

Appendix F

Historical & Cultural Resources

General Cultural and Historical Setting

Documentation of the Mississippi River Valley prehistoric and historical sequence is extensive and only a brief outline is presented here. Prehistoric human occupation of the area is generally broken into four inclusive periods: Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian. Each period is characterized by differing degrees of social complexity and by changes in subsistence technologies and pursuits. The Paleo-Indian period represents the first populating of North America. The earliest evidence for the occupation of the mid-continental United States appears as fluted points made around 13,500 to 12,700 years ago (Morrow 2014; Fiedel 1999). Paleo-Indians are generally characterized as smaller groups of hunters and gatherers following migrating herds of large game. The period lasted until the end of the Wisconsin glaciation around 8000 B.P. when the stabilizing climate promoted the different ecological adaptations of the Archaic period. While hunting and gathering continued, people began to cultivate native plants. Larger communities formed as increasingly sedentary culture developed. The subsequent Woodland culture (1000 B.C. to 900 A.D.) is characterized by the widespread use of pottery, ever increasing reliance on agriculture, and development of long-distance trade. The socioeconomic traits generally ascribed to the following Mississippian period (900 to 1400 A.D.) include intensive agricultural adaptations, the appearance of large fortified towns, construction of pyramidal mounds, increased interregional trade, and a highly stratified sociopolitical organization. The most elaborate and famous expression of the culture is the extensive settlement of Cahokia Mounds located on the American Bottom near modern Collinsville, Illinois.

The historical period begins with European exploration of the Middle Mississippi and the voyage of Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet down the river in 1673. A trading establishment and mission were built at "Grand Village of the Illinois" in 1675. Kaskaskia was established in 1703, Sainte Genevieve around 1750, and St Louis in 1764. For much of the 18th and 19th centuries, commerce on the river was driven by the fur trade, and there was some limited traffic in salt and lead. Along with increasing development of the region, the introduction of steamboats in the early 19th century greatly expanded both the volume of trade in general commodities and transportation for people. The number of vessels engaged increased yearly along with their size and the number of round trips each took (Haites and Mak:1971).

Specific Project Area History

There is no known prehistoric occupation of the project islands, but they have not been archaeologically surveyed. While Eagle's Nest Island formed predominantly in the historical

period, Piasa Island predates Euro-American contact. Archaeological sites are abundant on the floodplain of the Mississippi and its tributaries, and it would not be unlikely that they exist, or once existed, on long-standing islands.

The first Euro-American claimant to what became known as Piasa Island was Toussaint Cerré. Toussaint was probably the nephew of Jean-Gabriel Cerré. Jean-Gabriel was born in Montreal in 1734 and established a fur trading post at Kaskaskia by the mid 1770s. He quickly became a successful merchant, acquiring additional property in both Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis. After he moved his family to St. Louis in 1779, his daughter, Marie-Thérèse, married the founder of the city, Auguste Chouteau, thus uniting the two most prominent merchant families in the region.

It's unknown when Toussaint joined his uncle in the area, but in his petition for the island to the French lieutenant governor in January of 1800 he describes himself as “father of a family, ancient inhabitant of this county, and residing at the village of St. Charles of the Missouri” (House Doc. n.d.:71). He asked the governor to grant him the “great island of Payse” given the difficulty of raising cattle in the settlements and the growing scarcity of wood in the region. He assures him that the island is on the Spanish side of the river as the main channel passes between the island and the American side. The petition was witnessed by Auguste Chouteau. Lieutenant Governor Carlos Dehault, granted Cerré and his heirs the island “to possess and enjoy, and dispose of it as their own property” the same day (House Doc. n.d.:71).

There are several land surveys conducted for the Surveyor General, Anthoine Soulard, in the Missouri State Archives that document land in St. Charles owned by Toussaint Cerré. Their dates (i.e., 1799, 1800 and 1804), along with that of the Payse Island grant suggest that he moved to the area just before the turn of the century. Interestingly, despite his claim to being a father in his petition, he is recorded as marrying a Julie Doral on 10 August 1806 in St. Charles (Ormesher 1982:41).

