

HALES POINT, TENNESSEE

*Mile 819.3 AHP, Map 9
Left bank, descending*

Hales Point, Tennessee, was a transfer point for goods and produce brought down the Obion River. Shipments which came down the little tributary on flatboats or in small steamers were reloaded at the Point to be sent on to New Orleans.

During the Civil War, a U. S. Navy officer encountered a merchant steamer called the *Rowena* at Hales Point. He found the boat heavily loaded with contraband goods. Noting that Hales Point was not garrisoned by Union troops and that it was "heavily infested with rebels," the officer seized the boat and its cargo.

When the U. S. Secretary of the Navy heard about the seizure, he was embarrassed. The seizure was an illegal one, he told the officer, and the boat would have to be returned at once to its rightful owners. The confiscation of private property was a tricky issue in the Civil War, and Navy officers often complained that they found themselves in trouble when they did what they thought was their duty. As in any Civil War, the legal technicalities were difficult to understand, and it was not always possible for an officer in the field to determine whether a particular operation was a legitimate part of warfare or whether it might be construed as an inhuman disregard for the rights of private citizens.

OBION RIVER

*Mile 819.2 AHP, Map 9
Left bank, descending*

When Needham Cutoff occurred in 1821, the Obion River had to find a new outlet to the Mississippi. The little tributary took the easy way out, following the old bend of the Mississippi down to the new channel and joining the big river at Mile 819.2 AHP.

The Obion River drains about 1,852 square miles in the State of Tennessee and contributes an average flow of 2,511 cubic feet per second to the Mississippi. The odd name of the river is said to have had its origin in an Indian word that meant "many-pronged."

One of the legends connected with the Obion is that Davy Crockett killed 105 bears near the mouth of the river. The story may be true, for most of the early explorers and early settlers who recorded their experiences mentioned that bears were very plentiful along the banks of the Mississippi before the wilderness was overrun with people.

There were several minor skirmishes along the Obion during the Civil War. In 1864, a group of Confederates were transporting about 30 wagonloads of guns, ammunition, and medicines down the Obion on a flatboat when they were surprised by a Union

cavalry force. The rebels fled, and the contraband goods were destroyed on the spot. The Union cavalry commander explained in his report that it would have been better to salvage the goods, but that piloting wagons through the muddy roads of Tennessee was a task beyond his capabilities.

As late as the 1870's, there was still a modest steamboat trade on the Obion River. Two little screw steamers ran between Hales Point and Dyersburg, Tennessee, and a larger boat was being built for the trade. The steamers brought down cotton, tobacco, corn, peanuts, hogs, cattle, potatoes, lumber, logs, and handmade shingles. The small farmers in the interior complained that the boats charged exorbitant prices for handling their produce, but the pilots retorted that the hazards were great on the Obion.

In 1874 the Army Corps of Engineers was asked to improve the river so that it would be open to navigation all year, in the hope that transportation costs might be reduced. By 1874, however, the railroads were killing off the steamboat trade in any case, and soon there were no boats at all on the Obion.

In recent years, the Corps has conducted flood plain studies and made surveys on the Obion to determine the feasibility of improving it for flood control, wildlife conservation, and recreational development.

RUCKERS OR NEBRASKA POINT, TENNESSEE

Mile 814.0 AHP, Map 9
Left bank, descending

Early maps refer to the point in Barfield Bend as Rucker's Point, and show Nebraska Woodyard located on the point. Today both names identify the area.

The Rucker family of Tennessee were early settlers in the area and "Rucker's Battery" was one of the Confederate artillery companies that helped defend Island No. 10 in 1862. The *U.S.S. Benton*, flagship of the Union fleet, engaged the battery for several hours on March 17, 1862. Much to the chagrin of the *Benton's* gunners, 281 rounds of ammunition failed to silence Rucker's guns.

BARFIELD BEND

Mile 810.0 AHP, Map 9

Barfield Bend was named for George C. Barfield, who kept a warehouse on the Arkansas shore, where goods and produce from the Forked Deer River in Tennessee

were unloaded from flatboats and keelboats to be stored for shipment downriver by steamers.

When residents of the Arkansas Territory petitioned the U. S. Government for postal service in the vicinity of the warehouse, they said that George Barfield would be more than qualified to serve as postmaster. The government, after due deliberation responded to the plea by establishing the postoffice two years later, appointing Barfield as the postmaster.

The community which is still called Barfield lies behind the protection of the mainline levee system today, with a few docks and terminals on the river bank in front of the village.

TOMATO, ARKANSAS

Mile 806.0 AHP, Map 9
Right bank, descending

Tomato, Arkansas, is one of the few communities on the Lower Mississippi that lies outside the protection of the mainline levee system. It was established as a shipping point for produce from truck farms in the area, and was said at one time to have "the smallest postoffice in the world." A man named Jones was postmaster at the time, and when his house burned down, he moved into Tomato's postoffice—whereupon the postoffice moved into a tiny smokehouse that Jones owned.

FORKED DEER RIVER

Mile 804.0 AHP, Map 9
Left bank, descending

Forked Deer River drains about 369 square miles of Tennessee and is a very minor tributary of the Lower Mississippi. It has an average discharge of only 511 cubic feet per second.

Keelboats once navigated the lower reaches of the Forked Deer River. In later years, it was said that local people had attempted to shorten the route to the Mississippi, tampering with the little river near its mouth and causing it to change its course.

The Corps of Engineers undertook a navigation improvement project on the river in 1883, but by 1896, the Forked Deer River was choked with snags, drift, and debris. It was also obstructed by three or four low bridges, and the project had to be abandoned.

ISLAND NO. 25

*Mile 801.5 AHP, Map 9
Right bank, descending*

Island No. 25 was severely shaken by the earthquakes in 1811-1812. Flatboats often traveled in large groups for safety's sake, and Captain John Davis was a pilot on a boat in one such group of boats. On December 15, 1811, the flatboatmen had tied their boats at Island No. 25 for the night. They were all rudely awakened at two o'clock the next morning, and found the earth in chaos around them. Captain Davis described the scene in part as follows:

"In a few seconds the boats, island and mainland became perfectly convulsed, the trees twisted and lashed together, the earth in all quarters was sinking, and the water issued from the center of the 25th island just on our left, and came rushing down its side in torrents; and on our right there fell at once about 30 or 40 acres of land, some say 300 acres."

Captain Davis and his party completed their hazardous journey successfully, but not without some very anxious moments.

CANADIAN REACH

*Mile 800.5 AHP, Map 10
Right bank, descending*

The Canadian Reach, now an oxbow lake, was once the main channel of the river. The reach was filled with sandbars, snags, and tiny islands that made it a difficult passage to navigate. French and Spanish explorers called the numerous islands the Canadian Isles.

Zadok Cramer, in *The Navigator*, gave two of the islands numbers. Islands No. 26 and No. 27, as Cramer called them, soon grew together and became one island. The river, after 1900, abandoned its old bed in Canadian Reach and made a new channel in the chute behind the islands. Boatmen renamed the old islands "Forked Deer Island," and the Canadian Reach became an oxbow lake. Somewhere in the lake, under the sand and silt, lie the bleached bones of a steamer called the *Mary E. Poe*. She caught fire and went down in the reach in October, 1873, and several passengers and two members of her crew lost their lives in the tragedy.



ASHPORT, TENNESSEE

Mile 796.4 AHP, Map 10
Left bank, descending

Ashport, an old river town, had a population of about 200 in 1856. It was located in a big bend of the river, and had several warehouses, and a big steam-powered sawmill. The river's currents played havoc with the little village, eating away the bank in front of it until there was very little left of Ashport.

Today there is a relatively straight reach of river in front of Ashport, and the old bend has virtually disappeared. The area is still known as Ashport Bend, in spite of all the changes.

DANIELS POINT, ARKANSAS

Mile 796.3 AHP, Map 10
Right bank, descending

Daniels Point, on the upper end of the Plum Point Reach, was the site of some of the earliest experimental work carried out under the supervision of the Mississippi River Commission. Willow-mat revetments were placed on Daniels Point, but floods in 1891 and 1892 totally destroyed the protective works.

Changes in the river's course later changed the point of attack to the opposite side of the Mississippi, and today articulated concrete mattresses protect the Tennessee shoreline, while a dike field off Daniels Point helps to stabilize the navigation channel in the area.

GOLD DUST, TENNESSEE

Mile 791.5 AHP, Map 10
Left bank, descending

Gold Dust, a small Tennessee community, bears the name of an old steamboat. The *Gold Dust* was a sidewheel steamer, built in 1877 and still going strong when a famous passenger named Mark Twain noted that she was as neat and comfortable in 1882 as when she first entered the river trade. Twain was gathering information for a new

book to be called "*Life on the Mississippi*" when he rode the *Gold Dust* down the river. He enjoyed swapping stories with the boat's officers about the good old days before the Civil War, and he found the boat's pilot, Lem Gray, particularly pleasant and congenial.

About three months after Twain's trip on the *Gold Dust*, the old steamer exploded her boilers near Hickman, Kentucky, killing 17 persons outright and injuring about 50 more. Mark Twain noted with regret that Lem Gray was one of those who lost his life, and added that Gray was "a good man who deserved a kindlier fate."

The Gold Dust community today has a grain elevator and mooring facilities for barges. It is very small, consisting chiefly of people who farm in the immediate vicinity.

OSCEOLA, ARKANSAS

Mile 786.0 AHP, Map 10
Right bank, descending

Unlike many small towns along the Lower Mississippi, Osceola, Arkansas, has been growing in recent years. The 1960 census figures showed a population of little more than 6,000, but the 1970 census credited the town with a population of more than 7,000. It was originally located directly on the west bank of the river and had a thriving steamboat trade, but the river threw a large sandbar up in front of the town and gave it all kinds of problems. In recent years, local interests have established a small port, which is scheduled for expansion under a Federal project authorized by the Chief of Engineers in 1971. A harbor channel is being dredged, and a 97-acre industrial site is being developed.

During the Civil War, Osceola was too small to receive much attention from the Union forces, but in August, 1863, a Confederate force was reported in the area and a Union gunboat came up to investigate. The *U.S.S. Silver Cloud* landed a detachment of soldiers, who scoured the area but found no rebels. Just for good measure, the boat lobbed a few shells in the general direction of the town, to warn the people that an even worse fate might be theirs if they allowed Confederate forces to linger around Osceola.

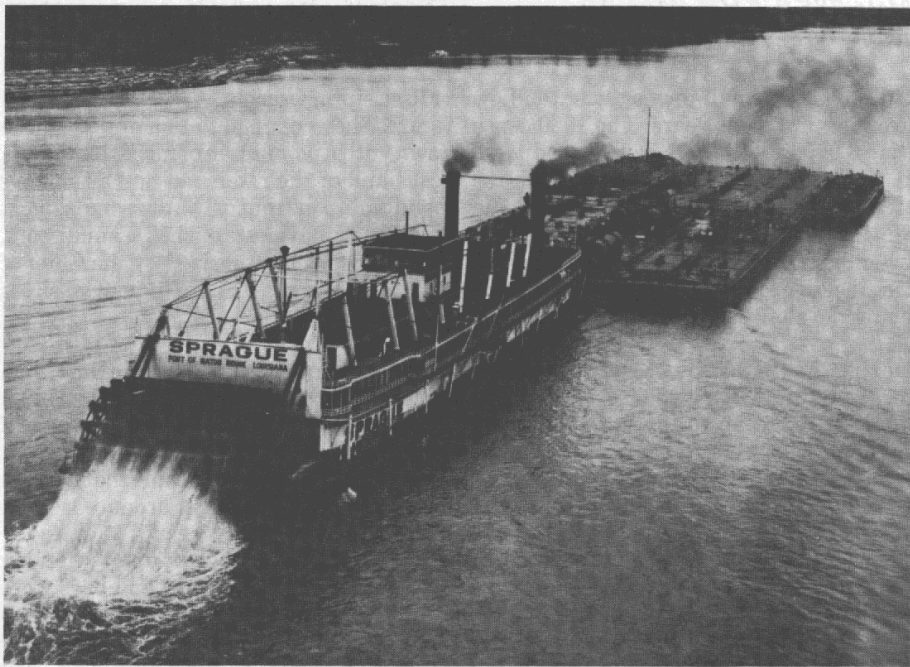
During the steamboat era, the people of Osceola must have seen more human suffering than most people witness in a lifetime. Plum Point's notorious snags and bars were fatal to more than one steamer, and Colonel Charles Suter's 1874 reconnaissance map showed three of the old wrecks still lying in the channel. The *Carolina* had succumbed to one of the snags in front of Osceola in 1841, and 34 people lost their lives. The *Tara Crown* and the *Telegraph* had gone down in the same area.

