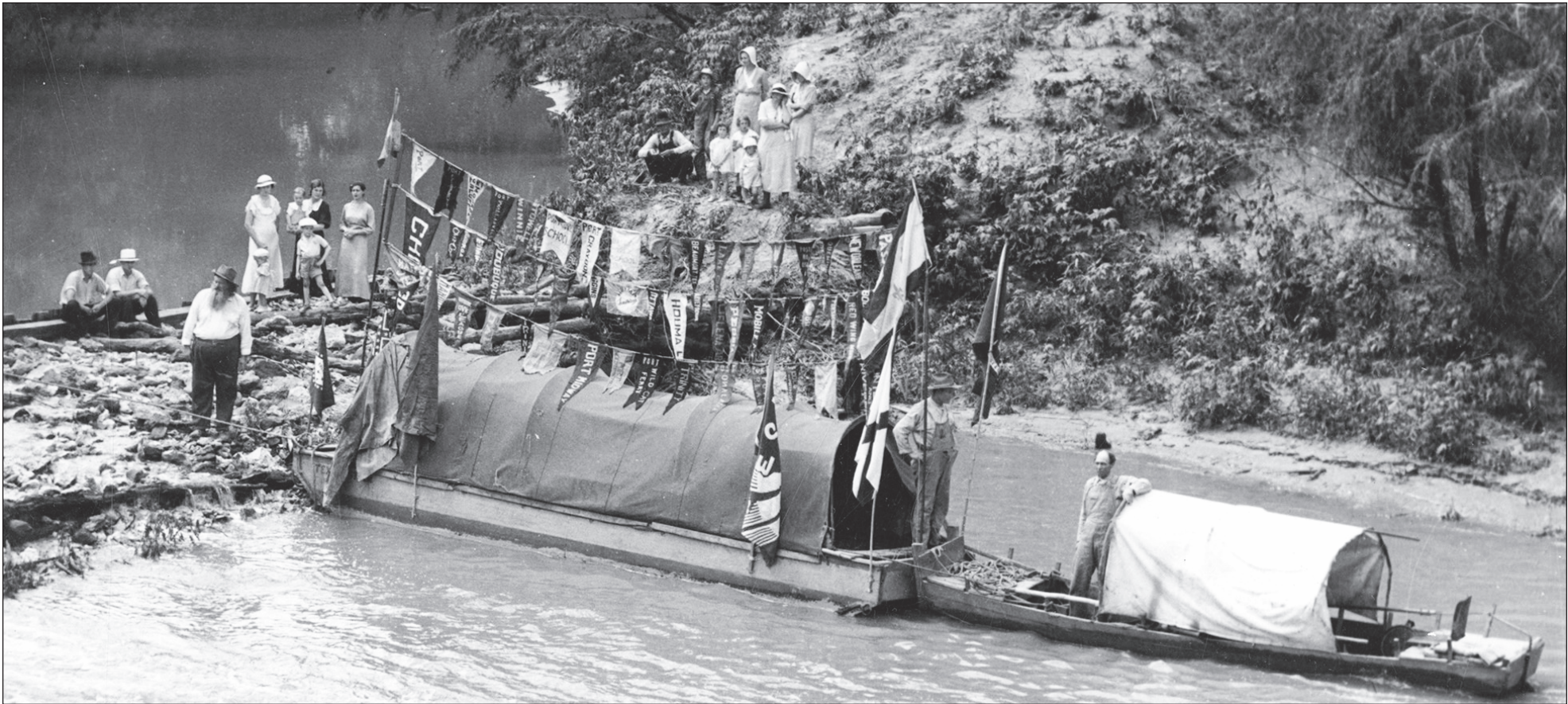


HISTORY & FOLKLORE



CHEER FOR TEXAS STEER - Sand bars and log jams failed to stop adventuresome Commodore B.M. Hatfield, standing at the front of his flat-bottom scow, “Texas Steer,” in which he navigated the Trinity River and made a roundtrip to the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair by way of Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Mississippi River. People gathered along the river to cheer long-whiskered Hatfield, whose death in 1942 ended many years devoted to promoting Trinity navigation.