After the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory in 1803, congress created a board of land commissioners to reject or confirm French and Spanish colonial grants. On September 13, 1806, Auguste Chouteau went before the board to claim Piasa Island, producing a certified copy of a deed of conveyance from Toussaint (House Doc. n.d.:72). Apparently, the board was not convinced and the issue was presented again in 1810, 1832, and finally on November 1, 1833 when their unanimous opinion was that the island be confirmed to Toussaint Cerré, or his legal representative.

In 1818 the western portion of Piasa Island was platted as three tracts in T6N R11W S25 (Figure 1). The corresponding map for R6N R10W does not show the eastern portion of the island.

Notably, the island was mapped in Illinois, in contrast to Toussaint Cerré's contention that it was on the Missouri side of the river. In 1841 the surveyor's office specifically mapped the island again along with Little Piasa Island (Figure 2). A notation in the margin states that the survey was provided to the Commission of the Land Grants Officer and identifies the islands as

No. 60 and No. 61. Again, the western portion of Piasa, in Jersey County, is shown as three tracks, and now the eastern portion in Madison County is shown as two tracks.



Auguste Chouteau died in 1829, but it was 1839 before his probate was filed with the court. In April 1839 there was a St. Charles Circuit Court case for “the Partition of land of Auguste Chouteau, deceased; Piasa Island, also known as Isle de Paysa, in Mississippi River opposite Alton.” Seven plaintiffs of the Paul and De Breuil families and eleven defendants of the Chouteau, Lawless, Smith, and Paul families are named. The outcome of the case is unknown, but at some point the island reverted to the Federal Government. Perhaps the initial Cerré claim was disallowed given the island’s location in Illinois verses Missouri as he initially contended. Alternately, the Chouteau claim as Cerré’s assignee may not have been upheld. It is tempting to associate the 1841 plat’s notation about being sent to the Commission of the Land Grants Officer with the land’s reversion to Federal ownership.

Three sale-cash patents under the Land Act of 1820 were issued for Piasa (i.e., Island No. 60). The first was for Track 2 in Jersey County to Joel Foster (12/1/1845), the second was for Tracks 1 and 3 in Jersey County to Peter Gutzwiller (4/10/1848) and the third was to Lewis Moore for the rest of the island in Madison County (4/25/1871). There is also a patent for Little Piasa Island to Louis Stritz (3/19/1874).

One of the earliest topographic maps of the Middle Mississippi is the 1866 Warren map series. Sheet No. 18 shows the two Piasa Islands along with a small, perhaps nascent, Eagle’s Nest Island (Sheet No. 18) (Figure 3).