ISLAND NO. 30

*Mile 785.5 AHP, Map 10
Right bank, descending*

When Island No. 30 was given its identifying number in 1801, it lay close to the left shore. Later it crossed the river—or the river crossed it—and it now lies in front of Osceola, near the Arkansas side of the Mississippi. It appears to be attached to Arkansas, but is owned by Tennessee.

In 1913 the famous, record-breaking steam-powered towboat *Sprague* had a spectacular accident at Island No. 30. The big sternwheel boat, pushing a record tow of coal barges, was coming downstream when she was caught in side currents and whirled into the chute behind the island. Colliding with some stone dikes, the *Big Mama*, as she was affectionately called by river men, dropped her countless tons of coal into the chute, and lost all her barges.



STEAMBOAT SPRAGUE. Known to rivermen as the "Big Mama" of the Mississippi, the steam-powered towboat Sprague was a record-breaking workboat. She was on the river for more than 30 years and served as a tourist attraction at Vicksburg, Mississippi, afterward until she burned in the spring of 1974. With restoration estimates running into millions of dollars, she now lies on a muddy bank at the Port of Vicksburg, awaiting a decision as to her future—if any.

Some years later, the Mississippi tore out the old stone dikes at Island No. 30, removed the mountains of coal deposited there by the *Sprague*, and settled itself in a new bed where the chute had been.

The *Sprague* survived her mammoth accident and lived to break more records (and, of course, more tows), retiring in the 1940's after more than 30 years of service on the river. The towboat was acquired by the city of Vicksburg, and was for many years a tourist attraction on the city's waterfront. In the spring of 1974, a fire virtually destroyed the *Big Mama*. The hulk of the old boat, with her sternwheel intact, was laid up at the Port of Vicksburg to await a decision as to whether the boat should be abandoned or restored.

PLUM POINT, TENNESSEE

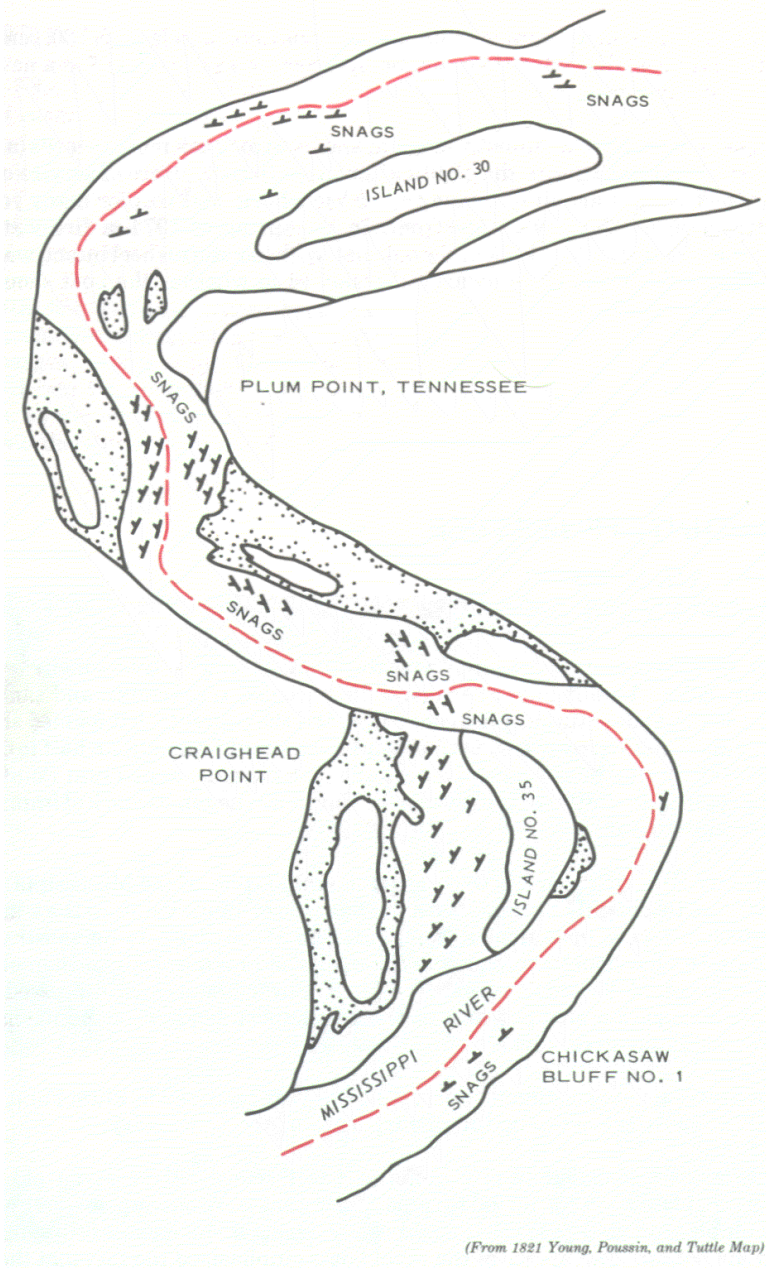
Mile 782.0 AHP, Map 10
Left bank, descending

"Worst place on the Lower Mississippi" was the kindest thing early boatmen ever said about Plum Point. A multitude of snags, half-concealed tree trunks, and sandbars gave even the most adventurous pilot cold chills, and the currents that foamed around the point with a loud roar were enough to frighten a timid flatboatman half to death. Flatboats, steamboats, barges, and even people met their doom at Plum Point with dismaying regularity until the Army Corps of Engineers began its work of improving navigation on the river.

Captain Henry Shreve, generally considered the real father of the Mississippi River steamboat, was thoroughly familiar with the hazards of Plum Point. In the winter of 1829, he took his new invention, a "snagboat," to Plum Point to demonstrate its effectiveness. In a few hours, the snagboat *Heliopolis* had snatched out and demolished a veritable forest of the ugly snags. The U. S. Government was impressed with Shreve's demonstration and put him to work as superintendant of the navigation improvements on the great river.

One of the few real naval engagements in the Civil War occurred in Plum Point Bend on May 10, 1862. It proved to be full of surprises for the U. S. Navy.

The Confederate's so-called "River Defense Fleet" consisted of seven old river steamboats that had been converted to rams. Their guns were not impressive, but they had formidable iron-clad noses that could easily penetrate an enemy ship's hull and send it to the bottom. The names of the rebel boats emphasized the fact that the fleet was an independent command that had nothing to do with the feeble Confederate Navy. They were called the *General Bragg*, *General Sterling Price*, *General Van Dorn*, *General Jeff. Thompson*, *General Beauregard*, *Colonel Lovell*, and the *Sumter*. A small steamer called the *Little Rebel* was the flagship of the fleet.



(From 1821 Young, Poussin, and Tuttle Map)

WORST PLACE ON THE RIVER. In 1821, when the above reconnaissance map was made, Plum Point was considered the worst place on the river. Plum Point was notoriously dangerous, and countless flatboats and steamers ran afoul of its snags and bars and went to the bottom.

The motley collection of vessels surprised the U. S. gunboats *Cincinnati* and *Mound City* in the Plum Point Reach and quickly butted them to death, sinking both of them near the river's banks. When the Union boats *Carondelet*, *Benton*, and *Pittsburg* hurried down to join the fray, the rebel commanders suddenly remembered their inferior armament and fled back down the river to Memphis, still Confederate territory at the time.

The glorious victory of the River Defense Fleet at Plum Point came as a surprise to southern supporters, as well as to the U. S. Navy, and in Memphis joy was unrestrained. Confederate citizens immediately jumped to the mistaken conclusion that Memphis would be a "safe" refuge for the duration of the war. The invincible River Defense Fleet would never allow Union gunboats to approach the city.

Today Plum Point is no longer the most dangerous passage on the Lower Mississippi, but it still requires the close attention of the Army Corps of Engineers. Miles of revetment work, several dike fields, and maintenance dredging keep the channel stable and maintain the required depth for navigation.

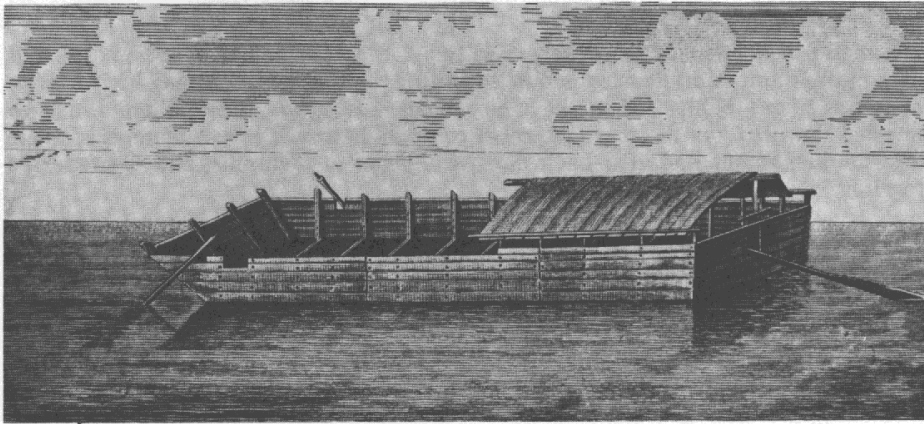
ISLAND NO. 33

Mile 781.5 AHP, Map 10
Left bank, descending

Island No. 33 is still shown on navigation maps, but Islands No. 31 and No. 32 were mislaid many years ago and no longer appear on the charts. Island No. 32 was said to have been totally destroyed by the New Madrid earthquakes in 1811-1812, and Island No. 31 may have suffered the same fate, or may have joined the State of Arkansas before it disappeared from the maps.

Island No. 33 was called Flour Island by early boatmen because so many flatboats that carried barrels of flour left their cargo smashed to smithereens on the island. Flatboats could carry from 200 to 400 barrels of flour, and even after the introduction of the steamboat most of the flour produced in the Ohio Valley was floated down by flatboat. New Orleans was the point-of-no-return for the awkward craft, if they were lucky enough to get that far in one piece. It was more practical to break them up there and sell the lumber than it was to attempt to get them back up the stream against the current, since manual labor was the only means of propelling them.

Thomas Nuttall, who took a loaded flatboat down the river in 1819, noted that Cramer's book, *The Navigator*, advised the use of the right-hand channel. After looking the situation over carefully, Nuttall said that the right-hand channel filled him with terror, and he took the channel on the left side of the island. He passed through something that resembled a submerged forest, he said, and was agreeably surprised when he landed safely on the river bank below Island No. 33.



FLATBOAT. Flatboats, also called Kentucky boats, came in many shapes and sizes. From the Ohio and Upper Mississippi Valleys, they carried furs, lead, coal, flour, and tobacco to New Orleans. Jacob Voder, a Kentuckian, had been a soldier in the American Revolution, but he took more pride in the fact that he had been one of the first American flatboatmen than he did in the fact that he had fought for American independence. When he died in 1832, Voder's tombstone informed the world that he had been a member of a crew that took the first flatboat from the Ohio Valley to New Orleans in 1782.

John James Audubon was detained at Island No. 33 by a storm in 1820. He spent the idle time working on his drawing of the Bald Eagle that he had killed at Little Prairie. With his spyglass, he could see live eagles roosting in the lower branches of the cypress trees in the vicinity of the island.

Island No. 33 was removed from the main channel of the Lower Mississippi in 1935 by Driver's Cutoff. It now lies more than a mile inland, on the east bank of the river.

