

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

*Mile 228.4 AHP, Map 46
Left bank, descending*

The huge, sprawling capitol city of the State of Louisiana received its name almost three centuries ago when the French explorer, Iberville, first visited the area and found a tall pole on the east bank of the Mississippi that had been painted red. "Le baton rouge," or the red stick, was said to mark the boundary between two Indian tribes.

The French established a small military post at Baton Rouge, and a colonial official received a large land grant in the area. Father Pierre Charlevoix, a Jesuit priest, visited "the Red Stick plantation" in 1722 and commented that it was in a sorry state and would probably never amount to much. The military post was a weak one, he said, manned by a handful of French soldiers.

When the Baton Rouge area was included in territory ceded to Great Britain by France at the end of the Seven Years War, the British placed a garrison of British regulars at Baton Rouge and erected a crude earthen fortification.

While the British were preoccupied with the American Revolution in the northeast, the Spanish attacked and easily overwhelmed the British fort at Baton Rouge. They held it until 1810, when the pro-American element in the area rebelled and took the fort. Baton Rouge became a part of the independent Republic of West Florida for a brief time. Three months later, the United States annexed West Florida, and Baton Rouge became an American city.

When the United States took possession of Baton Rouge, the old dirt fort was converted to a fine brick powder magazine, and handsome barracks were built for the soldiers stationed there under the command of an obscure Army colonel named Zachary Taylor. Taylor would later win fame as an American general in the Mexican War, and would become President of the United States in 1849.

The straggling village of Baton Rouge, which had been described in 1808 as "a dirty little town," and in 1809 as "a miserable place," began to prosper under American rule and was incorporated as a city in 1817. By 1829 its population had doubled and it was becoming an important river port. Around 1846 it was chosen as the seat of government for the State of Louisiana.

By the time the Civil War erupted, Louisiana's capitol had become a flourishing city. When Louisiana withdrew from the Union and declared itself to be an independent power in January, 1861, the barracks and arsenal at Baton Rouge were surrendered by the Union garrison. When the Louisiana legislature voted to join the Confederacy of southern states, the Confederate flag was raised over Baton Rouge.

Confederate authorities chose not to fortify the capitol city of Louisiana. When New Orleans fell, Federal forces came up the river and demanded the surrender of Baton Rouge on May 7, 1862. No resistance was offered. The seat of the State government had already been moved west of the Mississippi. The Union Army occupied Baton Rouge

on May 29, 1862, and many of its terrified citizens fled.

On August 5, 1862, the Confederates launched a vigorous attack on Baton Rouge. The four-hour battle resulted in heavy casualties on both sides and an uneasy victory for the Union forces. General Benjamin F. Butler, commanding in New Orleans, ordered the city evacuated and destroyed, fearing that another rebel attack would bring disaster. Union officers in command of the occupation army protested the order, reminding General Butler that the city still contained women, children, several orphanages, and an insane asylum. General Butler rescinded the order, but Union forces fled the city on August 20, in the midst of rumors of another rebel attack. A few months later, General Nathaniel P. Banks succeeded General Butler as commander of the district. He ordered Baton Rouge reoccupied, and the Federal forces moved back into the city on December 17, 1862. For the remainder of the war, a strong Union garrison was maintained in the city. The Old State Capitol Building was one of the casualties of the occupation. It was accidentally set on fire by soldiers, and the building was gutted. A replica of the old building was constructed in 1882. It served as the capitol building until a new one was erected in 1932 at a cost of \$5 million.

After the war, Baton Rouge shared all the problems that plagued other southern cities. The development of the modern diesel towboat, navigation improvements, and the revival of the river trade have made it the nation's seventh largest port today.

The Port of Baton Rouge is located at the head of the deepwater channel that leads to the Gulf of Mexico via New Orleans. It is also on the northern end of the highly industrialized area that stretches along the river's banks from the Baton Rouge port to a point below New Orleans. There are large chemical plants, grain elevators, and petroleum refineries in the Baton Rouge area, and the port handles more than 50 million tons of cargo annually.

There are fleeting and repair services for towboats and barges at Baton Rouge, but no marina for pleasure boats. The port area, which extends from River Mile 255.2 AHP to 168.3 AHP is often crowded with ocean-going vessels and towboats, and pleasure boaters should be extremely careful in the area.