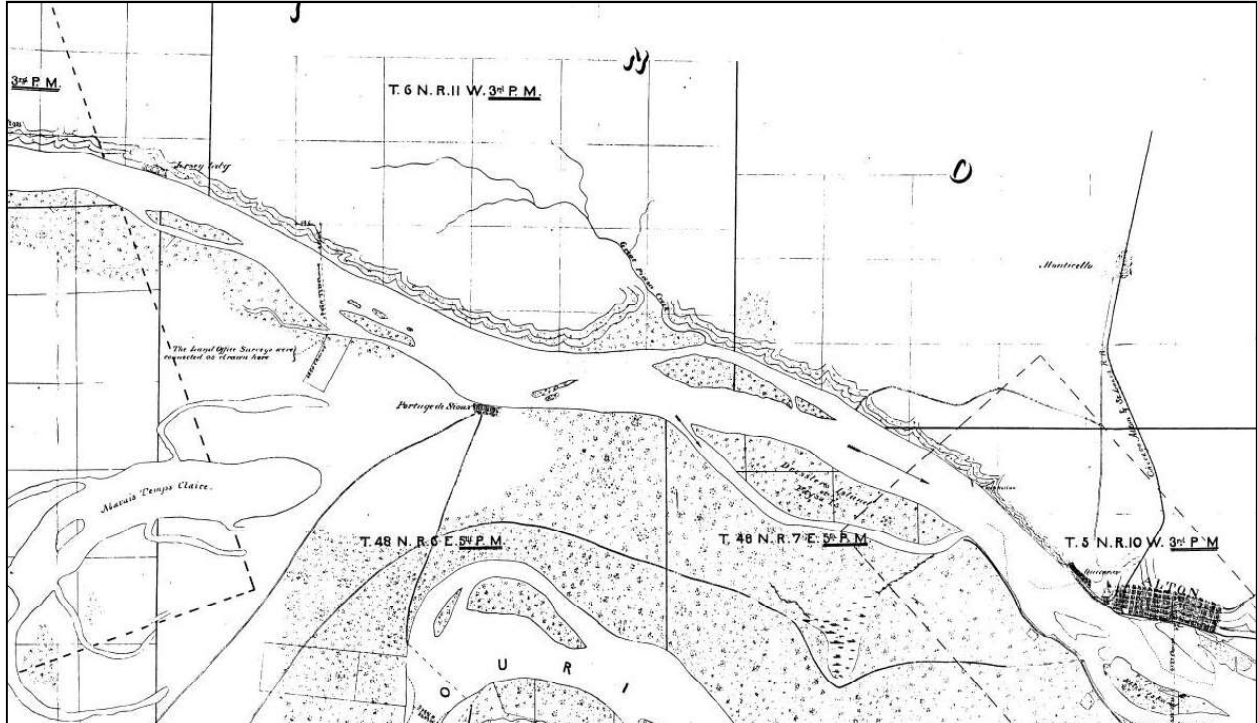


Figure 3. 1866 Warren map, Sheet No. 18.

The earliest detailed topographic representation and hydrographic chart of the project area is that of the Mississippi River Commission (1890 hydrology) (Figure 4).