FORT PILLOW, TENNESSEE

*Mile 779.5 AHP, Map 11
Left bank, descending*

Fort Pillow was a Civil War fortification, erected by Confederates in September, 1861. Named for General Gideon J. Pillow of the Confederate Army, the little fort had a small garrison and about 60 guns. The real strength of the position was never tested. The Union Army and Navy had planned a cooperative campaign against Fort Pillow, and set the date for June 5, 1862. When they arrived to launch the attack, they found that the rebels had abandoned the position the previous day.

Late in the Civil War, Fort Pillow unexpectedly zoomed into national prominence when the famous Confederate cavalry leader, General Nathan B. Forrest, recaptured it. A Union garrison, totally surprised and panic-stricken by the daring raid, offered

only feeble resistance. Forrest said later that he had attacked with a force of 1,000 men, but the frightened survivors of the engagement estimated the rebel force at 7,000 men.

The loss of Fort Pillow came as a stunning blow to Union officials, one of whom referred to it as "a massacre." The northern press took up the cry. After all, General Forrest had been a slave trader before the war, and it was natural to suppose the worst of him. The garrison of Union men had consisted of 200 white soldiers and officers and 300 blacks.

President Lincoln was deeply troubled by the outcry. He had been responsible for recruiting southern slaves into the Union army. He had supposed that it would be an effective war measure that would demoralize and terrify the people of the South. He had given the following assurance to Congressional leaders:

"The bare sight of 50,000 black soldiers upon the banks of the Mississippi would end the rebellion at once."

By the time the Confederates recaptured Fort Pillow, more than 100,000 black soldiers were garrisoning various captured posts in the Mississippi Valley, but the rebellion had not ended. Political enemies and the press demanded a public statement from the President about the Fort Pillow affair. Did the black soldiers panic and refuse to fight? Did the rebels trap them and deliberately murder them? Were they simply overwhelmed by numbers and did they fight bravely to the end? What was the true story of Fort Pillow?

The President said there would be an investigation, and refused to say more. The investigation was held, and resulted in voluminous and conflicting testimony. There were charges of southern atrocities, and charges of northern brutality. By the time the investigation was under way, the war was drawing to a close. The northern press lost all interest in the matter.

Today there is a small community on the Tennessee bluff that preserves the name of Fort Pillow. There is also a prison farm in the area that is a part of the State penal system.

CRAIGHEAD POINT, ARKANSAS

*Mile 779.0 AHP, Map 11
Right bank, descending*

When Columbus, Kentucky, New Madrid, and Island No. 10 had all fallen into Union hands, the way was opened for Federal forces to launch an effort to take Fort Pillow, Tennessee. The Union fleet of ironclad gunboats, under the command of Flag Officer Andrew Foote, and a Union army under the command of General John Pope arrived at Craighead Point, opposite Fort Pillow, on April 13, 1862.

After assessing the situation, it was agreed by the two commanders that a canal across Craighead Point would enable the gunboats and transports to bypass Fort Pillow and get below it.

Four days later, General Pope received orders to move his men to another point, and the Army departed, leaving Foote to deal with Fort Pillow as best he could. The Navy commander promptly decided that digging a six-mile canal was beyond his capabilities, and he kept the fleet dawdling about above Fort Pillow for several weeks. Occasionally one of the gunboats would throw a shell in the direction of the fortification, and the rebel guns would reply, but nothing was accomplished. On May 9, 1862, Foote turned his command over to another officer and departed, never to return. He was suffering from a wound that would not heal, and it would be the cause of his untimely death some months later.

Foote's hand-picked successor, Captain Charles Henry Davis, took command on May 9, 1862, and promptly found himself engaged in the humiliating affair at Plum Point. When the smoke had cleared, Davis urged the U. S. Secretary of the Navy to hurry the delivery to him of some ironclad rams.

While the Union fleet was waiting for the rams and trying to decide how to attack the fortification at Fort Pillow, the Confederates abandoned the position and disappeared.

Two years after the war had ended, a steamboat called the *St. Cloud* sank at Craighead Point. It was the second time down for the old steamer. She had served as a Union transport during the war, and in 1864 hit a snag on the Upper Mississippi and sank. She was raised, repaired, and put back in service, only to come to grief in the same manner at Craighead Point.

CHICKASAW BLUFF NO. 1

Mile 779.0 AHP, Map 11
Left bank, descending

There are four high bluffs along the Mississippi on the western edge of what is now the State of Tennessee. All of them were included in the territory claimed by the Chickasaw Indians, and the upper bluff was called Chickasaw Bluff No. 1.

The Chickasaws, never very numerous, were bold and aggressive in war and were much feared by the French, who had found them openly hostile.

The Chickasaws had almost destroyed DeSoto's expedition in the 16th Century. Later, they were friendly with English traders but always disliked the French. Eventually the Chickasaws would try to be friendly with the new American nation, and would in the process lose all of their lands, as well as their own national identity as a result.

FULTON, TENNESSEE

*Mile 778.0 AHP, Map 11
Left bank, descending*

Fulton, Tennessee, is a small community where the Corps of Engineers maintains a river gage and a bulletin board for the convenience of navigators. Before the Civil War, Fulton had an estimated population of around 400. Since it depended almost entirely on the steamboat trade for its commerce, it was doomed to decline when it failed to become a rail terminal and was bypassed in the 20th Century by major highways.

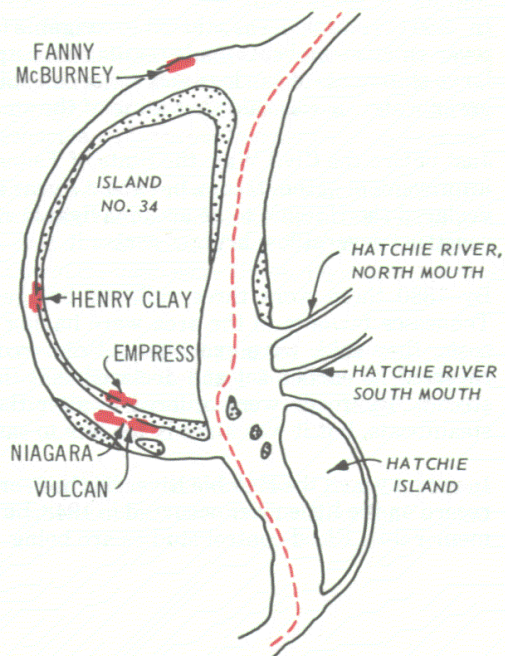
NODENA BEND

*Mile 777.8 AHP, Map 11
Right bank, descending*

Nodena Bend was a snaggy passage that ran to the right, or west, of Island No. 34. A good many steamboats went down in the bend before the river changed its course and appropriated a better channel in the chute east of the island.

Colonel Charles Suter's reconnaissance map of the Lower Mississippi showed just a few of the wrecks that had occurred in Nodena Bend. They were the *Fanny McBurney* (stranded on a sandbar in 1863); the *Henry Clay* (snagged in 1863); the *Empress* (snagged in 1864); and the *Vulcan* (a steam-powered towboat that sank in the bend in July, 1863).

NODENA BEND. The navigation channel west of Island No. 34, in Nodena Bend, was a treacherous one. Colonel Charles Suter's 1874 map showed five steamboats wrecked in the bend, and they were only a few of the boats that had been lost there. The river had already enlarged the Island No. 34 chute by 1874 and was in the process of abandoning its old bed in Nodena Bend.



ISLAND NO. 34

Mile 774.0 AHP, Map 11
Right bank, descending

Island No. 34 originally lay in the middle of the navigation channel of the Lower Mississippi, but migrated to the east bank, dragging a few smaller islands along with it. Later the river changed its course again, leaving Island No. 34 and a large towhead on the Arkansas side. The State of Tennessee still exercises jurisdiction over Island No. 34 and its towhead.

HATCHIE RIVER

Mile 774.0 AHP, Map 11
Left bank, descending

The Hatchie River is a small tributary of the Lower Mississippi. It drains about 2,609 square miles of Tennessee and Mississippi. Its watershed varies from flat, densely wooded river bottoms to fairly open, sparsely wooded hills. Abundant wildlife and waterfowl make the Hatchie Basin a favorite area for sportsmen.

In 1856 the Hatchie was said to be navigable for about 75 miles above its mouth. Six or seven small steamboats made regular trips up the river during the cotton season, and large shipments of sawlogs and white oak staves were brought downstream. Even in lower water, it was said that some of the smaller boats could navigate the Hatchie.

Just before the Civil War, the State of Tennessee appropriated some money for the improvement of the stream, but about a year after the war ended the state legislature declared the Hatchie to be an unnavigable stream and gave railroads permission to construct several low bridges across it.

By 1880 there were three railroad bridges obstructing the Hatchie River, and Tennessee farmers in the area were having some second thoughts. Transportation costs, they said, were exorbitant. Pressured by constituents, the state legislature reversed its earlier act and declared that the Hatchie was once again a navigable stream. Railroads were ordered to alter their bridges to provide draw spans for steamboats, but it was already too late to save the steamboat trade on the Hatchie.

In recent years, the Hatchie River has been on several rampages. The greatest flood of record on the little river occurred in 1948, but floods in 1935 and 1946 were almost as memorable. Flood-control studies are being made.

RANDOLPH, TENNESSEE

*Mile 771.0 AHP, Map 11
Left bank, descending*

Randolph, Tennessee, was established in 1828, and for a long time enjoyed more prosperity and a larger population than its neighbor, Memphis.

In its early days, Randolph had a great deal of trouble with a group of bandits who hung around the town, preying on the steamboats that came to the landing. In 1834, the people of Randolph lost patience with the criminal element and made a clean sweep of the robbers. Newspapers in other river towns reported, with obvious hearty approval, that eight of the wicked bandits had been jailed and that about a dozen more had been "meted out punishment decreed by Judge Lynch, from whose rulings there is no appeal." If the citizens of Randolph had really resorted to lawless violence to remove the bandits from their midst, it was the opinion of the people of other towns that the rascals had received exactly the treatment they so richly deserved.

Randolph might have been the site of a major Civil War battle, if Confederate officials had listened to some advice offered them in 1861. A rebel officer who was familiar with the area urged that Randolph should be heavily fortified. It would be much easier to defend than Columbus or Island No. 10, he said. About 18 guns were finally placed at Randolph, but when the Union fleet went down the river and approached the little fort on June 6, 1862, the rebels had already abandoned the post without a contest.

A short time later, General William T. Sherman ordered Randolph burned because some Confederates had fired on the Union steamer *Eugene* in front of the landing. Randolph had no real importance, General Sherman said scornfully, but he felt that its destruction would provide a salutary lesson for other southern river towns. It was a policy that was going to make the red-headed general better known later in the war than he was in 1862. Before the fighting ended, his concept of total war would make him the most hated of all the northern generals, as far as southerners were concerned.

In 1864 a handful of Confederate soldiers attacked another Union boat in front of the ruined town of Randolph, and almost succeeded in capturing it. The affair ended in a dramatic shoot-out on board the boat, and the *Belle St. Louis* fled the landing at Randolph with four casualties on deck. Two of the dead were Union men; the other two were Confederates.

After the Civil War, both the railroads and highways bypassed what was left of Randolph, and the town went into a permanent decline. In 1871, a Memphis newspaper reported that the bluff at Randolph was caving away, carrying with it the sites of the Civil War batteries.

Below Randolph, at the foot of Chickasaw Bluff No. 2, is Richardsons Landing. There is a casting field near the landing, where concrete blocks are produced for the Corps of Engineers to use in revetment work.

