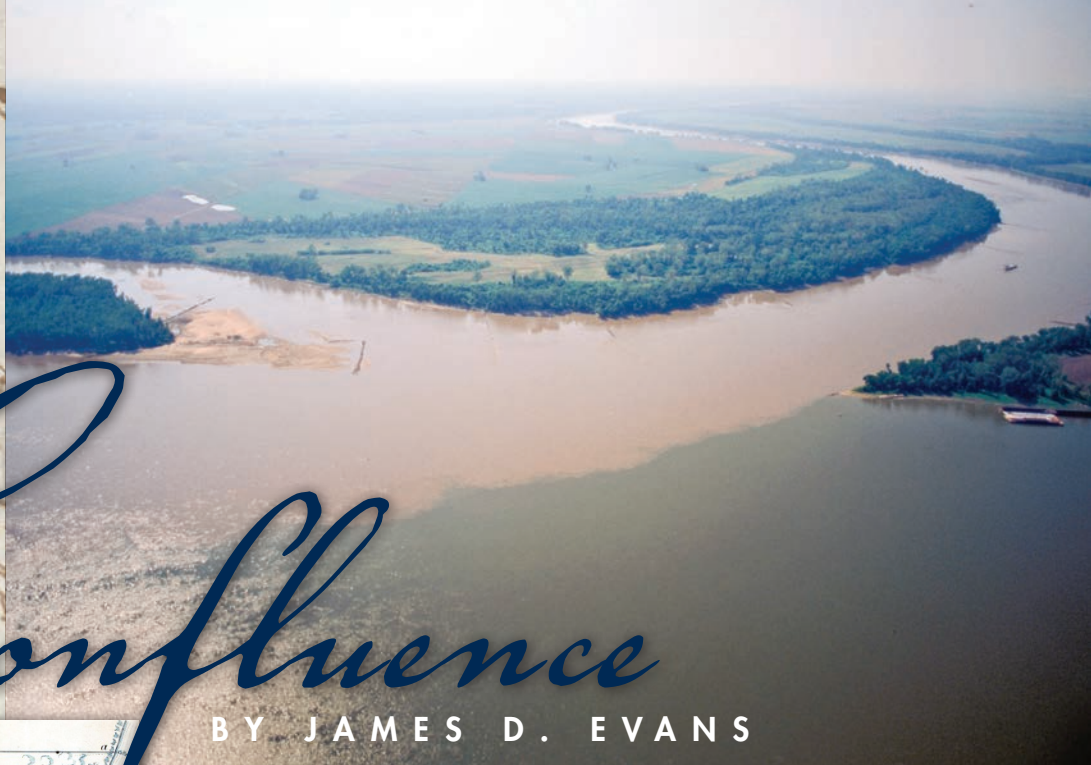


# Meet The Confluence

BY JAMES D. EVANS

(Photo: Missouri Department of Conservation)



(Photo: Missouri State Archives)

This map of the land at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers is a document found in a civil action of partition filed in the St. Charles Circuit Court, May 1845. In this action, the heirs of Vital M. Garesche asked the court to appoint commissioners who would partition the nearly 3,700 acres equitably among them. The map delineates the shares assigned to each of the heirs and notes several interesting features, such as a horse ferry, corn fields, and log cabins. Also note at the top of the map the land owned by the Honorable Henry Clay. The petitioners were Louisa Garesche, Julius P. Garesche, Alexander J. P. Garesche, Frederick P. Garesche, Ferdinand Louis Garesche, Mary Elizabeth Garesche, and Elizabeth Amelia Garesche.

One of the most striking aspects of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers is its changing nature. Even a cursory look at the maps and images over time reveals an ever-changing landscape. Islands appear (and disappear), shorelines change, the rivers' courses meander different places, and sandbars lurk beneath the surface. Even standing and looking at the merging of the rivers and seeing two colors of water converge, one cannot help but wonder which river is flowing into which, and which is the original "Father of All Waters."

Together, these two rivers flow over more than 5,000 miles.

When the Corps of Northwest Discovery left Camp Dubois in May 1804 and traveled upriver to begin its journey, the group took the left branch of the rivers. On May 14, Captain William Clark commented that they "proceeded on under a gentle breeze up the Missouri," embarking on one of America's greatest adventures. Yet the confluence Clark and the Corps saw was not that of today as you and I view it; the merging of the rivers was some two miles farther upstream. Perhaps that is one of the lessons of history: no matter how much things seem the same, time has altered them.

Writing of his recollections as a riverboatman in *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain found the same unpredictable

nature of the river. The currents move sand and shore, that which is seen and unseen, constantly blurring lines of perception and reality that required riverboat pilots to constantly observe the nuances of the river and remember what they had seen.

Gone now are the lines of riverboats at the levees, the "Bloody Island" that hosted duels, the rafts like those used by Huckleberry Finn and Jim—even the island that appears on the 1845 map pictured here. But the river continues to flow past us.

In many ways, these rivers and their confluence are metaphors for us, both as a liberal arts university and as a publication. We're committed to the notion that education is a lifelong pursuit that keeps flowing as it continues to change us. We also see learning as akin to the river, reflecting fields of inquiry such as history, the physical sciences, art and literature, material culture, and the social sciences—disparate parts, yet making up a whole that is our combined past and present. The images on these pages suggest this changing panorama of ideas and inquiries about the rivers themselves.

Herein lies the reason Lindenwood University is publishing *The Confluence* and naming it as such. We see scholarship as interdisciplinary and realize that people in our region are interested in all the factors that shape it. We know that past informs present and that our present shapes our views of the past. As a psychologist, I know that we humans are innately curious; we hope that *The Confluence* both piques and satisfies that sense of curiosity and wonder.