Improvement Efforts Date Back to 1849

(Continued from previous page)

capacity to carry 500 bales of cotton can be run ... to Dallas for four months in the year for \$5,000.”

The petition proposed to have 1/3 of the amount raised from Dallas citizens, the rest from the county.

Years later a river enthusiast said the petition “was placed in the hands of the Internal Improvement Company under Gov. E.J. Davis’ administration and fell asleep in the hands of the committee.”

The “Sallie Haynes” had a short, ill-fated career, striking a snag and sinking in the river a few miles south of Dallas a few months after launching.

Congress authorized a second Trinity survey in 1872 and the State Legislature granted a subsidy in land certificates of 10,000 acres per mile to one Captain Poitevaut in 1873 if he would clear the river. He removed overhanging timbers and snags as far as Magnolia in Anderson County, short of his goal by a good 10 miles, but received his land for what was done

Railroad building up the Trinity Valley in the early ‘70s took the peo-

ple’s mind off steamboating, including the people of Dallas.

But boats on the river had been too realistic a proposition to die in 1891. The Trinity Navigation and Improvement Company launched a 64x12-foot steamboat named the “Dallas,” which drew only 7 inches of water, said its backers, and had a capacity of 300 barrels. It was meant to be used for cutting away obstructions between Dallas and Liberty (hence was known as a “snag boat” or job boat). It was in use for a long period hauling ties for construction of the International & Great Northern Railroad at Riverside in Walker County.

The Trinity River navigation Company grew out of this effort and a town meeting in Dallas was called in 1892. Hundreds of citizens met almost weekly for several months.

One of the most colorful figures of the episode was Capt. L.S. Flatau of Pittsburg, Texas, a Trinity River steamboater who had also piloted the Red River and the Mississippi.

“I believe I am the first man who ever navigated down the river and I was

the first who ever carried Buck’s headlight at the jackstaff,” Captain Flatau told a cheering audience. “John Neely Bruan pitched his tent here because he considered it the head of navigation and so do I.”

Captain Flatau was sent to Washington to lobby for the Trinity and the feasibility of slackwater navigation. A plan involving 30 locks and dams to cost \$5,000,000 and offering a 6-foot deep channel was involved. Congress was asked for \$50,000 to start.

The climax of Trinity River navigation enthusiasm was reached in 1893 when the sternwheeler steam J.H. Harvey Jr.

reached Dallas on May 20, after leaving Galveston March 14.

Thousands from miles around swarmed to the riverbanks to gaze on the Harvey.

It was a big boat by Trinity standards, being 96.96 tons burthen, carrying 600 bales of cotton and 150 passengers, being 113 feet long and 19-1/2 feet wide with a 100 horsepower engine. A dam was constructed below Dallas 13 miles (at what is now Millers Ferry Road) at McCommas Bluff, a dance pavilion erected and the Harvey made many voyages to the spot. But the navigation bill in Washington hit