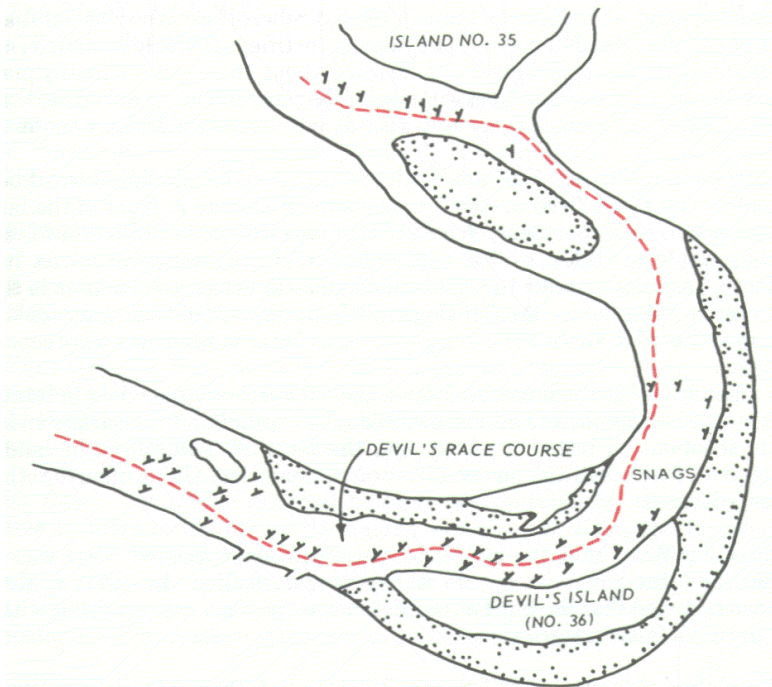
ISLAND NO. 35

*Mile 764.5 AHP, Map 12
Right bank, descending*

During the past century, many changes have taken place in the vicinity of Island No. 35, and Island No. 36 has completely disappeared from the river maps. The changes were all for the better. The area had been called Chenal du Diable, or the Devil's Channel by French explorers, and American flatboatmen had named it the Devil's Race Course. Island No. 36 was called the Devil's Island.

John Bradbury, a British botanist, was making a voyage down the Lower Mississippi in December, 1811, and had the misfortune to tie up at Island No. 35 the night the New Madrid earthquakes began to convulse the Mississippi Valley.

Bradbury had already been worried about the notorious Devil's Race Course. He knew that it was extremely shallow, with a huge bar obstructing the navigation channel. Countless large trees uprooted by the river's currents came to rest on the bar, and the



(From 1821 Young, Poussin, and Tuttle Map)

DEVIL'S RACE COURSE. The navigation channel in the vicinity of Islands No. 35 and No. 36 was feared by flatboatmen, who called the passage the Devil's Race Course. Sandbars and snags made navigation difficult, and the water rushed over the bars and through the branches of driftwood trees with a roar that could be heard for some distance. Army Engineers making a reconnaissance map of the area in 1821 showed some of the snags and bars.

water rushed over the bar and through the branches of the driftwood with a roar that could be heard some distance away. When the boatmen were awakened by the shaking of the earth and the tossing of their boats, trees were crashing around them and all the waterfowl in the area were screaming in terror. They spent the rest of the night trying to keep their boats from being dashed to pieces, and next morning found the Devil's Race Course tame by comparison with the night they had spent tied to the island.

When John James Audubon came down the river in the winter of 1820-1821, he too had dreaded reaching Island No. 35 and the dangerous channel below it. To his Journal he confided gloomily that he expected it to be a terrifying experience and that he was hardly surprised to find the Devil working anywhere "on this cursed river." The next day, having run the Race Course safely, Audubon wrote cheerfully that many places on the Lower Mississippi were not half as bad as their names had led him to believe.

During the Civil War, a transport called the *Universe* was taking a group of rebel prisoners from Vicksburg to Cairo, to be sent to a prison camp in the North, when the boat hit a snag between Islands No. 35 and No. 36 and went down. The Confederates took advantage of the general confusion and panic on board the Union boat, and about a dozen succeeded in escaping. Six or seven of the others were drowned, along with some of the boat's crew.

Around 1874, the Island No. 35 and Island No. 36 area began to change rapidly. In the bend where Island No. 35 was located, the river showed signs that it was about to abandon the channel on the west side of the island. The Corps of Engineers tried to prevent the change by building sand dams across the island chute, but the river had its way. After the flood of 1927, the channel on the west filled with silt, and by 1928 boats were using the island chute as the main navigation channel. Island No. 35 joined the Arkansas shore.

Island No. 36 was eaten away by the river currents, and in 1876 the Devil's Race Course was removed from the main channel of the river by the Centennial Cutoff.

All of these drastic changes brought the river into a better alignment, and proved in the long run to be beneficial rather than harmful to navigation interests.

CHICKASAW BLUFF NO. 3

Mile 755.0 AHP, Map 12
Left bank, descending

Rene-Robert Cavalier de la Salle was born in France on November 22, 1643. At the age of 23, the young man sailed to the New World, and for the next few years he lived in Canada and learned a great deal about Indians, fur trappers, and the great North American wilderness.

La Salle was a dreamer, but he was also a tireless and energetic worker. He soon acquired an obsession about the Mississippi River. He believed that it flowed into the Gulf of Mexico, and he thought that a chain of forts and trading posts along its course would be profitable both for him and for the French government.

It took years of almost superhuman effort, filled with betrayals, mutinies, and other disaster, for the determined La Salle to get together enough men and money to begin to explore the Mississippi River. In 1682 he set out at last, accompanied by his second-in-command and trusted lieutenant, Henri de Tonti, and a party of 23 Frenchmen and 18 Indian braves, 10 Indian squaws, and three small children.

From the mouth of the Ohio to the Chickasaw bluffs, the voyage was uneventful. At the third Chickasaw bluff, the party stopped to rest and replenish their supply of meat. Hunters went into the woods. By nightfall, all had returned except Pierre Prudhomme, one of the Frenchmen in the party.

La Salle feared the worst. If Prudhomme had been ambushed and killed by hostile Indians, the expedition could expect to be attacked at any time. He was nonetheless determined to find out what had happened to Prudhomme before he continued the voyage downstream. The French explorer and his men began to construct a crude fort, hastily throwing up earthworks to protect them from possible Indian attack. When their fort was finished, they began a methodical search for the missing man. They searched the forest by day, and slept uneasily at night within their earthworks. On the ninth day, Pierre Prudhomme staggered into the camp, totally exhausted but otherwise unharmed. He had simply become lost in the woods, and it had taken him more than a week to find his way back to the river.

Since Prudhomme was in no condition to travel, La Salle detailed a few men to stay with him at "Fort Prudhomme," while he and the rest of the party continued the voyage of exploration.

After La Salle had proved to his own satisfaction that the Mississippi did indeed empty into the Gulf of Mexico, he set up a cross at the mouth of the river and claimed the vast valley for France. Then he returned to Fort Prudhomme. He arrived weakened by a fever, and spent 40 days in the little fort, near death. When he recovered, he went back to Canada and sailed to France to make arrangements to establish a colony on the lower reaches of the great river he had explored. His plans and ambitions were destined to fail, for when he later entered the Gulf of Mexico he was unable to locate the mouth of the Mississippi and landed on the barren Texas coast, where he was later murdered by one of his own men.

Old maps do not always agree on the location of Fort Prudhomme, but contemporary documents give evidence that the Chickasaw Bluff No. 3 was the true location of the French explorer's camp and fort.

The State of Tennessee owns 6,512 acres of land lying between the Mississippi River and Chickasaw Bluff No. 3. The area, called Shelby Forest, is a public recreation area.

CENTENNIAL CUTOFF

Mile 754.0 AHP, Map 12
Right bank, descending

The Lower Mississippi celebrated the nation's 100th birthday by making two major cutoffs in its course. One of them occurred below Island No. 36, and removed a large bend in the river that boatmen had called the Devil's Elbow. The change in the river's course in this area set off a kind of chain reaction that eventually shortened the navigation channel by about 30 miles. It was also the indirect cause of some undesirable shoaling in the harbor at Memphis, some miles down the river. Island No. 37 and Island No. 38 were both removed from the river by the Centennial Cutoff above Memphis.

BRANDYWINE ISLAND

Mile 752.0 AHP, Map 12
Right bank, descending

Brandywine Point, known today as Brandywine Island, took its name from one of the early steamboat disasters on the Lower Mississippi.

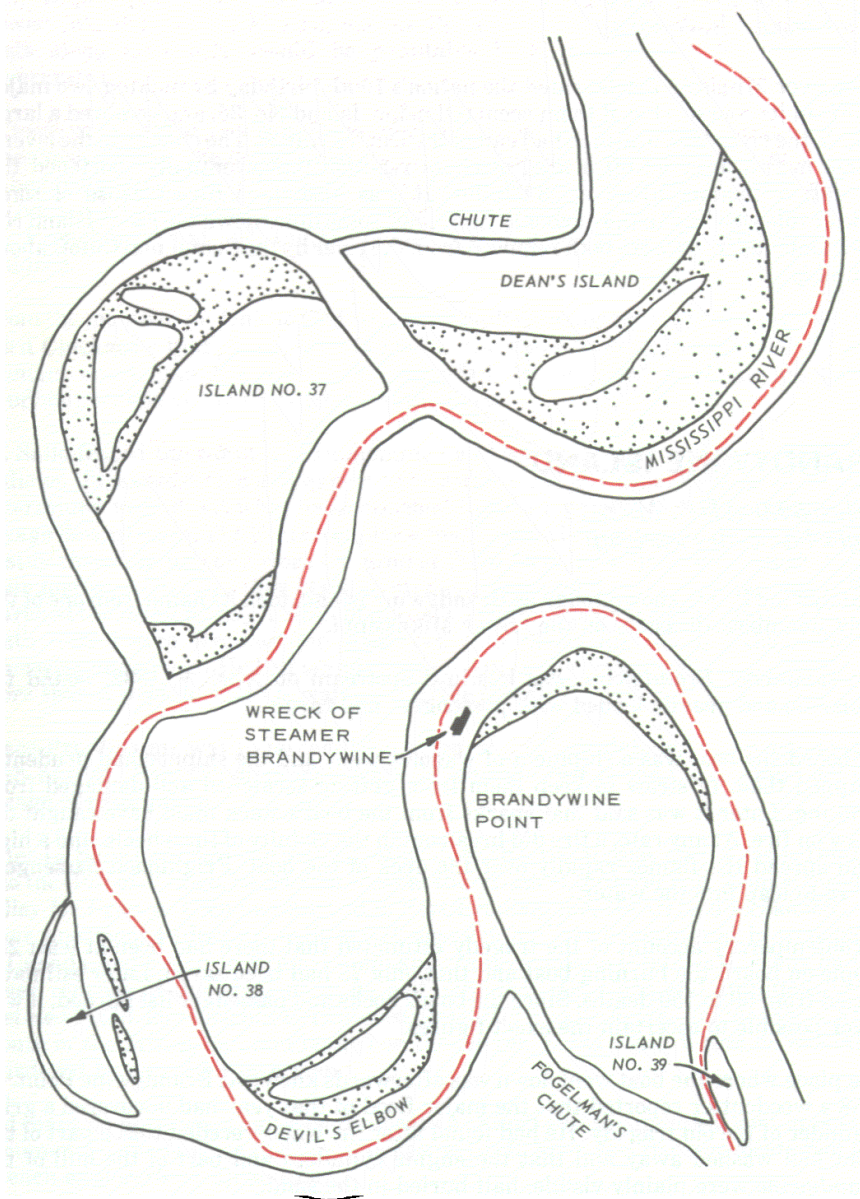
The steamboat *Brandywine* was hustling upstream on April 9, 1832, bound for Louisville and heavily loaded with passengers and cargo.

On board the boat was a shipment of wagonwheels, and the shipper had prudently wrapped them in straw to keep them from getting scratched and damaged from handling. Later it was said that sparks from the boat's stack must have caught the straw on fire. At any rate, a fire did break out in the vicinity of the wheels, and a high wind spread the flames rapidly over the deck of the boat. Frightened passengers began to leap into the water.