DUNCAN OR CONRAD POINT, LOUISIANA

*Mile 222.5 AHP, Map 47
Left bank, descending*

The steamboat *Princess* was one of the best-known and most popular boats of her time. When she left Vicksburg for New Orleans one cold, wet day in February, 1859, she was, as usual, heavily loaded with both passengers and freight.

On the morning of February 28, the *Princess* passed Baton Rouge, traveling slightly behind schedule. It had been a difficult trip down because of heavy fog on the river,

and it was said later that the boat's officers were doing their best to make up for the lost time. One of the engineers was reported to have declared that he would get the boat to New Orleans by a certain hour "or blow her up."

Whether the engineer ever actually made the remark was never proved. As the boat approached Conrad Point, there was one tremendous explosion and the engineer on duty was one of the first to die. The *Princess* caught fire, and those who had not been killed or injured in the explosion were soon trying desperately to escape the flames.

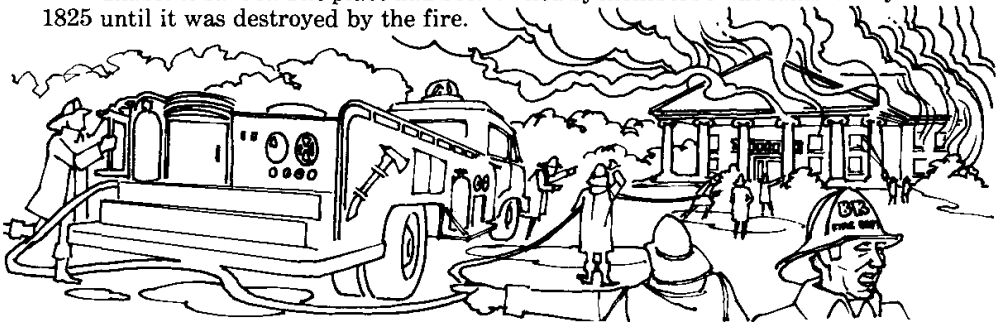
The boat was said to have been carrying more passengers when the accident occurred than she had ever carried before. Survivors were picked up by the steamers *Natchez*, *Sunny South*, *R. W. McRae*, *Vixen*, *Kate Dale*, and *Empress*—all of which happened to be in the vicinity at the time. So many of the injured were taken to so many different towns for medical assistance that it was difficult afterward for authorities to determine who had survived and who had not. Eventually it was estimated that about 100 persons had died in the tragedy, and that another 100 had suffered severe injuries.

So persistent were the rumors that blamed the accident on the boat's officers that a grand jury was asked to investigate the matter and determine who was responsible for the disaster. The jury was unable to fix the blame on any individual or individuals, for all of the people who might have had positive knowledge about the situation in the engine room at the time of the accident had been killed.

The explosion and fire that destroyed the *Princess* was not the first disaster associated with the name. She had been No. 5 in a line of boats that all bore the name. The *Princess No. 3* and the *Princess No. 4* had also burned. The elegant steamer *Charmer* replaced the *Princess No. 5* after the accident at Conrads Point, and she too burned two years later, at Donaldsonville, Louisiana, with the loss of five lives.

The point of land near which the disaster involving the *Princess* had occurred in 1859 was originally the property of Abner Lawson Duncan, who built a mansion on it that he called "The Cottage." When his daughter, Frances, married Frederick Daniel Conrad, Duncan gave the young couple the beautiful home. The Conrads were living there when the *Princess* exploded and opened their home to the suffering victims who had survived the accident but were horribly burned.

In 1960 The Cottage, which had been beautifully restored a few years earlier, caught fire and burned so rapidly that the fire engines that rushed down from Baton Rouge were unable to save it. The place had been owned by members of the same family from 1825 until it was destroyed by the fire.



MANCHAC BEND

Mile 215.5 AHP, Map 47

Manchac Bend takes its name from the Bayou Manchac, located on the east side of the Mississippi, and explored by Iberville in March, 1699. The French commander took two longboats, some bark canoes and 53 of his men into the narrow passage, hoping that it would be a practicable shortcut to the French post he had just established on the Gulf Coast. The bayou was so choked with debris and drift that the Frenchmen had to carry their boats on their shoulders a good part of the way. The men named the passage the "River Iberville," but French settlers later usually used its old Indian name of "Manchac," which was said to mean "rear entrance."

