Santa Fe’s 1951 Kansas City Flood

Sandhouse Gang member, Jack Barriger, will provide insights into the 1951 Kansas City flood and how the Santa Fe dealt with the disruption to the railroad.

The significance of the flood was that Santa Fe's main line (now known as the TRANSCON) was shut down in the vicinity of Kansas City by extremely heavy rainfall in the Kansas River (KAW River) drainage affecting freight movements for a month and 26 passenger trains per day for several weeks. I was there before the flood hit and stayed through much of the clean-up. President Fred G. Gurley and the Board authorized a large capital expenditure to "flood proof" the line and for 60+ years those improvements have worked.

Bio: Jack is a third generation railroader. After graduating from MIT and Yale Graduate School of Transportation Economics, in 1950 he began a 36-year career with the Santa Fe Railway. During the first 18 years, he served as Trainmaster in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, and as Superintendent of Transportation at Chicago headquarters. For the next two years he managed the Transportation Control Systems Division of Sylvania Electric Products at Waltham, MA. For his last 18 year he served in the Santa Fe’s Executive Department as Assistant to Chairman and President and as VP Finance and VP Public Affairs.

After retiring from Santa Fe, Jack headed an Operating Group for R. L. Banks Associates on a project authorized by Dept. of Justice to investigate Norfolk Southern’s prospective acquisition of Conrail. Also, he worked for the Trustee of Chicago, Missouri and Western Ry. in selling that property to Southern Pacific and Santa Fe and on various assignments for PTSI.

Jack remains active in railroad affairs as a Trustee of the John W. Barriger III National Railroad Library in St. Louis, which he founded in 1984, and as a member of AREMA, AARS, AAPRRCO, IAROO and MofW Club of Chicago.