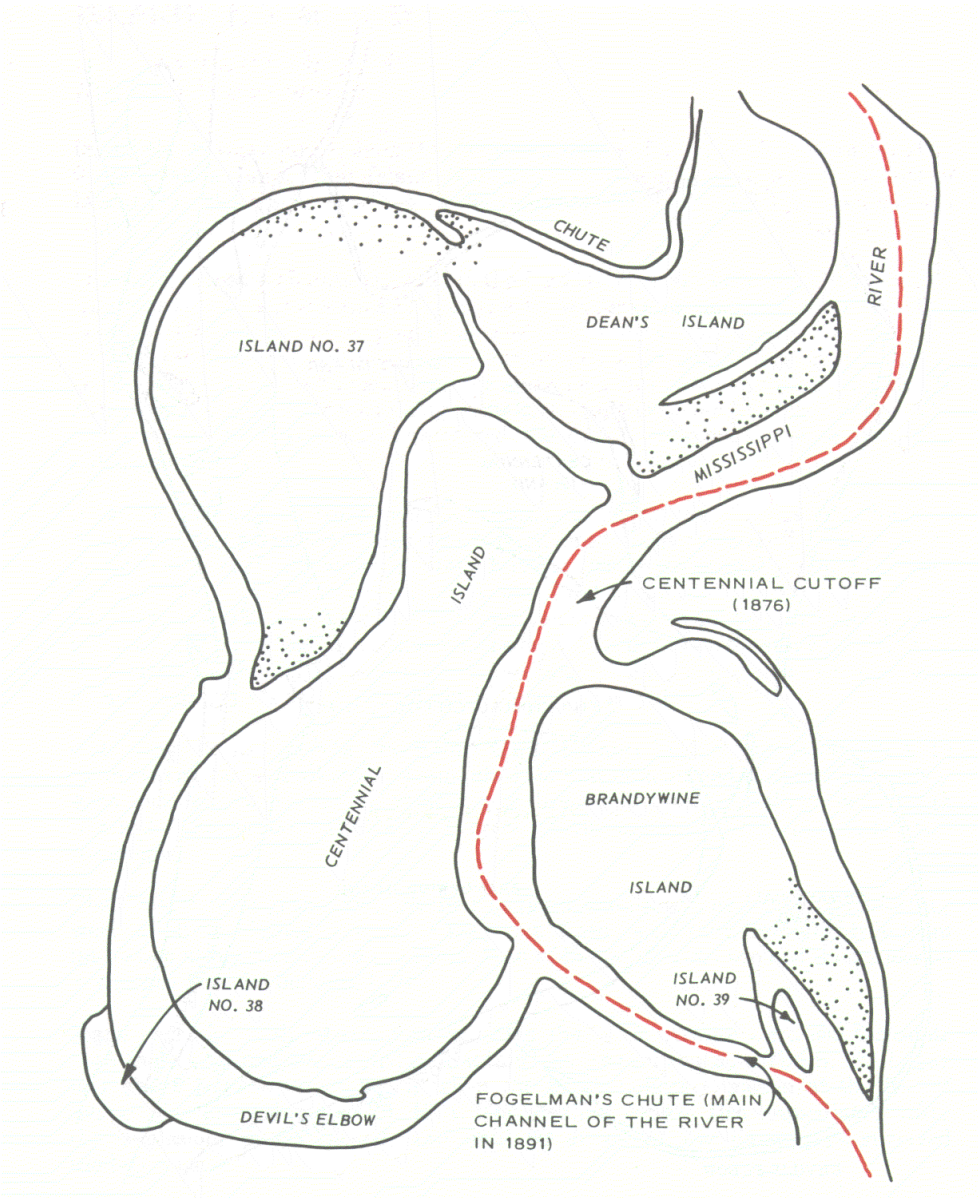
A contemporary account of the tragedy estimated that there had been at least 230 people on board the burning boat and that only 75 had been saved. Later estimates varied from 60 to 150 deaths. Since the boat's books and passenger list burned, it was never possible to ascertain the exact figures.

The place where the boat went down was afterwards known as Brandywine Point. In 1858 a woodcutter reported that the major flood of that year had uncovered a grim reminder of the old tragedy. He had found after the water receded that a part of the point had washed away and that the engine cylinders and part of the hull of the *Brandywine* were plainly visible, half-buried in the sand.

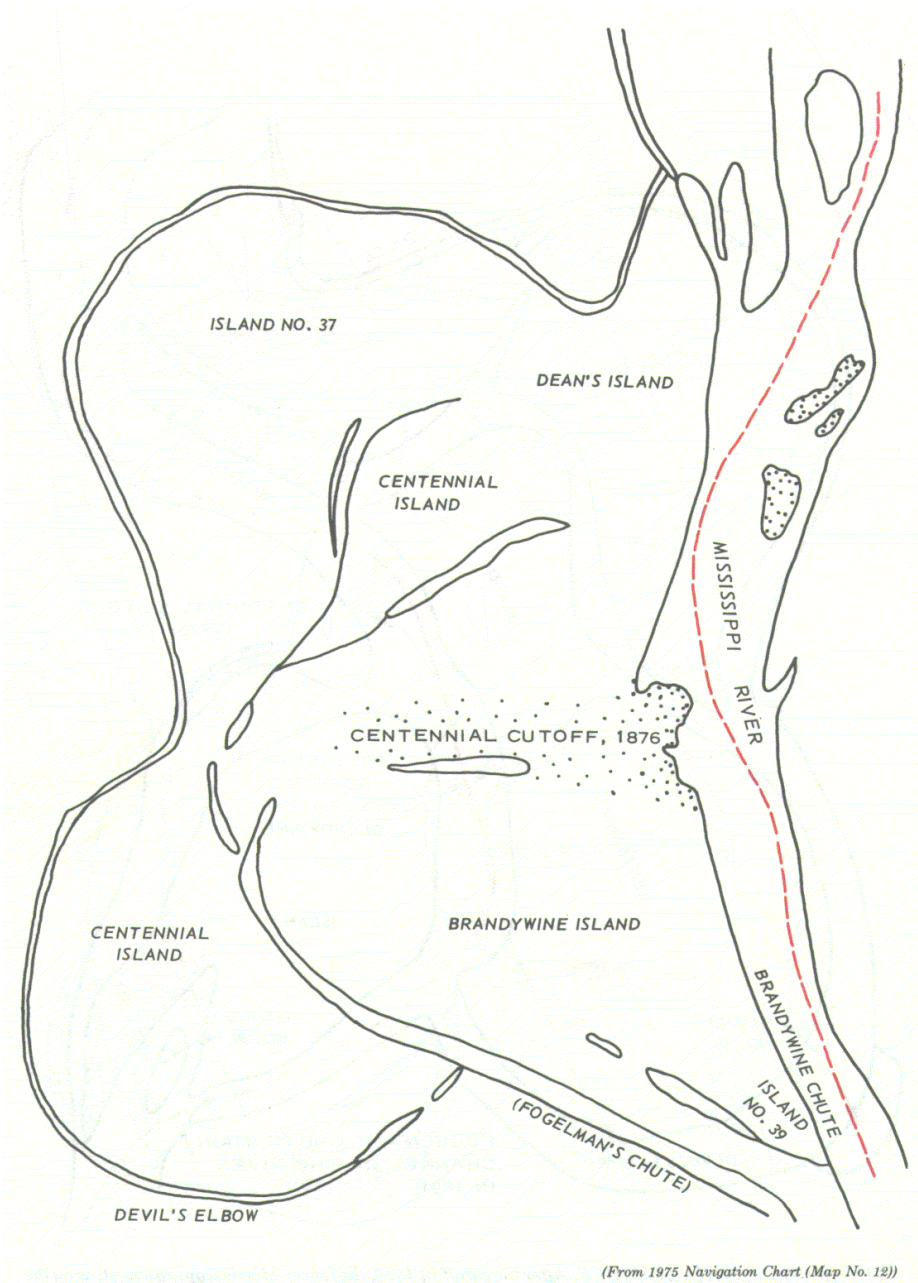
The State of Arkansas today maintains a public recreation area and wildlife refuge on Brandywine Island.



BEFORE CENTENNIAL CUTOFF. Colonel Charles Suter's map of the Lower Mississippi, made in 1874, showed a narrow neck of land separating the river channel above and below the long double loop that contained Island No. 37, Island No. 38, and the Devil's Elbow. Two years later, Centennial Cutoff occurred when the river jumped the neck of land and made itself a new channel.



AFTER CENTENNIAL CUTOFF. After the cutoff in 1876, the Lower Mississippi ran west, or on the right side, of Brandywine Island. A map published by the Mississippi River Commission in 1891 showed the river's new course and the old loop that was removed by the cutoff.



MORE CHANGES. Further changes in the Centennial Cutoff area made an island out of Brandywine Point. The river today runs through Brandywine Chute, and a total of about 30 miles have been removed from the navigation channel by changes in the river's course.

ISLANDS NO. 40 AND NO. 41

Mile 746.0 AHP, Map 13

Right bank, descending

Island No. 40 was a large island that lay in the middle of the river. The boatmen called it Beef Island, and when Island No. 41, a small island that lay at the foot of Island No. 40, became attached to the larger island, both became known as Beef Island.

Many steamboat accidents occurred in the Beef Island area, and one of the early ones would have been a major disaster had it not been for the prompt and unusual action taken by Captain T. J. Casey and his crew. The steamer *Gen. Pratte* had left New Orleans on November 19, 1842, bound for St. Louis. On board were more than 450 German immigrants who had taken the steamer at New Orleans after crossing the Atlantic on board the ocean-going vessels, *Columbus*, *Johannes*, and *Diana*. The immigrants were deck passengers, and the *Gen. Pratte* had eight or ten cabin passengers as well.

At about 2:00 a.m. on November 24, as the boat approached Beef Island, the crew discovered that a fire had broken out on the steamer. A determined effort was made to douse the flames with water buckets, but the fire spread rapidly. Captain Casey ordered the boat run ashore, a plank was put out to the bank, and the officers and deckhands began a nightmare effort to persuade more than 450 terrified people, most of whom spoke no English, to abandon the boat. Plunging into the smoke and flames, the boatmen forcibly removed some of those who were too frightened to run. Several elderly immigrants and many children were carried ashore.

Gathering the survivors on the island, Captain Casey built a huge bonfire to keep them warm. So loud were their lamentations that he assumed that many lives had been lost, but when morning came it was discovered that not a single person was missing. The heroic officers and crew of the *Gen. Pratte* had saved every passenger.

The German immigrants had lost their baggage and provisions, but fortunately they were all fully clothed. Captain Casey explained later that immigrants seldom undressed at night on board the boats. Most of them, he said, even had their shoes on when they fled the burning boat.

Many years later, the passengers on board the *W. R. Arthur* were less fortunate than those who had been saved by Captain Casey's cool courage. The *W. R. Arthur* had about 130 people on board when the boat's boilers exploded at the foot of Island No. 40 on January 29, 1871. The steamer caught fire immediately after the explosion, panic ensued, and only 50 or 60 of the passengers survived the holocaust.

The well-known *Belle St. Louis* was another steamer that met with an accident at Beef Island. She hit an obstruction there on November 14, 1879, and sank. The steamboat *Katie P. Kountz* had suffered the same fate in the same area a few weeks earlier.

REDMAN POINT, ARKANSAS

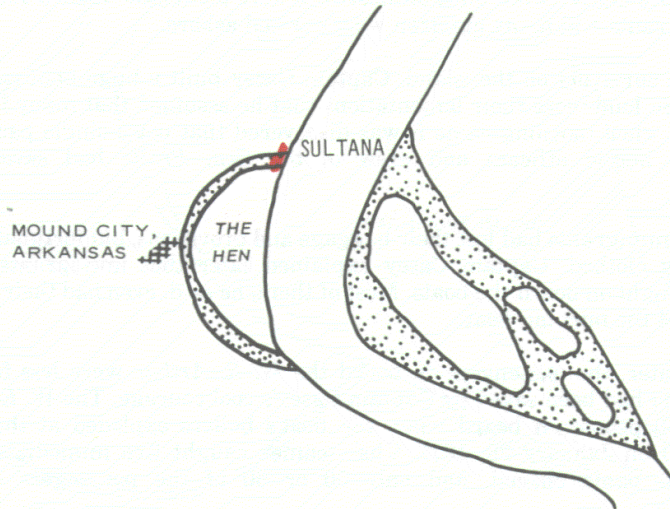
Mile 743.4 AHP, Map 13
Right bank, descending

Named for an early Arkansas settler, Redman Point had several steamboat landings and woodyards at the time of the Civil War. It was at Redman Point, between Harrison's and Bradley's landings, that the worst marine disaster in U. S. history occurred in 1865.

