

GATEWAY TO THE WEST

Ruth Louise Johnson

IT WAS a Fourth of July celebration such as St. Louis had never seen, and probably never would see again. More than 150,000 people had arrived in the city by train, steamboat, wagon, and on foot that July 4, 1874, to witness the dedication of Eads Bridge, the first real gateway to the west. Hotels were packed, the levee swarmed with people, and every steamboat was loaded to capacity.

Prior to the building of this bridge, trains from the East stopped at the river, trains to the West started there but trains could not cross the great river. Many people were skeptical that the bridge would hold up under the weight of trains. It was too beautiful, they said, to be strong enough for that. So, two days before the dedication, 14 locomotives were sent across to test the bridge, and it held under their weight, strong and sure.

It had taken seven years to build this first span across the Mississippi at a cost of \$6,538,730. In July, 1867, James B. Eads, chief engineer of the project, had submitted his plans to erect a steel arch structure of three 500-foot spans, resting on stone pillars sent down to bedrock far below the bottom of the river.

The nation laughed at him, and some of the country's best civil engineers called his idea "impractical and crack-brained." He planned two roadways, one above the other. On the lower one would be a double track railway, on the upper a wagonway, 34 feet wide, and two sidewalks, each ten feet wide. The wagonway, paved with wooden blocks, would have two lines of track for electric railway service to come later.

The work started in August, 1867, but financial difficulties, high water and sunken steamboats, tim-

ber and paving stones stopped the work until February, 1869. At that time 1,000 men were employed and the work went on.

Bedrock was reached 95 feet below the surface. This was the first instance in this country of foundations being sunk to such great depth by pneumatic process. But the effect of the compressed air on workmen in the airtight caissons produced a form of paralysis called "caisson disease." Fifteen men died. But in January, 1874, all three spans were closed, and the following June the last spike was driven by General William T. Sherman.

THE Fourth of July dedication began at daybreak with a 13-gun salute to the 13 colonies. At noon there was a 37-gun salute to the 37 states. Flags, bunting and banners decorated buildings, and a triumphal arch, 50 feet high, had a portrait of James B. Eads on top. The big parade began at nine o'clock that morning.

It was a day of blistering heat. All the streets leading to the bridge became impassable with the mass of humanity that jammed them. With bands blaring and flags flying the parade marched on its way, taking almost four hours to pass a given point.

The United States Cavalry from Jefferson Barracks pranced by; the National Guard, Fire Departments and Police Department, German Singing Societies, the Veterans of

1812, tobacco dealers, butter dealers, blacksmiths and brewers; on and on they came, and the heat was suffocating. Kindhearted citizens along the way held buckets of water with dippers in them, so the thirsty paraders could refresh themselves. The mercury reached 98 degrees in the shade, but the procession moved on.

Finally, the first marchers passed under the arch and approached the bridge. Suddenly a fire alarm sounded. Several fire engines broke out of line and dashed away in search of the fire, while people fell over each other getting out of the way. Horses reared, women screamed and fainted, but the parade went on.

Across the river, on the east side, an inaugural train was made up with 15 of Mr. Pullman's palace cars drawn by three Vandalia engines. On board were several state governors, senators, and other distinguished guests, 1,000 passengers in all. The train moved toward the bridge. Both spectators and passengers seemed to hold their breath, with only the engines breaking the silence. But in less than four minutes the train crossed safely from Illinois to Missouri, where it halted for the christening and dedication ceremony.

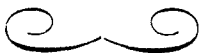
A St. Louis woman carried a silver flagon in which were mingled the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. She poured the water on the

bridge amid loud cheers from the people and the whistling of steamboats and locomotives.

THE Mayor of St. Louis gave an address, the singing societies performed the "Spanning the Mississippi" composed for the occasion. Then the Governor of Missouri and the Governor of Illinois shook hands, pronouncing the bridge a "marvel of engineering" and "an artistic

triumph," after which, James B. Eads, was called upon for a speech.

That night the city was ablaze with gaslights, and the sky sparkled with fireworks. Steamboats were gaily decorated with colored lights but it was the beginning of the end for steamboating. A new era had begun. Eighty-two years have passed since then, and the bridge still stands, strong and sure, the first real Gateway to the West.



The old doctor had never refused a call, from rich or poor, but now he was tired.

"Have you any money?" he asked a midnight caller.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Then go to the new doctor. I'm too old to get out of bed for anybody who can pay for it." — *Victoria Colonist, Canada.*

Enrico Caruso, the great tenor, had a will of steel. Fainting from pain, drugged almost to insensibility, staggering like a blind man, he would get into a car at the rear entrance of his hotel in Berlin, where he had been lying deathly ill, and rush to the stage door of the opera house where he was to sing, having flatly refused to disappoint immense audiences eagerly waiting to hear him. As his dresser put him into his costume, he lay on a couch, nearly unconscious from suffering.

The door of the room opened. The stage manager made a sign. "Signor Caruso, are you ready?" Pulling himself together with a superhuman effort, Caruso would grope his way toward the stage. As he stood for a moment in the wings, he braced himself in another effort of unbelievable self-control.

Then — he strode onto the stage, eyes flashing, head up. Another moment — and out poured the golden notes, throbbing with beauty and power. And the audience, sitting enthralled, had not the remotest idea that anything was wrong. — T. R. Ybarra, *Caruso the Man of Naples and the Voice of Gold* (Harcourt Brace & Co.)

BALLPLAYERS and BUGABOOS



by

Raymond Schuessler

SUPERSTITION is good for a ballplayer, says Lefty O'Doul. It has psychological effects. It keeps a player's mind revolving around baseball.

"Not that I think if I stepped on the foul line it really would lose a game, but it's just that it has become part of the game for me. 'Course, I don't really believe stepping on the foul line would influence the game in the least . . ." he said, crossing his eyes, spinning three times in short hops while pulling his little fingers till they cracked, and spitting in his left rear pocket four times.

Most ballplayers today are superstitious. The doodles that batters draw in the batting box, the precise route they take to their positions, the ritual before and after each inning, are a whammie's delight. Of course they don't spit in a cross-eyed woman's beer any more or go back to the hotel to change their clothes if they pass a funeral.

John McGraw never ridiculed superstition. He even helped create a few to give his players confidence. One year his eccentric star, Mike Donlin, saw a truckload of empty barrels roll by the stadium. That day he got three big hits — and a new superstition was born. The next day he couldn't beg a base hit. "If I could only see a few empty barrels," wailed Mike. McGraw hired a wagon full of empty barrels to circle the stadium every day and Mike went crazy blasting hits all over the field. The Giants won the pennant.

Superstitions start in even crazier ways. When Al Simmons of the fabulous Philadelphia A's of the Thirties went into a slump he would wander about in a daze trying to figure out means of exorcising these imps of ill luck. One day he wandered out of the shower after a particularly disastrous day and as he stood dripping wet in front of his locker, he unconsciously put on