

WHERE THE RIVERS MEET A DREAM TAKES SHAPE

THE WATERS RALLY

From St. Joseph to Cape Girardeau, from the heart of the Ozarks to the Mark Twain country, the State of Missouri is a lacework of beautiful, useful and navigable rivers and lakes. On the Eastern shore, the great Mississippi, Father of Waters. Cutting the State in half, the enormous and unpredictable Missouri. From the Ozarks flow the Osage, the Gasconade and the White. On the north, the Grand, Chariton, Platte and Salt. Through hilly wooded country the Meramec twists northeastward into the Mississippi near St. Louis.

The ultimate rallying point for Missouri's rivers is the Mississippi. Generally, the State's northern rivers empty into the Missouri, which in turn meets the Mississippi three miles below Alton, Illinois. Near Alton the powerful Illinois River, fed by the Fox and Sangamon, adds its waters to the Mississippi.

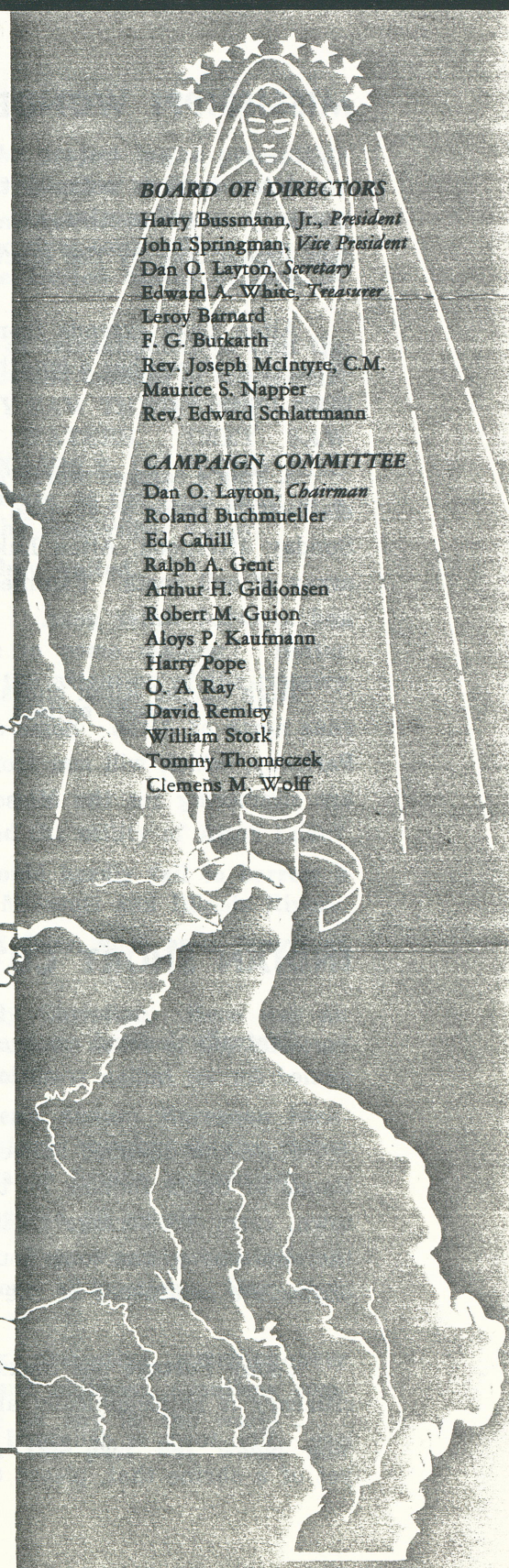
The commingling of these three major rivers near Alton has created a twentieth-century phenomenon that blossoms twenty-five miles north of St. Louis. The Alton Lake.

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WHERE THE RIVERS MEET .

MISSISSIPPI WONDERLAND

Alton Lake is actually the Mississippi River where it has been abruptly halted in its headlong course southward and its waters quieted, cleansed and broadened into a magnificent inland lake by the erection of the Alton dam some 20 years ago.

Alton Lake extends from the dam about forty miles up the Mississippi to Winfield, Missouri. It reaches a length of eighty miles on the Illinois River, and in some places it is three miles wide.

A king's ransom worth of yachts are berthed in 14 harbors that have been fashioned elaborately from what used to be bottom farm land. The yachts are in the minority. Any Sunday afternoon, Alton Lake teems with canoes, motor boats of all sizes, and a dazzling array of sail boats. Families with small children gather for the day with picnic baskets and assorted water gear.

High on the Alton bluffs, on the east side of the Lake, the McAdams Memorial Highway runs north of Alton. Some day this highway will be a segment of the Mississippi River Parkway, which will run from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Similar highway plans are simmering for the Missouri or west side of the River.

INDIAN SHORT CUT – PORTAGE DES SIOUX

Centrally located on the Alton Lake is the historic river town of Portage des Sioux—named for an Indian tradition, settled by the French in 1779.