The Civil War had just ended. At Vicksburg, Mississippi, Union soldiers released from southern prisons were waiting for transportation North. For reasons which were never fully understood, the Union officers, who had a choice of several boats, put more than 2,000 of the unlucky men on board the steamboat *Sultana*.

The *Sultana* was a large boat, but hardly big enough to carry 2,000 men comfortably. The soldiers were so tightly packed on board that there was barely room for them to stand, much less to eat and sleep or rest. Few of them complained. The war was over, and they were anxious to return to their homes at long last.

It was an extremely cold December night when the *Sultana* exploded her boilers and caught fire at Redman Point. The Union soldiers, enfeebled by long imprisonment and exhausted by the crowded conditions on board the boat, never had a chance. In the swift, cold currents of the Mississippi, most of them struggled only briefly before they drowned.



WRECK OF THE SULTANA. Colonel Charles Suter's 1874 map of the Lower Mississippi showed the ill-fated Sultana lodged near the head of Hen Island, above Mound City, Arkansas. The explosion of the Sultana was the worst marine disaster the United States had ever seen. More than 1500 persons lost their lives.

For days after the accident, barges were sent out from Memphis on grim recovery missions. Hundreds of bodies were found, caught in piles of driftwood or lying on the edge of bars and islands. The final official estimate was that 1,547 men had died, but there were probably more. Not all of those who made it to the shore survived, and not all the bodies of those who had drowned were recovered.

The *Sultana*, burning furiously, had drifted down to Hen Island, in front of the little village of Mound City, Arkansas. There it sank, and the river piled sand around the hulk and mercifully obliterated all traces of the ill-fated boat.

In the North, the press paid little attention to the fearful loss of life in the *Sultana* disaster. President Abraham Lincoln had just been assassinated, the public was crying out for vengeance, and the press had more sensations than it could handle. Later several books would be written about the tragedy, but at the time the nation was preoccupied with other matters.

CHICKEN ISLAND

Mile 740.0 AHP, Map 14
Right bank, descending

Chicken Island is all that remains of what the French explorers called “the Thousand Islands.” Kentucky flatboatmen had renamed the islands “Paddy’s Hen and Chickens.”

In 1801 Zadok Cramer numbered four of the little islands, designating them as Islands No. 42, No. 43, No. 44, and No. 45. Island No. 46 was the number assigned to Presidents Island.

About three quarters of a century later, a mapmaker became confused by all the numbers on the islands and accidentally appropriated a number belonging to one of Paddy’s “Chickens” and gave it to Presidents Island. The error went unnoticed, and was perpetuated by subsequent maps and charts. As a result, Presidents Island and several islands below it do not bear the numbers today that Zadok Cramer gave them in 1801.

HOPEFIELD POINT, ARKANSAS

Mile 736.8 AHP, Map 14
Right bank, descending

In 1795, the Spanish were still clinging stubbornly to their possessions in the Lower Mississippi Valley. The little forts they had constructed to discourage encroachment

by Americans were feeble posts at best, but they were supported by a Spanish war fleet. On May 20, 1795, seven of the Spanish galleys were assembled at the point of land opposite the present site of Memphis, Tennessee.

Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos was in command of the Spanish expedition, and he was preparing to negotiate with the Chickasaw Indians. He wanted a site for still another fort, to be located on Chickasaw Bluff No. 4. Setting up a camp on the west bank of the river, the Spanish governor commuted back and forth to meetings with the Indian chiefs. He called the campground "El Campo de Esperanza."

El Campo de Esperanza (later called Hopefield—a literal translation of the Spanish phrase) continued to serve as a base for the Spanish fleet while the Spanish workmen were constructing the fort on the bluff. When the United States took possession of the post on the east bank in 1797, the Spanish soldiers and seamen remained at Hopefield for a short time before they withdrew permanently from the river.

After the Spanish left the valley, Hopefield became a small American village. During the Civil War, the little town was burned. In front of the ruins of Hopefield lay the wrecks of several Civil War steamers.

One of the wrecks was an old riverboat that Confederates had converted to a ram. They called it the *Colonel Lovell*, and it was one of the boats that was sunk by the Federal fleet on June 6, 1862. The rebel ram, hit first by the Union ram *Queen of the West*, and then butted again by the *Monarch*, went down so fast that her crew had to swim for their lives. The boat was so badly damaged by the ramming that the Union forces did not bother to raise it to use against its former owners, as they did some of the other Confederate boats sunk at Memphis.

Another old hulk that was visible off Hopefield Point for many years after the war was the wreck of the little steam tug *Hercules*, a boat that enjoyed the dubious distinction of having been sunk by Confederate cavalry. Captain J. H. McGehee, a bold commander with a small detachment of Arkansas cavalymen, had captured the *Hercules*, the *Grampus No. 3*, and the *Jacob Musselman* and had burned them all under the very noses of the Union fleet and garrison at Memphis.

WOLF RIVER

Mile 735.9 AHP, Map 14
Left bank, descending

French explorers had called the little river at Chickasaw Bluff No. 4 the Margot River, and a French priest who descended the Mississippi in 1700 explained that it had been named for an Indian who accompanied the great explorer La Salle on his first voyage down the river in 1682.

Spanish officials had referred to the river as "Las Casas," and American settlers renamed it Wolf River.

This minor tributary of the Mississippi was never navigable very far above its mouth, but its lower reaches served as a harbor channel for Memphis, Tennessee, for many years. The Wolf River Harbor was the site of some of the earliest work of the Mississippi River Commission and Army Corps of Engineers. Currents had attacked the bank near its mouth in 1878, and willow mattresses were placed on it to protect the Memphis waterfront. In 1893, an outlying sandbar was developing at the mouth of Wolf River, and soon steamboats were having difficulty reaching the landing. Wharf boats had to be used to land or load passengers and cargo.

Some improvements were made under a project authorized by Congress in 1935, but the rapid development of barge lines and diesel towboats soon made the harbor obsolete. In 1946, major improvements were authorized for Memphis Harbor, and the Corps adopted a project that provided for a new industrial channel and harbor in what had formerly been called Tennessee Chute.

A closure dam was placed at the head of the chute, and an industrial fill provided building sites for industries on Presidents Island. Later, Wolf River was diverted into Loosahatchie Chute, above Memphis, and the three-mile reach at its old mouth became a slack-water harbor for the city, with terminals and facilities to supplement the big harbor project in Tennessee Chute.



MEMPHIS INDUSTRIAL HARBOR.

The Memphis Yacht Club now has its headquarters in Wolf River Harbor, and there is a small boat dock where pleasure boaters can obtain fuel and supplies. A marina offers showers, rest rooms, air-conditioning, and all the other comforts so often lacking at stops along the Lower Mississippi. The marina is only a block from the heart of the city of Memphis.

Recently, the Corps of Engineers and the city of Memphis have joined forces to provide a new recreational area on the waterfront. The inelegantly named Mud Island, which lies in front of Memphis, is to be renamed "Volunteer Bicentennial Park." The Corps is constructing a small boat harbor and public access site for the new park, and the city plans to build a river museum, a scale model of the Lower Mississippi, an amphitheater, and other public recreational facilities.

CHICKASAW BLUFF NO. 4

Mile 735.8 AHP, Map 14
Left bank, descending

The fourth, or lower, Chickasaw Bluff, where the city of Memphis is now located, was recognized by early voyagers as an ideal place for a settlement. The country around it was very beautiful, and the high bluff commanded the river and appeared to be a point that might well have military significance for any power desiring to hold the Lower Mississippi Valley.

French interest in the area had waned with LaSalle's death in 1687, but rumors of British interest in the valley of the Lower Mississippi awakened France's determination to keep a foothold in the interior of the North American Continent. For a time, it was all the French could do to maintain a feeble settlement on the river near the Gulf of Mexico, but when English traders incited the Chickasaw Indians to hostile acts against French traders and voyagers on the river, Jean Baptiste LeMoynes, sieur de Bienville, governor of the Louisiana colony, decided that the Chickasaws must be punished. He began preparing for an expedition against the Chickasaws.

By 1736, Bienville's campaign was under way. The plan was that M. Diron d'Artaguettes, commandant of the French settlements on the Illinois, would bring all the Indian allies he could gather and land at the fourth Chickasaw Bluff. D'Artaguettes's party would march eastward from the Bluff to meet Bienville, who was to bring his army up the Tombigbee River into the Chickasaw Territory. The two French armies would crush the hostile Chickasaws between them.

Bienville's elaborate plans did not work out, and the campaign was a disaster for the French. Bienville was repulsed by the Chickasaws before he reached the rendezvous, and the Chickasaws defeated the party from the Illinois and killed M. d'Artaguettes. Bienville retired to New Orleans to brood about the humiliating failure.

In the spring of 1739, the French were ready to challenge the Chickasaws again. The rendezvous point this time was at the mouth of the St. Francis. From the St. Francis, Bienville proceeded to the Chickasaw Bluff No. 4 with an army of almost 4,000 whites, together with Indian allies from the Illinois, and a number of blacks he had brought up from New Orleans. The French commander landed his force at the Bluff and erected a crude fortification he called Fort Assumption.

The army spent the winter in the fort, and illness and hunger reduced the effective force to 200 men. Bienville, despairing of victory, sent a small contingent of men to negotiate a fragile peace with his old enemy, the Chickasaw nation, and retired again to New Orleans. Fort Assumption was dismantled.

The Chickasaws retained possession of the lower Bluff until the close of the Revolutionary War and the beginning of the westward expansion of the new American nation. Settlers moved into the Ohio Valley and hardy frontiersmen and land speculators began to eye the east bank of the Mississippi. Ownership of the territory that is now a part of western Kentucky and western Tennessee was still a disputed question, and claimants would have to negotiate with the Chickasaws before it could be occupied. The Spanish, who already had possession of the west bank of the river and New Orleans on the east bank, saw no reason to allow the Chickasaw Bluffs to fall into American hands by default. They had negotiated a treaty with the Choctaws and built Fort Nogales below the mouth of the Yazoo in 1791. In 1795 Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos took a small fleet of Spanish war vessels up the Mississippi, and began negotiations with the Chickasaws at the fourth Chickasaw Bluff.

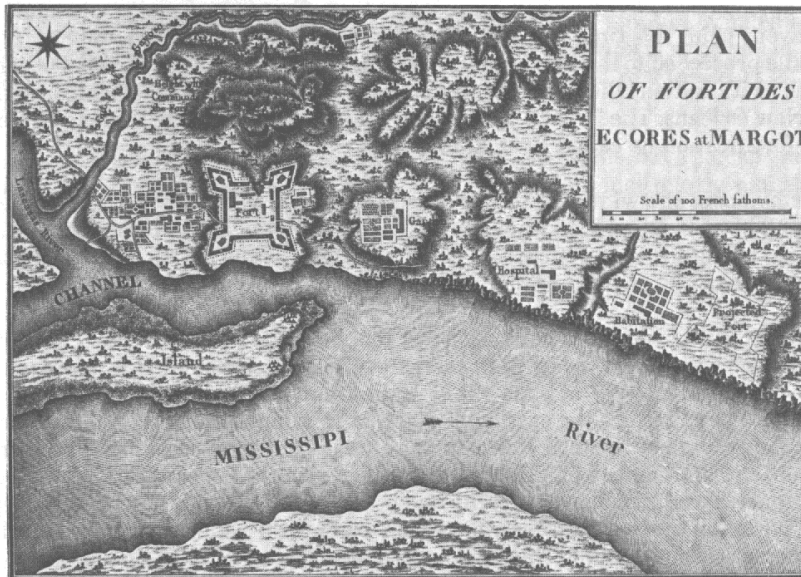
Rum, presents, and flattering words were followed by promises that the Spanish would protect the Chickasaws from the greedy Americans who were coveting the Indians' best hunting grounds. The Chickasaws agreed that the Spanish could build a fort at the mouth of Wolf River on Chickasaw Bluff No. 4.

Gayoso personally supervised the construction of the fortification, and on May 30, 1795, he took formal possession of the site, raising the Spanish flag with his own hands and conducting a noisy and colorful ceremony that was designed to impress the Chickasaws with the strength and power of the Spanish army and navy.

