

**THE LOG OF THE ALTON: BEING A
NARRATIVE OF THE VOYAGE OF
THE BUSINESS MEN'S LEAGUE TO
NEW ORLEANS OCTOBER 25 TO
30, 1909**

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The Log of the Alton: Being a Narrative of the Voyage of the Business Men's League to New Orleans October 25 to 30, 1909 by Walter B. Stevens

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WALTER B. STEVENS

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WITH THE RECORD, IN PART, OF WHAT WAS
SEEN, THOUGHT, SAID AND DONE,
DURING THE FIVE DAYS:
AND NIGHTS



BY
WALTER B. STEVENS.

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St. Louis, 1909.

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COMPANIONS OF THE VOYAGE

St. Louis—

Charles P. Senter
 George W. Parker
 Hobart Brinsmade
 Richard C. Kerens
 John A. Lewis
 Cecil D. Gregg
 Eugene J. Spencer
 Amedee B. Cole
 Fred N. Cheney
 Henry P. Fritsch
 George C. R. Wagoner
 Julius B. Parkell
 John E. McKinney
 Thomas B. Arnold
 Clarence H. Howard
 Adrian O. Rule
 Roscoe D. Smith
 William A. Gardner
 Edward L. Adreon
 George L. Hassett
 Will K. Stanard
 Albert von Hoffman
 Robert W. Pommer

St. Louis—

George L. Edwards
 Charles W. S. Cobb
 William B. Weston
 Alexander H. Handlan
 Edward A. Faust
 William J. Fischer
 J. Arthur Anderson
 Lewis D. Dozier
 Edward F. Goltra
 Charles C. Nicholls
 Charles O. A. Brunk
 John W. Kearney
 George A. Meyer
 James P. Blake
 Charles V. Anderson
 Henry W. Lohmann
 John H. Dieckman
 Christopher W. Pank
 Thomas Dunn
 Charles E. Crane
 John R. Laughlin
 Augustus P. Rein
 Jephtha D. Howe

Walter B. Stevens

Shell, Wyoming—

Jay L. Torrey

Hannibal, Missouri—

Archie C. RoBards
 Dr. John J. Farrell
 O. M. Friend

Joplin, Missouri—

Hugh McIndoe

Trenton, Illinois—

J. C. Eisenmayer

Hagerstown, Maryland—

Edward W. Mealey



EVERY atom that moves onward in the river, from the moment it leaves its home amid the crystal springs or mountain snows, throughout the fifteen hundred leagues of its devious pathway, until it is finally lost in the gulf, is controlled by laws as fixed and certain as those which direct the majestic march of the heavenly spheres. Every phenomenon and apparent eccentricity of the river—its scouring and depositing action, its caving banks, the formation of the bars at its mouth, the effect of the waves and tides of the sea upon its currents and deposits—is controlled by laws as immutable as the Creator, and the engineer needs only to be assured that he does not ignore the existence of any of these laws, to feel positively certain of the ends he aims at.

—Captain James B. Eads.
In 1875.

The Log of the Alton



HE last warning pull had been given to the bell cord. From the roof of the hurricane deck, Captain Leyhe turned and waved his hand toward the pilot house. The paddles were churning; the Alton was moving, when a man in a light, checked suit, his overcoat over his arm, his face glowing with exertion, ran swiftly down the levee, up the whariboat gangway, across the deck of the Grey Eagle, caught a stanchion and swung on board. Close behind came a colored man with a steamer-trunk, which was shoved across the widening gap into the outstretched hands of the Alton porters. The agile act was a reminder of old steamboat days. He who did it was the son of a once famous steamboat commander. And the little granddaughter of the old-time river argonaut stood half way down the levee watching. When she saw the feat accomplished, she clapped her hands and laughed joyously. Thus L. D. Dozier contributed to the gaiety of the getaway. And while the other fifty-three St. Louis delegates were welcoming and congratulating him, the Alton was backing into deep water.