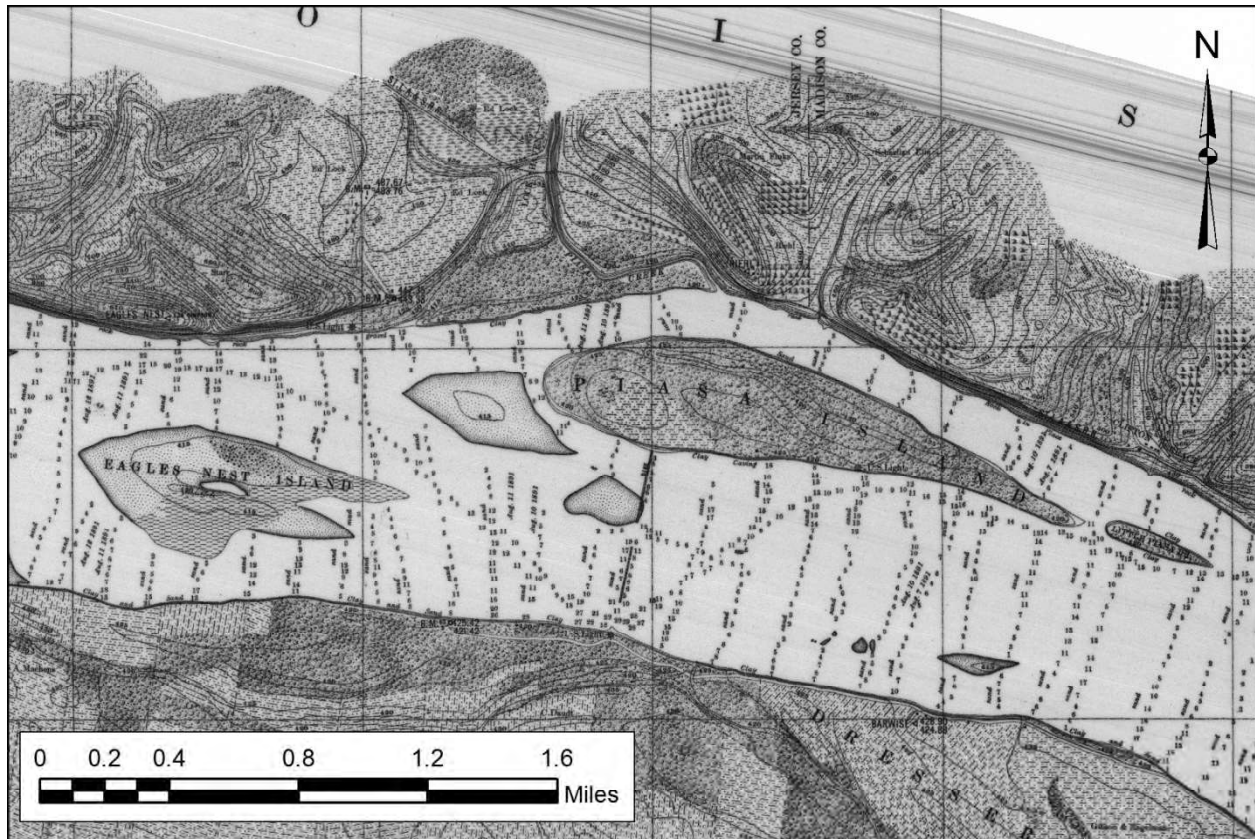


Figure 4. Mississippi River Commission, 1890, Chart 118.

By the end of the 19th century Piasa island was better known locally as “Scotch Jimmy’s Island,” sometimes spelled “Scotch Jimmie’s Island” (e.g., Alton Evening Telegraph, May 17, 1906). Less frequently, it was also known as “Silver Island” (Alton Evening Telegraph, October 29, 1930:20). Scotch Jimmy was the nickname of James Powrie, a civil war veteran who had served in the 144 Illinois Infantry. The 1870 census for Jersey County lists him living with Ellen and Jane Powrie in Township 6N, Range 11W, which includes Piasa Island. He was reportedly born in Scotland in 1828 and died in 1903.

Piasa Island was the location of considerable Corps of Engineers work during the last quarter of the 19th century. Between 1875 and 1877 a submergible dam was built between the island and the Missouri shore (Report of the Chief 1881:1566). The intent was to force waterflow into the northern chute and thus create a good navigation channel during all flood stages. The presence of rock in the upper part of the chute prevented the necessary scour, however, and the structure was a failure (Report of the Chief 1895:1677). Moreover, the northern chute became increasingly difficult to navigate and eventually, during the high water of 1882, a large bar moved over its mouth and closed it off completely (Report of the Chief 1883:1183). Steamboats were forced to use the southern shoot by finding any depression that existed over

the dam. In an emergency effort, using funding originally intended for the improvement of Alton Harbor, the Corps decided to breach the dam next to the Missouri shore. An initial effort using a hydraulic excavator failed, but a second with a conventional dredge was successful. A 385 foot cut was made to a depth of six feet at low water. These efforts cost the government \$2,750. Ironically, it was another break in the dam caused by winter ice that opened and became the main channel. In 1889, the Corps raised the remaining dike to six feet above low water, but left the two gaps in the hope that scour would further deepen the channel. For that effort, 2,505 cubic yards of stone was placed and \$5,580 spent (Report of the Chief 1890:1966).

Accumulations of sand behind the dam, however, continued to make navigation dangerous and in 1893, 1600 feet of dam structure was removed entirely, with the rock being used to create a number of wing dams and for shoreline reinforcement (Report of the Chief 1895:1678). Additional work was performed to raise and repair the wing dams and to expand the shoreline revetment in subsequent years (e.g., Report of the Chief 1907:1562).

Industry

The need for lumber was cited in Cerré's initial grant application and Piasa Island doubtless continued to be harvested regularly. A 1906 newspaper account, for example, noted that the current owner of the island, Louis Young, had built a raft of 100 soft-timber logs (specifically soft maple, sycamore, and elm) and drifted down to St. Louis (Alton Evening Telegraph, March 9, 1906). Young was reportedly building another raft of 300 logs at the time. The account noted that the trip took eight hours and was accomplished with two rafters.

Another 1906 article lamented the loss of a famous cottonwood tree on the island (Alton Evening Telegraph, May 17, 1906). It had been hit by lightning three years previously and had slowly died. Mr. Young then cut it down for lumber. The account noted the prodigious size of the tree stating that the government officials had measured it and declared it the largest tree, in both height and girth, in the Mississippi Valley. It was over seventy-five feet higher than the other cottonwoods on the island. It had served as a valuable landmark to steamboat pilots and was a well known site of interest in the region.