The new fort was christened Fort San Fernando de Barrancas, and Gayoso departed, leaving a small garrison of soldiers and three Spanish war vessels to defend the post. The Americans were as impressed as the Chickasaws, apparently, for no real effort was made to oust the Spanish and take possession of the Chickasaw Bluffs.

While Gayoso labored to make the Mississippi Valley secure for Spain, Spanish diplomats at home were busy undoing his work. In the Treaty of San Lorenzo, signed on April 26, 1796, Spain agreed to evacuate her posts on the east bank of the Mississippi north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Spanish colonial officials in the Louisiana colony delayed as long as they dared, but on October 22, 1797, Fort San Fernando de Barrancas was dismantled and evacuated, and a small party of American soldiers moved into the area to take possession of the territory. The Americans built a fort near the mouth of Wolf River and named it Fort Pike, but they soon abandoned it for a better site close to the ruins of the old Spanish



SPANISH FORT. When Victor Collot made the sketch of the Spanish fortification on Chickasaw Bluff No. 4, he labelled the drawing "Plan of Fort Des Ecores at Margot." The Spanish, who built the fort in 1795, called it Fort San Fernando de Barrancas. When they left the area in 1797, they dismantled the fort and took away all their guns and other equipment.

fort. Here they built a stronger fortification and called it Fort Adams. By 1808, the name had been changed to Fort Pickering, and a young officer named Zachary Taylor had been placed in command.

When the town of Memphis was laid out on the bluff in 1819, the United States government soon decided the area was secure enough to remove the garrison. Fort Pickering was abandoned, and allowed to fall into ruins.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

*Mile 735.0 AHP, Map 14
Left bank, descending*

Between the U. S. Census of 1960 and the Census of 1970, some of the great urban centers of the nation lost population. Memphis, Tennessee, during the same period of time, reversed the trend and grew at an almost incredible rate.

The boom that Memphis still enjoys today is the result of industrial development. In search of adequate water and power supplies, well-motivated labor forces, and cheap transportation, industries have moved into the South in large numbers during the past decade. The influx of new industries has brought new jobs, new money, and new people into the Memphis area.

The city on the bluff is more than 150 years old. Although the high bluff had often been described as an ideal site for a great city, Memphis was slow to develop. The streets and lots were laid off in 1819, and the village was chartered in 1826, but there were few signs of progress until the development of steamboat lines and cotton plantations made it an important shipping point.

Early travelers seldom had a complimentary word for Memphis, but by 1856 it was showing a few signs of vigorous growth. It had a number of stores, some churches, printing offices and schools, and a population of around 14,000 people. A few observers even voiced cautious optimism about its future.

What the immediate future held for Memphis, of course, was a Civil War. The hostilities brought progress to a screeching halt there, as elsewhere in the South. Overconfident Confederate officials hardly bothered to fortify the position, and the city was dependent on the River Defense Fleet for its protection.

Memphis proved to be an easy target for the Federal forces. The Confederate rams, with their commanders suffering from delusions inspired by their easy victory at Plum Point, rushed out boldly to meet the Union Navy when it appeared in front of the city on June 6, 1862. To the astonishment and dismay of the River Defense Fleet and the spectators who had gathered on the bluff, the Union gunboats *Carondelet*, *Benton*, *St. Louis*, *Cairo*, and *Louisville* had brought along two new Union rams, the *Monarch* and the *Queen of the West*.

The noisy and unequal contest lasted about 90 minutes. Cheers turned to tears as the spectators on the bluff saw all of the rebel boats but one lost by sinking or capture. When the last remaining rebel boat, the *C.S.S. General Van Dorn*, turned tail and fled ingloriously down the river, the victors sent a detachment of Union soldiers ashore to take possession of the helpless city.

Memphis remained in Federal hands for the remainder of the war, except for a couple of hours one bright Sunday afternoon in August, 1864, when the bold and daring cavalry leader, General Nathan B. Forrest, swept into his old hometown, surprised the Union garrison, and almost scooped up a couple of high-ranking Federal generals. Forrest and his men occupied the city briefly, until the Yankee soldiers pulled themselves together and drove them out again.

When the war ended, Memphis had the same problems that plagued other southern cities. Reconstruction, yellow fever epidemics, and the decline of the river trade left the city prostrate and impoverished. A visitor from Europe in 1882 commented that Memphis seemed to be still suffering from the shocks of war. The old brick buildings were so green and mouldy, the visitor said, that they reminded him of Stilton cheese.

The development of the diesel towboat and the resulting rapid increase in commercial traffic on the river revived the city on the bluff. Today Memphis is a fast-growing

community with an unlimited potential for future development. The Port of Memphis handles more than ten million tons of cargo annually and is one of the nation's largest inland ports. Petroleum products, industrial and agricultural chemicals, wood products, and agricultural products are just a few of the items handled by the terminals, elevators, and piers in Memphis.

The Memphis District office of the Army Corps of Engineers is also located in the city, and the Corps has a repair and maintenance yard on the waterfront.

PRESIDENTS ISLAND NO. 45

*Mile 732.7 AHP, Map 14
Left bank, descending*

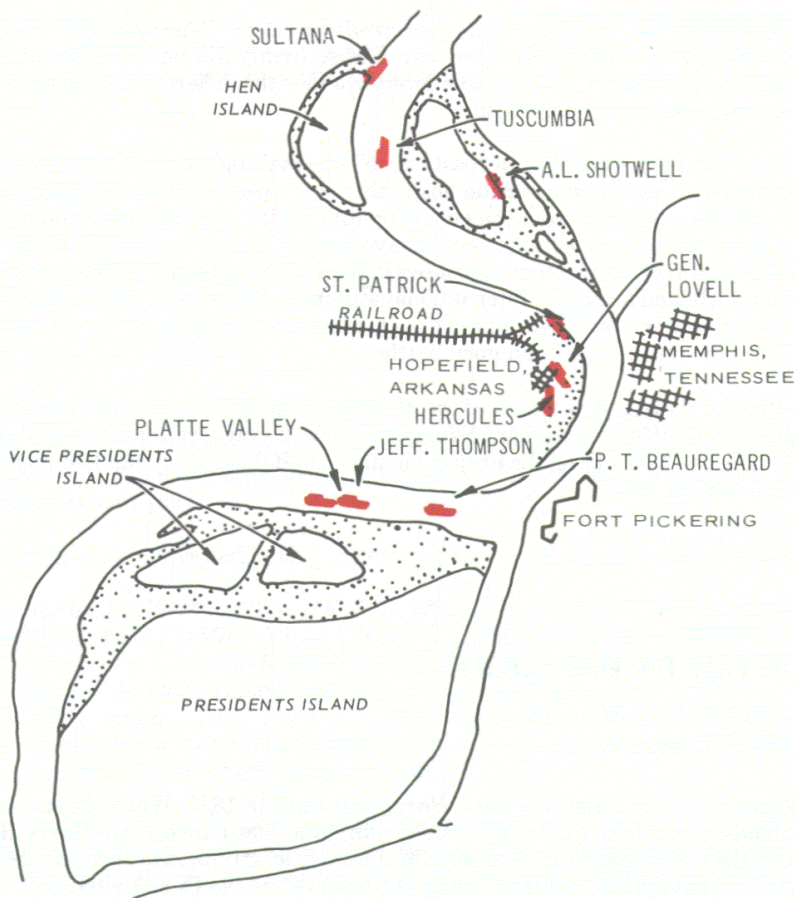
Zadok Cramer in 1801 identified Presidents Island and Vice Presidents Island as Islands No. 46 and No. 47. Today they are erroneously called Islands No. 45 and No. 46.

It has been said that Presidents Island was named for President Andrew Jackson, who had a small farm on the island at one time. Since the big island was already called Presidents Island in 1801, this seems improbable, since Jackson did not become President of the United States until 28 years later.

When the Civil War engagement between the Union and Confederate navies took place in front of Memphis in 1862, one of the casualties was a rebel boat called the *General Jeff. Thompson*. There were two versions of the sinking of the Confederate ram. Union officers said she was hit and sunk by their guns. The commander of the boat said, however, that he had found himself surrounded by Union vessels and had deliberately run her ashore and set fire to her to keep her from falling into Union hands.

After the battle, the wreck of the *Jeff. Thompson* had drifted down and lodged near the head of Presidents Island, where pilots found it a considerable hazard to navigation. Two years after the war had ended, the steamer *Platte Valley* stumbled over the old wreck and demolished herself. Three years later, the steamer *Mary Boyd* crashed into the wrecks of both the *Jeff. Thompson* and the *Platte Valley* and went to the bottom.

On the occasion of the *Mary Boyd's* misfortune, a newspaper columnist revealed some interesting details about the past history of the boat that had been known as the *General Jeff. Thompson*. The rebel ram had originally been a sailing vessel called the *Mary Kingsland*, the columnist recalled, and she had carried American soldiers to the Mexican War in 1846. She had later been converted to steam power, and had been engaged in the towing trade between New Orleans and the Gulf. When the Civil War erupted, the old boat was converted to a stream ram, rechristened the *General Jeff. Thompson*, and made a part of the River Defense Fleet. The Confederate officer for whom she was named was one of the spectators on the bluff at Memphis when the ram was sunk in 1862.



PRESIDENTS ISLAND. In 1874 Colonel Charles Suter's reconnaissance map showed the channel at the head of Presidents and Vice Presidents Islands obstructed by the wrecks of old steamboats. The Jeff. Thompson and P. T. Beauregard were both Confederate rams lost in the naval engagement in front of Memphis on June 6, 1862. The Platte Valley had been a Union transport during the Civil War.

If the *General Jeff. Thompson* had really been involved in both the Mexican War and the Civil War, she was in good company. During the Mexican War, Lt. U. S. Grant, Capt. Robert E. Lee, Capt. George B. McClellan, and Col. Jefferson Davis had all been officers in the U. S. Army and had fought together in Mexico.

During the latter part of the Civil War, Presidents Island was the site of a refugee camp for more than 1,500 blacks from southern plantations. The Federal agency called the Freedmen's Bureau established the colony but when the Bureau was abolished, the ex-slaves had to learn to take care of themselves. Some of them may have gone to work for Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest, who retired to Presidents

Island for a time after the war to manage a large plantation. General Forrest had been a slave trader in Memphis before the war, and so firmly did he discipline his labor force that many of them may have wondered whether the difference between slavery and freedom had been exaggerated.

Many years after the Civil War, a "pest house" was maintained on Presidents Island. Most southern cities had such crude hospitals, where people with highly contagious diseases could be isolated from the general public. With the pest house and a prison located on the island, respectable people gave it a wide berth until some years later, when it became a sort of gambler's paradise in the 1920's. In January, 1924, cock fights on Presidents Island attracted international attention. Birds from Mexico, Cuba, and other countries were matched against each other, and huge sums of money were wagered on the outcome of each gory battle.

Today Presidents Island is a part of the Memphis Harbor Project that has provided about 9 miles of off-river harbor channels to serve a 960-acre industrial fill on the island. There are 20 docks on the project channels, and the project handled more than 11 million tons in 1974.

JOSIE HARRY BAR LIGHT

Mile 719.5 AHP, Map 15
Left bank, descending

The elegant steamer called the *Josie Harry* was built in 1878. When she sank above Cow Islands, a sandbar grew up in the vicinity and was called Josie Harry Bar. A change in the river's course caused some of the old boat's timbers to be exposed to view in 1964. Two navigation lights in the area preserve the boat's name today.

COW ISLANDS NO. 47 AND NO. 48

Mile 715.0 AHP, Map 15
Left bank, descending

These two islands, now joined together and attached to the Tennessee shore, were originally called Islands No. 48 and No. 49. The boundary between Tennessee and Mississippi runs across Cow Islands, and each State has jurisdiction over a part of the islands.

In 1866 a fine new steamboat, the *R. J. Lockwood*, exploded and burned in Cow Island Bend. There were the usual rumors that a steamboat race had been under way shortly

before the accident, and the usual vigorous denials. Nine or ten people lost their lives, and a contemporary eyewitness account of the accident described in graphic and painful detail how the boat sank with the charred bodies of some of the victims still on board.