In a treaty ratified on March 10, 1763, Great Britain received from France all of the French colony of Louisiana that lay on the east (or left) bank of the Mississippi, "from its source to the Iberville River." Thus the Bayou Manchac became the dividing line between the British colony of West Florida and the "island of Orleans," which was occupied by the Spanish.

Early in January, 1764, a British officer visited the bayou, or the River Iberville, and surveyed the site to determine whether the little outlet could be cleared to provide passage for British ships. When it was decided that the plan was feasible, 50 blacks were put to work under the direction of a British captain. After laboring for six months, the workmen succeeded in clearing a passage for the ships and the governor of the British colony of West Florida ordered a fortification erected at the junction of the bayou and the Mississippi River. About 40 soldiers garrisoned the fort, which was named Fort Bute.

In the spring of 1765, it became apparent that the improvement of the bayou passage would be a continuing expense. Governor Johnstone reported unhappily to the King's ministers in England that he had spent 2,000 pounds clearing the bayou and would have to station men at its entrance to keep the floating trees and other debris from closing it again.

The feeble British garrison held Fort Bute until it was attacked by the Spanish on September 7, 1779. After a three-hour bombardment, the British surrendered, and the Spanish moved in to replace them.

When the Americans took possession of the area and became embroiled in the War of 1812, they obstructed the Bayou Manchac to keep the British forces from using it as a "rear entrance" into the Lower Mississippi Valley.

In 1828 American settlers built a large earthen dam across the head of the bayou to keep their plantations below it from being flooded at every high water. A proposal was made in the 1850's to reopen Bayou Manchac, so that it could serve as a floodway in major flood years. The Army Corps of Engineers investigated the plan, but did not approve of it. Today, the Bayou Manchac, or River Iberville, is effectively and permanently closed by the massive mainline levee system that crosses it.

PLAQUEMINE, LOUISIANA

*Mile 208.6 AHP, Map 47
Right bank, descending*

The word "Plaquemine" is said to have come from an Indian word that meant "persimmon." The persimmon tree of the South is ordinarily a small to medium sized tree that grows in moist bottomlands, in old fields, and along roadsides. It bears a small orange-colored fruit that is edible when fully ripe. Indians in the Mississippi Valley were very fond of the persimmon fruit, and often served it to visiting missionaries and explorers. The trees were said to be very abundant in the Plaquemine area, along the small bayou that was one of the Mississippi's distributaries.

