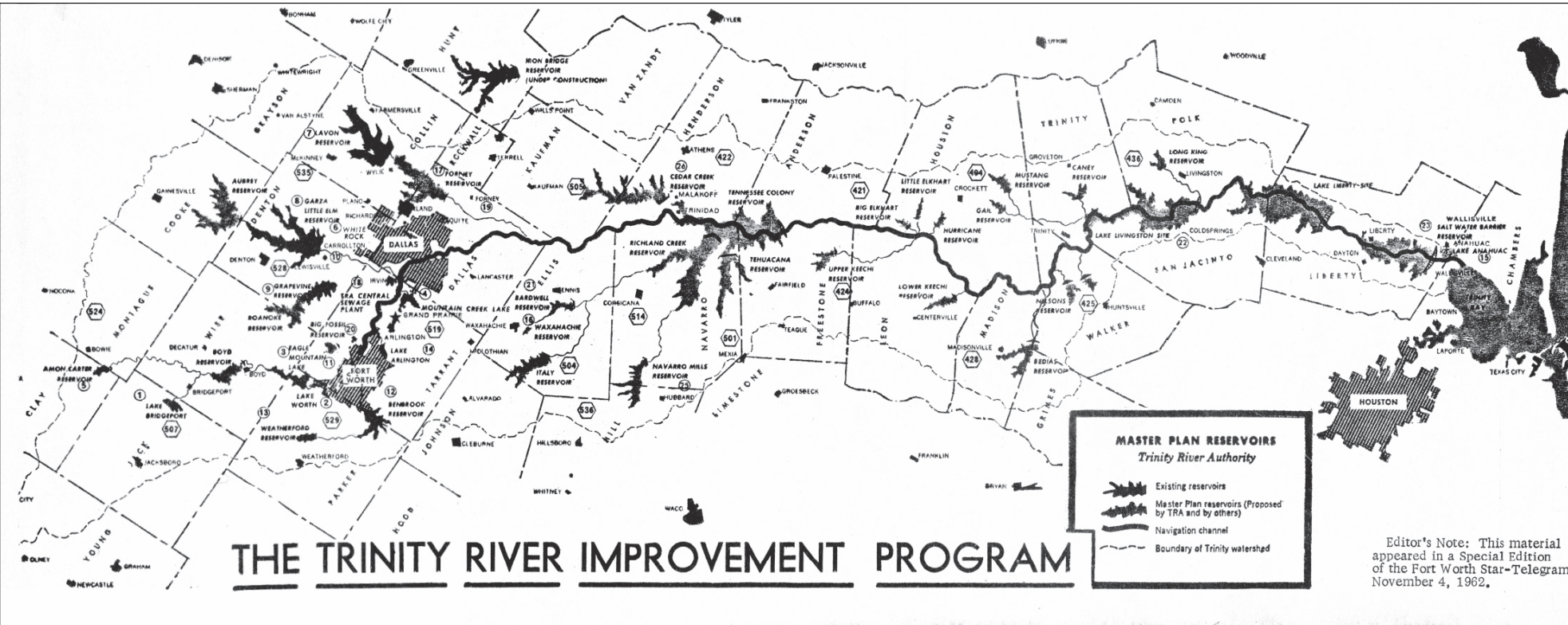


HISTORY & FOLKLORE

From The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 'Lifetime for Progress' on the Trinity River Basin, November 4, 1962 –

Improvement Efforts Date Back to 1849



Steamboats on the Trinity, barges being towed to the Gulf or nosing into berths along the upper reaches of the river – this has been the goal of many Texans for more than a century.

In fact, the first recorded Trinity River improvement meeting was at Huntsville in 1849 with steamboat navigation as its object.

The Trinity has always had the ability to stir the imagination of those who lived along its banks. And almost from the time of its discovery men have talked of it becoming a watery highway of commerce.

In 1852 Congress authorized a survey to pass on recommendation of a navigation channel as high up the Trinity as Anderson County. “The Trinity is the deepest and least obstructed of any river in Texas,” the report said.

Steamboating began in earnest about this time. By 1853 the U.S. Army Engineers reported there were seven boats in regular operation on the lower channel. Between 1852 and 1874 it was estimated as many as 50 boats ran continuously as high as Trinidad, in Kaufman County, and Porter’s

Bluff, 40 river miles below Dallas, in Ellis County.

The great barrier to navigation above this point was Bois d’Arc Island, a large land area 30 river miles below Dallas where the main channel split and a gigantic raft of logs and other obstructing items had formed. At certain flood times and during wet seasons this portion could be navigated – but dangerously and only with great skill and care.

In 1858 the state removed a sand bar at the mouth of the Trinity in Galveston Bay and immediately after the Civil War the upriver communities, led by young but lusty Dallas began hollering for boats.

The times were torn apart in political atmosphere and in technical argument. Railroads were building in every state in the nation. Texas, which entered the Civil War with scarcely enough rail mileage to mark on a map, was particularly made a goal of railroad promotions throughout the South and Southwest. The big, rich market and producing area of Texas even then was recognized

as one of the wealthiest potential source areas in the U.S.

But the Trinity lay temptingly right through the heart of what was then the population belt of Texas. Cotton was making a comeback and the cattle industry was rising rapidly.

Dallas citizens offered a cash pot of \$500 to the first boat to reach their city. The money was taken by U.S. Job Boat No. 1, which reached Dallas in May 1868, after a trip from Galveston, which took one year and four days. Capt. J. H. McGarvey and his wife, along with Philip Dungen, the engineer, and one deckhand, brought the 66 and 20-foot craft of 26 tons to the Commerce St. banks of the Trinity and remained in Dallas for several days, taking several citizens down the river to where the east fork joined the main stream (a spot call Mount East Fork, among several names given by the pioneers).

Some 15,425 bales of cotton were carried to market by boat in the 1868-1869 year along the Trinity.

But at Dallas the fever reached its peak. The “Sallie Haynes” (named for the daughter of a leading merchant, and a belle who later became Mrs. Governor Barnett Gibbs) was launched in Dallas Dec. 17, 1868, with a length of 87 feet and a beam of 18. A petition

was presented to the constitutional convention on June 4 of that year asking for a \$75,000 appropriation to remove obstructions and overhanging timbers. The petition al-

leged the Trinity, “may be successfully navigated from the City of Galveston to the town of Dallas and the mouth of the East Fork.

“An experienced steam-

boatman of 20 years practice has proposed to citizens of Dallas County to remove all obstructions ... so that boats of sufficient

(Continued next page)



TRINITY PROPHET

Back in 1938, the late Commodore B.M. Hatfield, left, was telling Capt. Julius Keg, dredge skipper, that bringing his barge tow up the Trinity River to Liberty had fulfilled Hatfield’s prophecy in 1933. The bewhiskered Hatfield, subject of legendary tales in the river basin, died in 1942. The photo was made by the late Dean Tevis of Beaumont and Liberty.

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FAMOUS PAIR ON TRINITY

The steamboat H.A. Harvey Jr. and the snag boat Dallas are shown tied up at Dallas just below Oak Cliff in this old photo. The Harvey made the voyage up from Galveston in 1893 to great civic celebration but ended up her days on a Louisiana river. Both boats were stern wheelers and were owned by the Trinity Navigation Company, a Dallas civic enterprise.