NORFOLK LANDING, MISSISSIPPI

*Mile 710.2 AHP, Map 15
Left bank, descending*

Norfolk was a steamboat landing on a plantation that belonged to a man named Nelms. Since it was the first landing below the Tennessee-Mississippi boundary line in 1861, Norfolk was designated as a customs point for the new Confederate States of America early in 1861.

A contemporary notice published in newspapers at the time, read as follows:

REGULATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY FOR VESSELS NAVIGATING THE MISSISSIPPI: All boats beyond the limits of the new Confederacy, going South, are required to land at the port of Norfolk, otherwise known as Nelm's Landing, in the State of Mississippi, a point just below the Tennessee line, when the Captain must furnish the Custom House officer with a list of his cargo. A permit is given to land freight at way points.

Men who had previously been neutral and disinterested in the issues which had aroused others in the North were suddenly enraged. Free navigation of the Mississippi was a natural birthright of every American, the westerners believed, and they would gladly fight to the death for it. The idea of a "foreign power" dictating the terms upon which they could navigate "their river" was unthinkable. Many of the frontiersmen and small farmers who would never have lifted a finger to liberate a slave, marched off with the Union Army cheerfully, hoping to liberate the Mississippi.

CAT ISLAND NO. 50

*Mile 710.0 AHP, Map 15
Right bank, descending*

Cat Island is the only island between Memphis and Council Bend that still bears its correct number. It lay close to the right shore in 1801, but has since joined itself completely to the Arkansas shore.

BUCK ISLAND NO. 53

Mile 702.0 AHP, Map 16
Left bank, descending

Buck Island's correct number is No. 51, but the confusion of numbers that began just below Memphis around 1874 reaches all the way down to this small Arkansas island. It originally lay in the middle of the river, was numbered No. 51, and is now firmly attached to the Mississippi shore.

John James Audubon wandered over Buck Island in December, 1820, marvelling over the large number of ducks, geese, and seagulls he saw in the area.

During the Civil War, Buck Island was the scene of a clever little smuggling operation. Although Union gunboats were constantly patrolling the area, the rebels somehow managed to quietly ferry across 12 wagonloads of arms and ammunition at Buck Island in 1864. By the time Union forces became aware of what was going on, rebels and supplies had all vanished.

In June, 1866 the steamer *City of Memphis* exploded and burned opposite Buck Island. On her last trip up the river, the big boat had run aground just above Vicksburg, but a high wind and heavy rains had dislodged her from the sandbar and she had hurried on upstream to her doom. Newspapers reported that about 60 people lost their lives in the explosion and fire.

The *City of Memphis* was an old boat at the time of her demise. She had been well-known and extremely popular in her day. In 1858, she had carried so many passengers that a daily newspaper published on board proved to be a successful and lucrative venture.

COUNCIL BEND

Mile 695.0 AHP, Map 16
Right bank, descending

Council Bend was a sharp right-hand turn in the Lower Mississippi. The navigation channel ran to the west of a large island that early French explorers had called Council Island. The island was said to have been the site of an important council between the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indian nations.

Both Council Bend and the island were removed from the main channel of the river in 1874 when the Mississippi leaped across a small neck of land and cut them off.

Council Island was originally called Island No. 53, but map makers later appropriated its number and applied it to Buck Island. Today the island is no longer on the river and on current navigation maps it bears no number.

COMMERCE CUTOFF

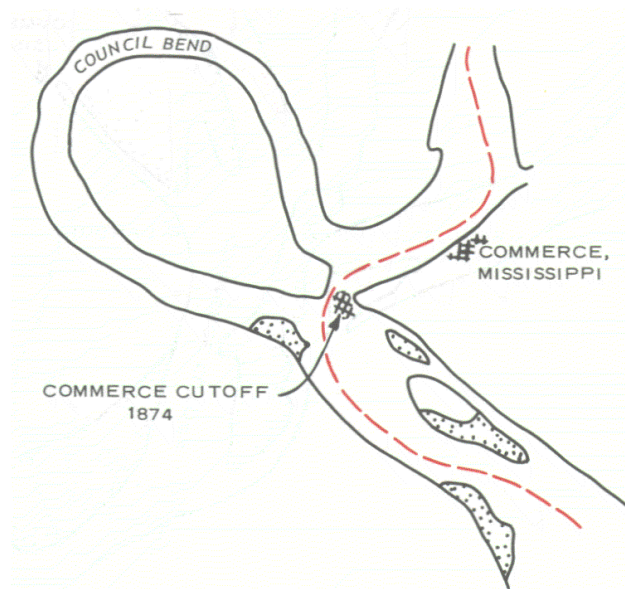
Mile 695.0 AHP, Map 16

Commerce, Mississippi, had a hopeful beginning and was a thriving little river town in the 1830's, but by 1841 it was engaged in a losing battle with the Lower Mississippi, and it soon lost most of its waterfront buildings and houses.

During the Civil War, the Union forces paid the town several visits. A Union gunboat captured a little steamer called the *Eureka* at Commerce in 1863. The boat was not armed and had no contraband goods on board, but the commander of the *U.S.S. Covington* explained with the usual wartime logic that the steamer must have been up to some kind of mischief or the rebels would already have burned it themselves, so he felt justified in confiscating it.

About a year later, another Union force stopped off at Commerce and burned a ferry boat. They reported that they had also shot a man "who looked like a guerilla."

In 1874 the Mississippi jumped across a neck of land just below Commerce and cut about ten miles off its channel. Local people reported that a steamer passed through the new cutoff just two days after the river changed its course, and that it was 800 yards wide by the third day.



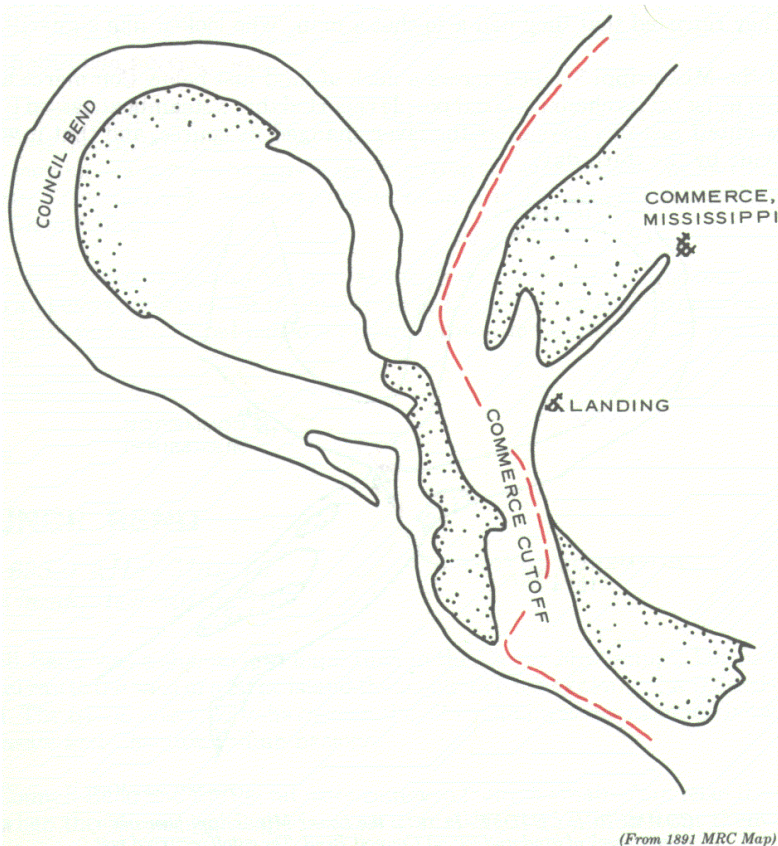
(From 1874 Suter Map)

COMMERCE CUTOFF. In 1874, the Lower Mississippi blew out a narrow neck of land and cut off Council Bend. The cutoff occurred just below the little town of Commerce, Mississippi, where currents were already causing the banks to cave. As was usually the case, one change led to another, and the river was going to make it impossible for the community to survive.

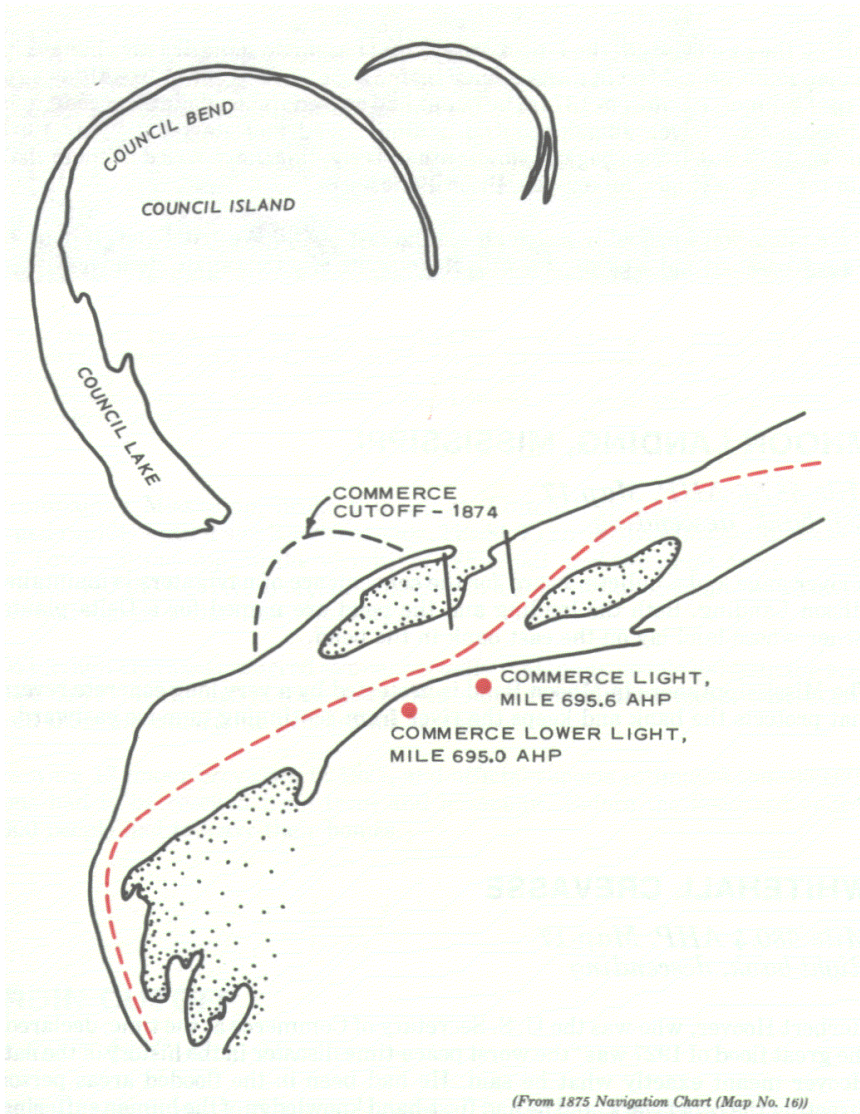
The river continued making changes around Commerce, causing all kinds of trouble for the little town and doing a lot of damage to property in the area. It finally settled itself comfortably in a new bed known as Mhoon Bend, where it still remains today—restrained from further movement by a long revetment on the east bank of the bend.

The steamboat landing at Commerce was still in occasional use as late as 1888, when a boat called the *Kate Adams* caught fire and burned at the landing. The big sidewheel boat was one of the first steamers on the Lower Mississippi to be completely equipped with a modern invention known as the electric light. The popular boat was also noted for the beauty of its cabin accommodations. The staterooms were panelled in solid walnut, cherry, and ash.

The town of Commerce was still hanging on in 1915, and still had a postoffice and steamboat landing, but the river had built up a big sandbar in front of it. As the steamboat trade on the river dwindled away, the community gradually disappeared.



COMMERCE CUTOFF IN 1891. The Commerce Cutoff in 1874 initiated a series of changes in the river's course near Commerce, Mississippi, and had disastrous results for the little town. By 1891, the river had thrown a huge sandbar in front of Commerce, making it impossible for boats to land anywhere near its commercial center.



COMMERCE CUTOFF TODAY. Today the river lies far east of its old bed in Council Bend. The old Commerce Cutoff channel has also been abandoned by the river, and the town of Commerce has disappeared from the maps.