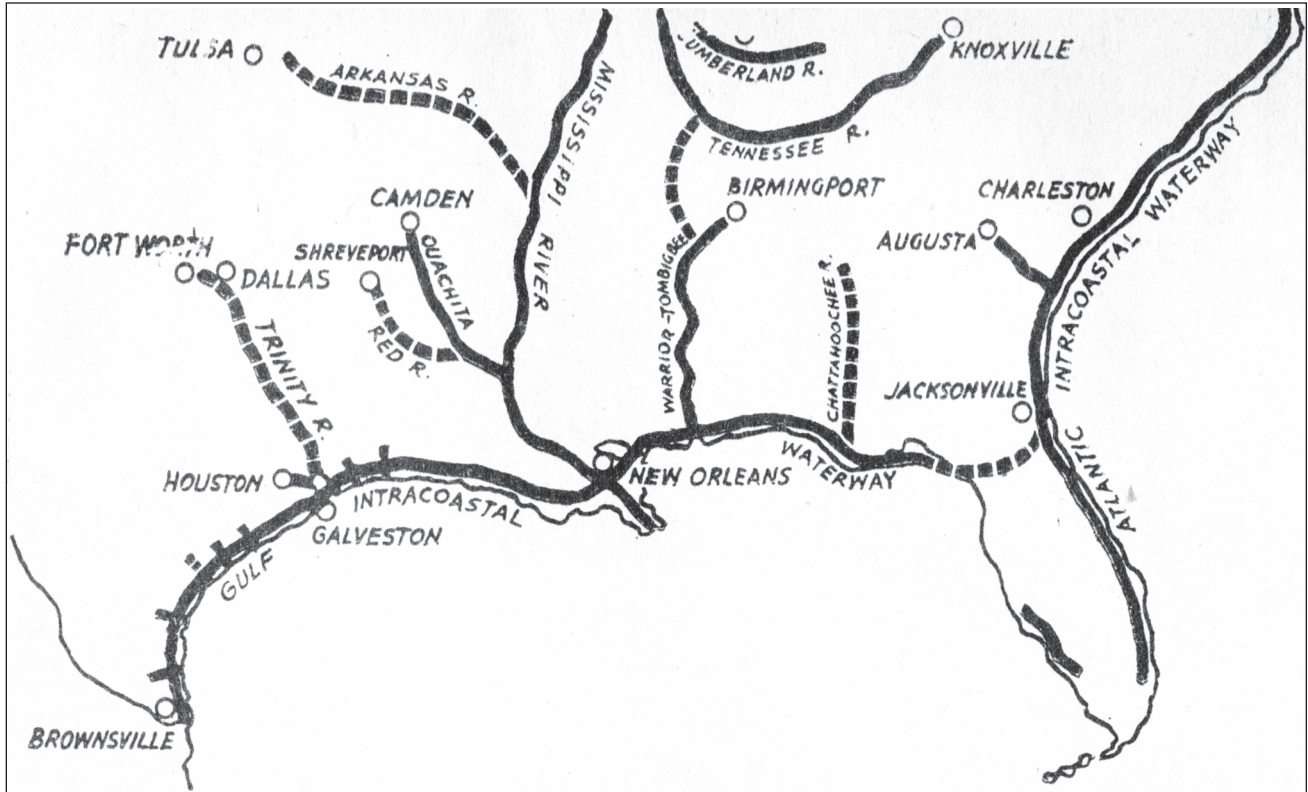
as many snags as the boats on the river and on Feb. 1, 1898, the Harvey sailed for Galveston. The trip took four months and 21 days and when the craft reached the Gulf it was sold and never returned to Dallas. The snag boat was broken up after sitting under the Commerce Street Bridge for many years.

In 1905 the Trinity again fired people up and \$60,000 was offered from Dallas people in order to have river improvements begin there. By now the idea of using the river as open stream navigation was abandoned and slackwater navigation (the same as is presented in present plans) was seen to

be the only answer.

By 1914 several locks and dams had been built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the remains of which may be found at several spots along the river. But World War I put an end to this dream and shortly after the war, when work began again, Congress couldn’t be aroused to vote more money in the project.

The final work was closed in 1921 and from that date the idea has been kept alive by a hardy band of believers. Their belief has been vindicated by the current report, which once again shows the economical feasibility of navigation of the Trinity River.



INLAND WATERWAY SYSTEM

The proposed Trinity River barge canal, now recommended by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for development from the Houston Ship Canal to Dallas and Fort Worth, would become the major feeder tributary for the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and an important link in the nation’s more than 29,000 miles of inland waterways. Solid lines indicate waterways in operation. Broken lines represent those under construction, authorized, recommended or in planning stage.

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