stock cars in West Bottoms after the flood.



Kansas City, Mo., June 9, 1903. U. S. Express Co.'s yards and platforms after the water receded



Kansas City, Mo. Submerged district along C. & A, right of way.



Kansas City, Mo. East Bottoms during the flood. In this district many small houses were swept away.





Glasgow, Mo., west of C. & A. Bridge. A work train distributing "sand bags" in an effort to save miles in circumference was formed by



Glasgow, Mo., west of C. & A. Bridge. A work train distributing "sand bags" in an effort to save the railway embankment and track. Beyond the point where the tracks go under the water a lake twenty miles in circumference was formed by the back waters of the Missouri River.



C. & A. New Steel Bridge, Glasgow, Mo., (cost \$1,000,000), which stood like a rock against the raging torrents.



Kansas City, Mo., June 3, 1903. View of flooded district in the Railway Bottoms from Scarrett's Point.



Patrolling and watching the largest bridge abutment in the world, at Glasgow, Mo., to protect it from the rush of the waters.





Glasgow, Mo., and the Great Steel Bridge over the Missouri, showing submerged farm property on river front.



A once prosperous farm in vicinity of C. & A. \$1,000,000 Bridge, at Glasgow, Mo.





Bent on seeing the flooded district at "\$1.00 per." "Only a coal car special" with over 600 excursionists.



rack of 800 feet, where the water rushed through at a depth of 60 feet.



Bird s-eye panoramic view of high-water conditions at Louisiana, Mo., showing C & A Railway Bridge across the Mississippi to the right



Cedar City, Mo., the terminus of C. & A. track, on the South Branch.



Break in the "Sny Levee," east of Louisiana, Mo., showing break in track of 800 feet, where the water rushed through at a depth of 60 feet.



The Missouri River at Cedar City, Mo.



The morning boat unloading passengers for The Alton Limited at Alton station.

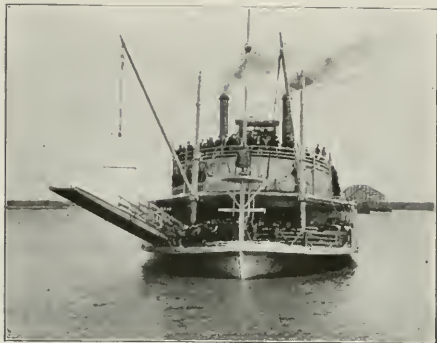


The mid-day boat at Alton station receiving passengers, baggage, mail, express and milk for St. Louis.





Passengers from the local trains in morning taking the 10:00 o'clock boat from Alton station to St. Louis.



The "Spread Eagle" about to land at Alton, Ill.



Waiting on the Alton station platform for the boat to land.



Transferring passengers from the boat to the train, Alton, Ill.



Express piled in front of the City Hall Square, near the station, at Alton, Ill.





The transfer of passengers, baggage, mail and express at Alton Station, 7:00 a. m., from the Chicago-St. Louis "Midnight Special" to the boats.



Steamer "Spread Eagle" receiving cargo at Alton Passenger Station. Division Passenger Agent Burns, C. & A. Ry.; General Passenger Agent Lynch, "Big Four" Route; Capt. William Leyhe, "Spread Eagle," and General Passenger Agent Charlton, C. & A., in foreground.



Officers and agents of the Chicago & Alton Ry. and the Eagle Packet Co. in charge at Alton and St. Louis of all transportation during high water



Ticket office at Alton, Ill., used temporarily as general passenger office. Station Agent Norris, Capt. "Alf." Robinson ("Black Eagle"), Train Master Reardon, Gen'l Pass. Agent Chariton (at 'phone) receiving reports from St. Louis. Telegrapher and Stenographer in foreground.



Capt. Alf. Robinson of the "Black Eagle."



Capt. Russel Gardner of the private yacht "Annie Russell."



The good ship "Black Eagle" pressed into special service to carry the overflow, Tuesday, June 16, 1903



The private yacht "Annie Russell" puts into Alton to offer services.





A street close to river front, Aiton, Ill



Submerged water front, north of C. & A. station, Alton, Ill.



High-water mark at Alton, Ill. C. & A. station and boat landing. Suburban platform, train shed and levee tracks under water in foreground.



Spieler announcing trains to passengers about to land from the boats at Alton, Ill.



The President, General Passenger Agent and Train Master "talk it over," at Alton, Ill.



Raising and repairing the track at the end of the break at Granite City.



C. & A. track near Mitchell—the last to be covered by water



Railway yards at Granite City. Water gradually creeping up over the tracks.



First appearance of the water in the yards at East St. Louis.





Bird's-eye panoramic view of submerged railway property at East St. Louis, Mo.





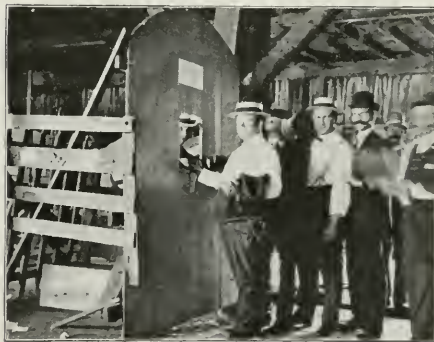
Liquidating the corn crop. An elevator in East St. Louis.



A street scene in East St. Louis (C. & A. track in foreground).



Houses in East St. Louis near the C. & A. depot.



The improvised ticket office on the docks, St. Louis, Mo.



A crap game on steamer between Alton and St. Louis The editor and proprietor of Saxbys' Magazine in foreground getting on to the game.



View of River Front, St. Louis, Mo. "Capt. Alf" Robinson's Boat, the "Bl



Eads Bridge, St. Louis, Mo., at high-water mark    Only three boats were able to find head room to pass under.



Wharf boat landing, St. Louis, Mo., with bridge and gangways to street.



View of River Front, St. Louis, Mo. "Capt. Alf" Robinson's Boat, the "Black Eagle," in mid-stream, trying to find a dock landing for passengers and cargo.



Trucking baggage from the dock, St. Louis, Mo. C. & A. waiting-room on the left



Passing under Merchants' Bridge with lowered smoke stack.  
Will she clear the bridge (only four inches to spare) ?







**TRY  
"ALTON"**

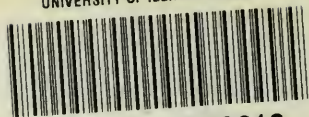


**TRI-  
ANGLE**

**"THE ONLY WAY."**



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 001052619