The 1880 MRC map shows that approximately 26 acres of Piasa Island were under cultivation, while the remainder was forested (Figure 4). Interestingly, the same lot is still under cultivation in 1931 (Figure 5). In 1880 Eagle's Nest Island is mainly mud and sand flats. Its landmass, however, grows in size and by 1931 is forested. There is no indication it was ever cultivated.

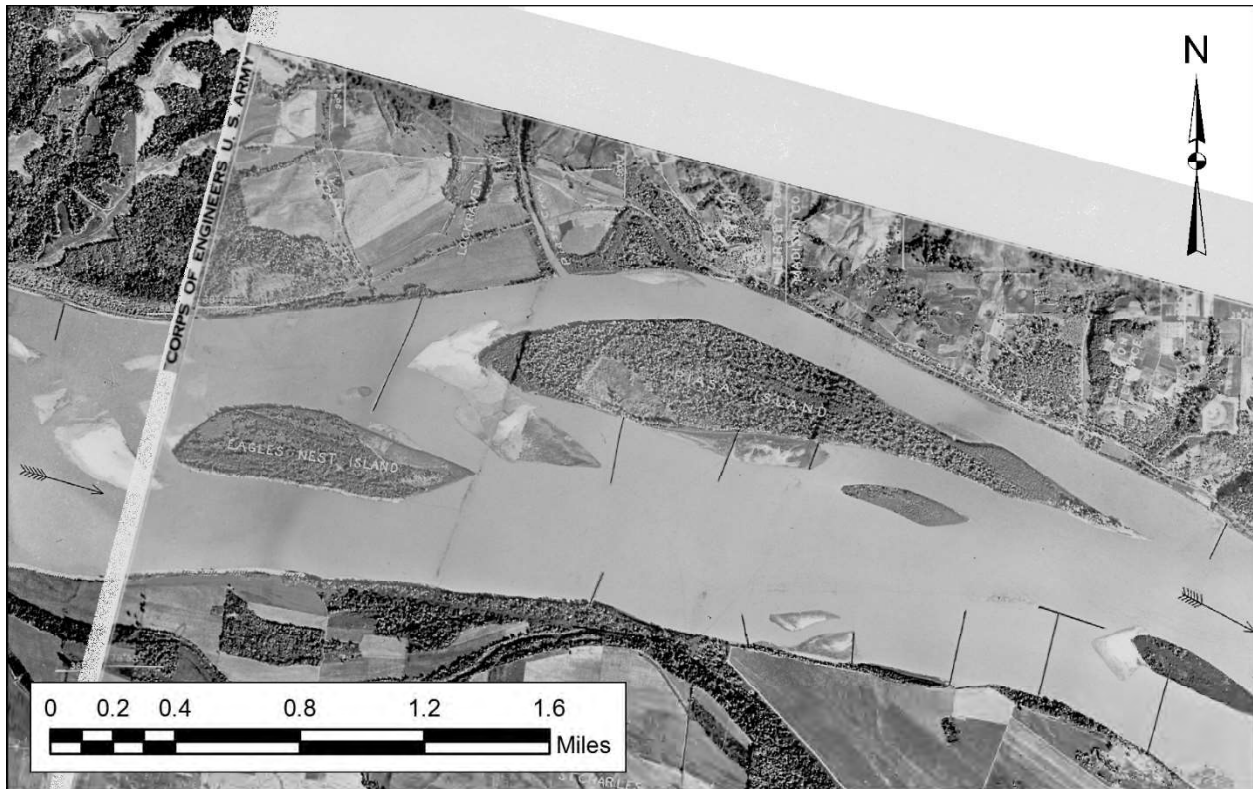


Figure 5. 1931 aerial photographs of project area.

Piasa Island was probably always used for recreation, in some form. In 1898 an outdoors club, the Nessmuck Club of Alton, leased the island for five years for use as a hunting and camping reserve (Forest and Steam 1898: 130).

An unusual use of the island occurred as the crowning feature of the entertainment program for the Illinois Pharmaceutical Association meetings in 1898, when it hosted a, then timely, recreation of the bombardment of Havana. A mock fort was built on “Scotch Jimmy’s island” across from the hotel where the conference was held and was manned by students of the Western Military Academy along with two cannons. The island’s assailants were members of the Illinois Yacht Club of Alton and twelve row boats manned by Alton Naval Reserves. Over two hundred dollars’ worth of fireworks were employed for the occasion (Parsons 1898:851). There are references to a number of clubhouses on the island with a particularly large one at its lower end, the remnants of which were still visible at low water as late as the 1960s (Alton Evening Telegraph, August 13, 1969).