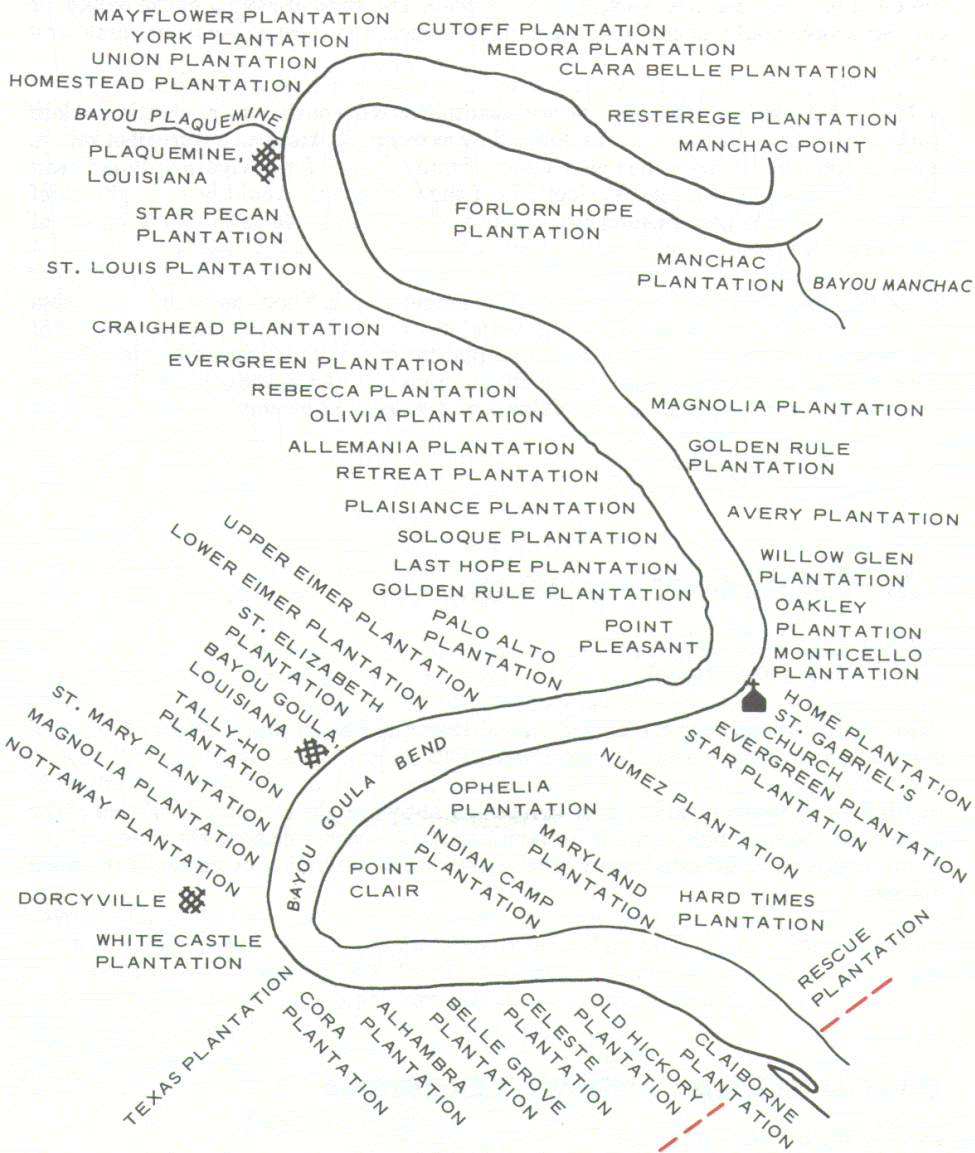
Early settlers in Louisiana removed the timber and debris that obstructed the Bayou Plaquemine, so that the waterway could serve as a path to the interior, but they found that they had created some serious problems for themselves. With the head of the bayou open, it began to enlarge rapidly. By 1865, local residents found it necessary to close the head of the bayou again.

A small settlement sprang up at the head of the bayou around 1800 and adopted the name of the troublesome waterway. It was incorporated in 1838. Plaquemine was not fortified during the Civil War, and when a regiment of New York Infantry marched in on the last day 1862, the Union soldiers occupied the town without opposition. Most of the citizens of Plaquemine were of French descent. A few of them took the oath of loyalty to the United States after the soldiers moved in, but most did not.

Early in January, 1863, there were rumors that the Confederates were about to attack the post the Union forces had established at Plaquemine. The Union commander, a young major, sent out desperate appeals for reinforcements, but no help arrived. On January 2, 1863, he and his men repelled a determined rebel attack and suffered heavy casualties. The following day, the Union garrison learned that the local grapevine was humming with rumors of another attack. They fled, leaving behind their guns, ammunition, and rations.

Later Union officials questioned the townspeople. The citizens of Plaquemine professed to have been astonished by the sudden evacuation of the Union fort. They had heard no rumors of rebel attacks, they said blandly, and knew of no Confederate forces anywhere in the vicinity. A new regiment was sent down to reoccupy the town.

In June, 1863, the *Anglo-American*, a Union transport, ran aground in front of Plaquemine. The Union steamer *Sykes* went to the assistance of the grounded vessel. Confederates lurking in the area promptly sneaked down to the waterfront and burned both the boats. The *U.S.S. Monangahela* was sent to Plaquemine immediately to protect Union transports from further depredations. Admiral David Farragut himself came boiling up the river "to read a lecture to the mayor of Plaquemine." The admiral said that the mayor assured him that the citizens of the town had had no advance knowledge of the rebel raid on the fort and that he swore that the attackers were strangers to every citizen of the place.



LOUISIANA PLANTATIONS IN IBERVILLE PARISH. Iberville Parish, Louisiana, lies on both sides of the Lower Mississippi River. An 1884 map, published by the Mississippi River Commission, shows many of the Parish's fine sugar plantations that were located along the banks of the river. Some of the beautiful plantation homes still stand, most of them facing the river road and massive mainline levee system, rather than the river itself.