Mid-channel the wheels stopped. While the Alton poised, the moving picture presented itself. Down the river the Oleander was disappearing in the smoke of her chimneys and the spray of her lively sternwheels. The St. Paul, squatting low in the water, paddling with the aggravating deliberation of a dowager goose, gave the first promise of what was to be continuous delay. The Quincy, too, took her distance and moved along. Impatiently, the Erastus Wells turned into line and pressed hard after. And then, looking down river and up river, to one shore and to the other, the voyaging business men on the decks of the Alton saw the sight of a lifetime. Beyond the skyline of the city's tall buildings, the Indian summer sun was just setting. Over Cahokia beamed a full Indian summer moon.

Southward was moving with majestic precision the first division of the fleet. Above, boats were backing, swinging and taking position. It was a forest of smokestacks with clouds of smoke over all.

Levee tradition tells that on another October day, just sixty years ago, the crowds saw thirty-seven steamboats back out from St. Louis and start for the Missouri River. But that was the rush of the forty-niners for gold in California. That was going some, and as-you-please. Here was precision; every boat in its place and at its distance; bands playing, to be sure, but no tooting of whistles, save the signals from the Oleander, repeated backward up the line to the last one in the fleet. Moreover, here was schedule such as river travel has rarely known. At the first revolution of the Alton's paddles, Chairman Charles P. Senter drew out his watch and showed it to George W. Parker.

"On time to the minute," commented Colonel Parker.

And so it was—a departure which called for no explanation or apology on account of delay. Along the rail of the Eads bridge clustered great bunches of humanity. The city's hives had swarmed with the close of business. Up from the levee throngs swelled the cheers. On the decks of the Alton, banker and merchant, manufacturer and real estate man, railroad capitalist and lawyer, men of pursuits almost as varied as their number, drew inspiration from the scene. In that hour they were welded by a common interest. In the nights and days to come they thought, said and did what prompt these printed pages.

The Alton was the St. Louis Business Men's League boat. It carried no guests. Its cabin list included no official of nation, State or city. Here were business men, nearly three scores of them, who had left in suspense their everyday duties, who had put on "high hats and tail coats," as the poet laureate, Nicholls, phrased it; who were giving their time and paying their expenses in the interest of the deep waterway.

In that first hour everybody didn't know everybody else. Here and there, the center of a group, was one who had been doing this sort of thing—*pro bono publico*—for a generation. But the rest of the group

was the fresh blood, the hope of St. Louis for the new generation, the men who had no doubt they would see in their business lives the deep waterway and all of the attendant blessings. It was an hour for easy introductions. The twilight was deepening. South St. Louis' population was represented by indistinguishable masses wherever a street ran down to the water line. But the masses had throats, if not forms. One ringing cheer succeeded another in rapid succession as the fleet in column slipped along at a twelve miles schedule. The groups on the Alton re-echoed back the greetings from shore. In the exhilaration of such sights and sounds one business man after another made up to his neighbor. In the glare of the line of Greek fire along the front of the Anheuser-Busch brewery, they became St. Louisans all.

Altenheim, from the heights, waved a Chautauqua salute, seen dimly. All Carondelet was on the river bank. It was dark now, but the bonfires, hemmed by humanity, told that the Fourth City was awake with interest to its southern border. Diminutive cannon on the prows of the motor boats, at anchorage, barked their salutes. Not until they had seen the Barracks, with the great camp fires, did the groups on the Alton's decks heed the bugle call to supper. As he discerned the cordwood, stacked with the precision which the soldier afield learns, E. J. Spencer turned to Jay L. Torrey with the comment:

"Those boys know how to do it. That is the kind of fire to cook bacon, Colonel!"

And Torrey assented. One colonel had gone to the front in 1898 with a regiment of engineers from the very spot where the recruits of 1909 were blazing their regards to the President. The other, about the same time, had passed south at the head of the Rough Riders of Wyoming and half a dozen Northwestern States.

No one dallied at the table. There was too much going on along shore. The riverside Missourians were out to greet the flotilla. Every landing had its cheering crowd and its mighty bonfire. Kimmswick and Crystal City emphasized themselves luridly. The Alton passed under the shadow of the frowning cliff at Hercu-