As part of the construction of Lock and Dam 26 and the creation of Pool 26, Piasa and the other islands in the project area were acquired by the government (Figure 6).

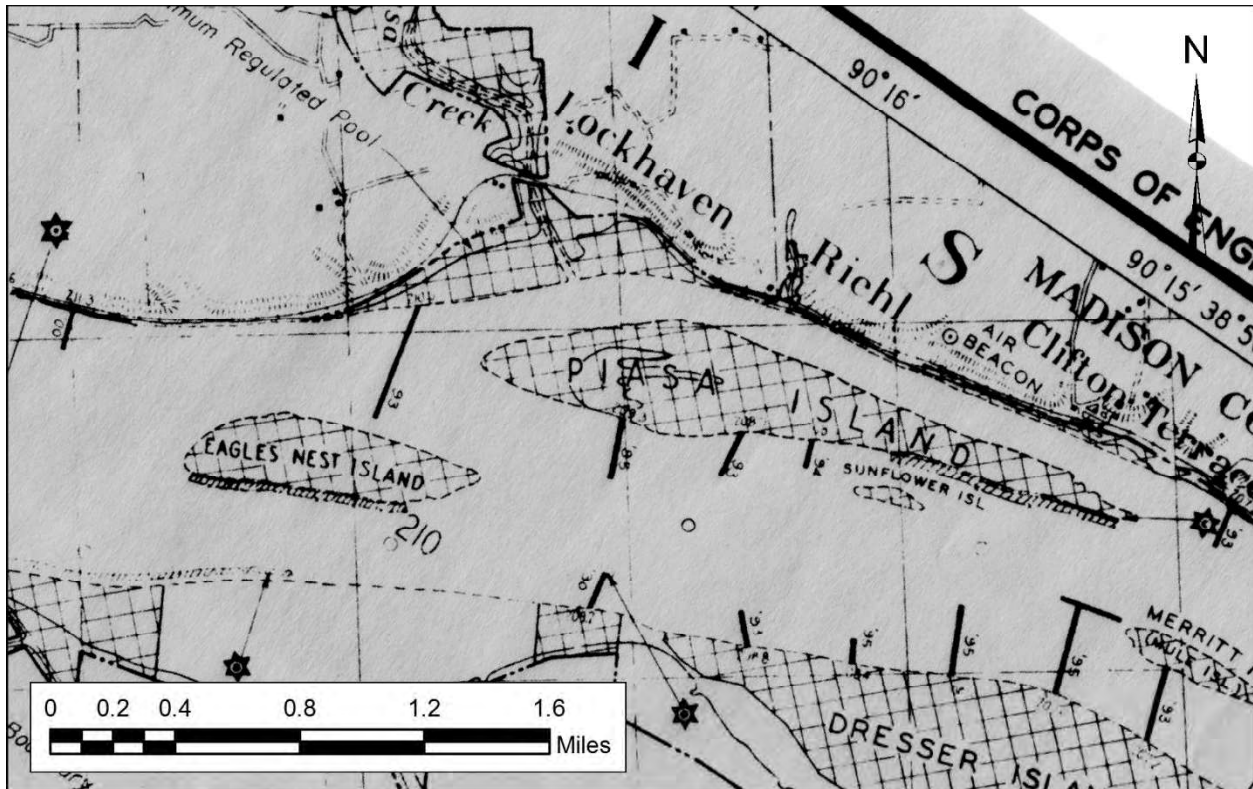


Figure 6. 1942 Corps of Engineer map showing land acquisition (hatches indicate title vested in federal government).

Shipwreck Inventory

Losses among the many steamboats that traveled the Mississippi River were high. Primary reasons for their destruction were snags, fires, and explosions. Indeed, the average longevity for steamboats has been calculated to be only six (Haites and Mak 1971:54) or seven (Hall 1885:181) years. For this reason insurance rates were also high, and many operators carried none; those that did typically only did so for two-thirds or three-quarters the value of the boat (Haites and Mak:1971:55-56).

