

## As the Flood Flows

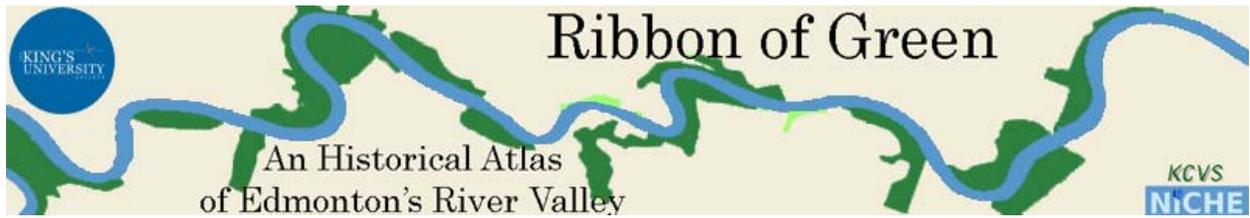
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Manitoba's Red River isn't the only dangerously flowing river in Canada. In fact, the North Saskatchewan River has wreaked havoc multiples times in Edmonton over the years. Two of the largest floods occurred in 1899 and 1915. The North Saskatchewan was the highway of trade and connection between the early cities of Edmonton and Strathcona which made these floods especially detrimental. The flood of 1899 postponed the construction of the Low Level Bridge and altered the development plans, raising up the bridge an entire eight metres.<sup>1</sup> The flood of 1915, although the waters were not as high as those of 1899, caused even greater damage to the human establishments in the river valley. Through the industrial revolution Edmonton's river valley experienced a great expansion of factories and mills. Many of these enterprises were wiped out by the flood of 1915 as most were built in the flats of the river valley which took the brunt of the flood waters. Ken Tingley writes, "measurements at the Low Level Bridge indicated the river peaked at 37 feet above its low water mark, rising 26 feet between Saturday night and Tuesday morning... The devastation was much greater because so much industrial and residential development had occurred."<sup>2</sup> The flood waters wiped out many of the buildings causing tonnes of debris to float down the river in the swift current, eventually piling into the Low Level Bridge. City workers drove steam engines onto the bridge to add strength to the structure. Much like the sandbag brigades in Red River country, so too were Edmontonians

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<sup>1</sup> *Edmonton Book of Everything*, (Lunenburg: Macintyre Purcell Publishing, 2007), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ken Tingley with Paul Bunner, *Heart of the City: A history of Cloverdale from Gallagher Flats to Village in the Park*, (Edmonton: Cloverdale Community League, 2005), 76.



attempting to fight the surging waters a the muddy river. The flood of 1915 would not be the last of the North Saskatchewan floods, but it certainly was the worst and as such instigated the building of multiple dams on the river to prevent the same type of devastation in the future.

- this still needs a LOT of work and fine-tuning... maybe split into two separate articles, one for each flood?