

# Generations of Missouri

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## An Elephant and A Bridge Chapter Three

Sarah, age 25 & Mary, age 6 months | 1874

Sarah joined crowds of people heading along the cobblestones on their way to the Mississippi River on this warm June day. At 25, she was married to a lawyer, was a mother, and lived in St. Louis.

Sarah shifted the weight of Baby Mary in her arms. Mary was Sarah's third child. The older children were at home in the nursery, but Mary was easy enough to bring along on today's adventure.

The high collar and thick fabric of her dress made sweat drip down her back, but Sarah was determined to get there on time. She remembered the lesson her Grandmother Annie had taught her about showing up and bearing witness to history. Today was one of those special days.

Andrew Carnegie, steel tycoon and one of the richest men in the United States, was going to walk an elephant across the Eads Bridge! Mr. Carnegie had commissioned the building of a bridge to span the river connecting St.

Louis to East St. Louis in Illinois.

Named after its architect, James Eads, the new bridge was one of the first constructed with steel rather than wrought iron. The steel supposedly made the bridge quite strong. Sarah hoped this was true. Trains and elephants

could cross the river!

Sarah, Baby Mary, and the rest of the onlookers gathered along the riverbank to find out just how great Carnegie and Eads' creation was.

And there, in front of the crowd, stood Andrew Carnegie, James Eads, and the immense elephant!

"Ladies and gentlemen!" Carnegie called. "Today, we shall test the strength of the Eads Bridge! We all know that an elephant will not walk on unstable ground. And we all know that an elephant is the greatest, and heaviest, beast to walk on land! So, I present to you the ultimate test! This elephant will cross Eads Bridge!" The crowd erupted in cheers of excitement. Carnegie continued, "So strong is my faith in Eads' magnificent work, that I too will accompany the elephant on its trans-river journey to the state of Illinois!"

The crowd went crazy! Sarah held Baby Mary up to see the elephant as Andrew Carnegie, the elephant, and its handlers set forth.

A hush settled over the crowd, and everyone gasped as the elephant took its first steps onto the bridge. The quiet then dissolved into cheers as, without hesitation, the giant pachyderm crossed the river confidently under the blazing summer sun.

Sarah felt an overwhelming sense of joy and anticipation. Her teenage years before her marriage and motherhood had seen the turbulent times of the Civil War, resulting in the dissolution of slavery and the Confederacy. The 15th amendment gave black Americans the right to vote. And now, the country seemed to be moving forward with progress in an exciting new direction.

Sarah looked at the massive bridge and cradled her baby, seeing only possibilities.

### NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

**Find articles in your local newspaper about construction projects, and look for words that are common to the stories.**