As part of a 2003 USACE study, archival research documented six hundred and eighty seven (687) ships abandoned or reported lost prior to 1940 between Saverton, Missouri and the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The information was obtained by James V. Swift from a variety of sources, including unsigned, undated wreck data in the files of the Waterways Journal (St Louis), nineteenth century correspondence and newspaper accounts, insurance records, official government surveys and reports, private accounts, and published research (Norris 2003). Typically, losses were reported within a general location (e.g., Scudder Towhead, Brewer Point), which was researched and when possible converted to approximate river miles.

The yearly mean for reported losses is just over five and half (5.5) with a peak in the 1850s to 1860s.

Between July and December of 1988, when the Mississippi River was at a particularly low level, the St. Louis District Corps of Engineers conducted aerial surveys of exposed wrecks between Saverton, Missouri, and the mouth of the Ohio River. Thirty four (34) historic wrecks were documented at that time. Since then, the Corps database has been updated several times when new wrecks are reported or when research provides new information on wreck location. A separate database of modern (i.e., metal) wrecks, or abandoned barges, which may pose a risk to navigation is also maintained by the Corps. The combined total of mapped locations is ninety (90).

The nearest known historic wreck is over nineteen (19) miles from the project area. The nearest known modern wreck is over twelve (12) miles away. The nearest reported wrecks are off Portage des Sioux and Elsah approximately a mile and a half and three miles upstream respectively. The *Car of Commerce* is reported to have been lost to a snag off Portage des Sioux on 5/8/1832 and the *Julia* reportedly exploded and burned off Elsah on 10/15/1914.

In one source, the steamer *Artemus Lamb* was described as “badly wrecked at Scotch Jimmy’s Island” on 3/26/1896 due to a boiler explosion (The Locomotive, 1896:86). Two men were reported scalded, one fatally. The *Artemus Lamb* was built in 1873 and owned and operated by C. Lamb and Son of Clinton Iowa (Figure 7). According to one account she had a tow of eight barges of railroad ties when the boiler “let go” as she was “near the old dike crossing opposite Silver Island” (The Edwardsville Intelligencer, April 3, 1896). The vessel was not lost, however, and was eventually sold in 1898 to the Joy Lumber Company of St. Louis and later to C&EI railroad to handle barges at Joppa on the Ohio River (Blair 1930:178).



Figure 7. The steamer Artemus Lamb with an excursion party.

References Cited

- Blair, Walter A., 1930. A Raft Pilot's Log. The Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland
- Fiedel, S. J. 1999. Older than we thought: implications of corrected dates for Paleoindians. *American Antiquity* 64(1):95-115.
- Forest and Stream. 1898. Volume I. Forest and Stream Publishing Company, New York.
- Haites, E. F. and J. Mak. 1971. Steamboating on the Mississippi, 1810-1860: a purely competitive industry. *The Business History Review* 45(1):52-78.
- Hall, H. 1884. Report on the Ship-Building Industry of the United States. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.
- House Document, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents: 13th Congress, 2d Session-49 Congress, 1st Session. n.d. "Private Land Claims in Missouri (Doc. No. 79)" Government Publishing, Washington D.C.
- Morrow, J. E. 2014. Early paleoindian mobility and watercraft: an assessment from the Mississippi River Valley. *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 39(2):103-129.

Ormesher, Susan, 1982, Missouri Marriages Before 1840. Genealogical Publishing Co. Baltimore.

Parsons, Charles (ed.), 1898, The Pharmaceutical Era, Vol. XIX. D. O. Haynes and Co., New York.

Report of the Chief of Engineers. 1881. Appendices. Government Printing Office, Washington.

Report of the Chief of Engineers. 1883. Appendices. Government Printing Office, Washington.

Report of the Chief of Engineers. 1890. Appendices. Government Printing Office, Washington.

Report of the Chief of Engineers. 1895. Appendices. Government Printing Office, Washington.

Report of the Chief of Engineers. 1907. Appendices. Government Printing Office, Washington.

The Locomotive. 1896. Vol. XVII. Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co., Hartford.