Here the distance between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers is scarcely two miles. Bands of Sioux Indians on their water journeys were accustomed to disembark at this town, carry or portage their canoes across the narrow neck from one river to the other, thereby saving the long journey of twenty-five miles around the point of land which separates the confluence of the two rivers.

Today Portage des Sioux is a tiny thriving town of 264 population. Its flood-wise citizenry is philosophically alert to the new chapter about to be written in Mississippi River lore. The town is delighted by the recreational activity outside its doors, but is prouder yet of a shrine that, please God, will soon arise in its back yard—the Mississippi River.

A DREAM TAKES SHAPE

LIKE OLD WINE

Eight years ago a whisper of enthusiasm for an Alton Lake project began perceptibly to circulate among and beyond the river people. Up and down the river enthusiasm grew. A group of businessmen, noting this interest, began examining the extraordinary situation of three major rivers blending into one huge lake at an historic river town. They saw this circumstance as symbolic of the 1,257,000 square miles of the United States drained by the Mississippi River system.

These men also noticed the progressively increasing numbers of recreationists to visit the Alton Lake annually. They took a look at the growing volume and tonnage of commercial boats passing to the north and south on the Mississippi. **THEY SAW THE ALTON LAKE AS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF MAN'S WISE USE OF THE WATERS. THEY SAW THAT THE ALTON LAKE REPRESENTED A SHINING EXAMPLE IN FLOOD AND NAVIGATION CONTROL.** They saw the Alton Lake, furthermore, as the focal point of a new and glorious chapter in the long and glorious history of the Mississippi Valley.

Eight years ago they saw this. They had an idea, but they waited.

Eight years later the idea is even more attractive.

Why not, these men asked, commemorate the Alton Lake in some manner? Better yet, why not create some kind of memorial that would focus the attention of the country on one of the newest and most magnificent inland lakes in the United States?

THE SHRINE

What kind of memorial would best enhance the beauty and the utility of Alton Lake?

A statue of anything or anybody could be erected, and could hardly fail to borrow a dignity of sorts from the rich traditions of the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois Rivers.

A pagan statue, commemorating for example some Indian deity, such as a "spirit of the waters," would make some sense, they reasoned.

But, no. The tradition of the area involved was too solidly Christian. Here was an area settled by French Catholics, where the first Protestant sermon north of the Missouri River was preached, and which today supports people of all faiths.

The person selected would have to blend together the area's distant European background, the early days of Portage des Sioux, the twentieth-century wonder of the Alton Lake, and the continuing and growing importance of the area to future generations.

The person selected would in general have to be all things to all people.

Would Mary, the Mother of Jesus, be generally agreeable? Yes, was the cautious response. Yes, they said, Mary belongs to all faiths, all generations, all locations. Mary they agreed would be universally acceptable.

A statue of Mary, overlooking an immense body of water, protective, watching over benignly as it were hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, countless commercial vessels, and a land as pleasing to God's Almighty eye as any in the world . . . such a statue or shrine would not only borrow dignity from the past but would add dignity to the area, now and for the future.

OUR LADY OF THE RIVERS

Mary is known the world over under many titles . . . Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Our Lady of the Snows, and many others. Nowhere is she officially known under the title that would be most appropriate for the Alton Lake: Our Lady of the Rivers.

THE IDEA TAKES SHAPE

A young Midwestern artist was asked to submit a statue design. Several models were examined. Consultations were held with the proper Federal authorities to determine what had to be done to erect a statue in common waters. A marine engineering firm was engaged to examine the problems associated with basing a statue twenty-five feet high on a railed concrete base rising twenty feet out of the water, and the added problem of constructing a 400-foot causeway from the shore to the base of the shrine. These problems turned out to be relatively simple. Marine engineers even pointed out that the electrically lighted twelve-star diadem crowning the head of the statue would in all probability be a valuable navigational aid at night. **The cost of the entire project is modest.**

FOR THE SUM OF \$50,000, THE HISTORY, THE TRADITIONS, THE PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE FUTURE TRIUMPHS OF THE ENTIRE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CAN BE INFLUENCED AND MEMORIALIZED FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS TO COME.

THE PLAN FOR FINANCING

Fifty thousand dollars is not a large amount of money to be subscribed. On the other hand, such a project, far-reaching as its renown will soon be, must **AT FIRST** be local in nature. Furthermore, after eight years of discussion, the completion of the project becomes urgent with respect to the oncoming winter months which might well complicate the engineering problems involved. Finally, the voluntary campaign organization is small; hence the financial appeal will be selective.

THE CASE RESTS – NOW ACTION

Within a month you will be visited personally, if at all possible, by one of the volunteer workers in this modest fundraising effort. We hope, and we confidently think, the idea of an enduring Midwestern shrine close to home will appeal to you. A pledge card is enclosed with this mailing.

Amounts contributed to **OUR LADY OF THE RIVERS, INC.**, are of course deductible from your income tax, and may be pledged over an eighteen-month period.

Please contribute generously. Your contribution is, in effect, an investment in the future glorification of this great section of the Mississippi we proudly call home.

OUR LADY OF THE RIVERS, INC.

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