

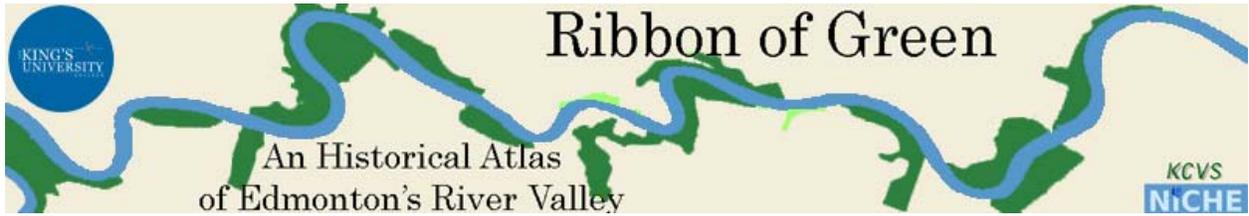
Rescue the Perishing

Written by Katie Wallbaum

Today many Edmontonians enjoy floating down the North Saskatchewan during one of the city's scorching thirty degrees above days. The same was true of early Edmontonians, sometimes however, peril followed these rafters. A trio of young men ended up trapped on a sandbar in the middle of the North Saskatchewan in 1904. They built a raft out of logs and launched it into the river at the mouth of White Mud creek and proceeded merrily down the river. Their simple trip was complicated when the craft, "reached down and found a boulder or a snag or some kind of impediment and promptly and solidly stuck there about thirty feet from shore."¹ The current of the river kept the men scrambling to stay on the only part of their raft not swept underwater. Now, like any good shipwrecked fellows, the men screamed for their lives. Nearby picnickers at Groat's flats heard their cries and wandered to the rivers edge to see what the noise was about. They were shocked to see these three men trapped in the middle of the river but were unfortunately unable to help as they had no boats and no rope to throw and reel them in. The onlookers tried to cheer the men through various means: "'Rescue the Perishing' and other appropriate hymns were sung.. friendly counsel followed, mingled with admonitions to the unfortunates to take off their boots and wade ashore, to swim out, to float ashore in their hats, or to try a standing jump at it."² Fortunately for the men, the picnickers were better at messaging for help than they were at cheering the stranded, and two sturdy boatmen from Walter's mill

¹ "Three Men in a Boat," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 25, 1904.

² Ibid.



came to their rescue. Today Edmontonians seem to have perfected the art of floating down the river, or maybe just realized that oars are a necessity, as not too often are cries for help heard coming from the middle of the river.