After the war had ended, Plaquemine suffered a major disaster when a large part of the town fell into the Mississippi River in 1880. The sudden caving of the bank had carried away about a dozen buildings, many fences, and most of the front part of the town.

In 1900 the Army Corps of Engineers was authorized to construct a navigation lock in the Bayou Plaquemine. Work was delayed by extreme heat and an outbreak of yellow fever in 1905, but in 1909 the new lock was finally opened for navigation. It had been designed by Colonel George W. Goethals of the Corps, who would later be the chief engineer on the Panama Canal project and who would serve as the Panama Canal Zone's first governor.

The old navigation lock, now obsolete, is no longer in use. The interesting little town has preserved many of its early buildings and its French flavor. It is the trade center of a rural area where some of the large sugar plantations of Louisiana are located. One of these is St. Louis plantation, just below Plaquemine. The house at St. Louis was built in 1857, and is still occupied by descendants of the original owner.

POINT PLEASANT, LOUISIANA

Mile 200.3 AHP, Map 47
Right bank, descending

Point Pleasant was once the parish seat of Iberville Parish, but the seat of the local government was moved to Plaquemine in 1842.

In 1973, there was a flood crisis at Point Pleasant when the river bank in front of the levee began to cave and crumble. Materials and men were rushed to the area, and the Army Corps of Engineers constructed a setback levee that averted the threatened disaster.

BAYOU GOULA LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 195.6 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

The Bayou Goula Indians occupied this point on the Lower Mississippi when Iberville and his party went up the river in 1699. When the French colony was established on the lower reaches of the river, the land at Bayou Goula Point was granted to colonists who attempted to raise tobacco and indigo. The two crops were not entirely successful in

the area, but the introduction of sugar cane culture in 1795 gave the planters a new economic base for the development of plantations that would later bring them great wealth.

In 1851 a steamboat collision in Bayou Goula Bend attracted wide attention. Both of the boats involved were well-known steamers. The accident occurred when the steamer *Autocrat*, northbound in the bend, met the steamer *Magnolia*, southbound at Bayou Goula.

The rules for passing were perfectly clear, and when steamboat pilots followed them scrupulously, boats could pass even in a fog without danger. On this February morning in 1851, there was no fog. The pilots exchanged signals, and the two boats came together with a resounding crash.

On board the *Magnolia*, which had suffered no great damage from the collision, ladies screamed and ran about the decks in panic. On board the *Autocrat*, which was sinking rapidly, the passengers were too busy to cry out. Forty or fifty men jumped overboard. The ladies scrambled to the highest part of the sinking boat and waited nervously for rescue. The wind was high, and when the *Magnolia* came alongside the sinking vessel to offer assistance, the wind caught the two boats and banged them together again.

The crew of the *Magnolia* persisted, and all the people who had stayed on board the damaged *Autocrat* were saved. About 15 of the people who had jumped overboard were picked up, but it was estimated that 30 had drowned.

Several days after the accident, one of the passengers favored a newspaper with an eyewitness account of the disaster, and ended with the generous remark that the accident had been "entirely unavoidable." This aroused indignation on both sides. The master of the *Autocrat* said bitterly that it was obvious that his boat would not have sunk if the *Magnolia* had not crashed into her without warning. The master of the *Magnolia* retorted that no one could possibly hold him responsible for what had happened. His boat, he said, was simply proceeding upstream in a perfectly normal way when the *Autocrat* had rushed across her bow. The unlucky boat had gone to the bottom as a result of her own pilot's stupidity and inept handling, he declared.

Bayou Goula Bend claimed other victims in later years. In 1882, the steamboat *City of Greenville* collided with the *Laura Lee* in the bend and sent it down to join the *Autocrat* at the bottom of the river. In 1908, the *H. M. Carter*, a sternwheel packet boat, had an old-fashioned boiler explosion at Bayou Goula and sank with the loss of ten lives.



WHITE CASTLE, LOUISIANA

Mile 193.3 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

White Castle was a large and imposing plantation home built by a sugar planter around 1800. The original site began to cave into the river, and the house was moved back several times, losing sections with each move. Eventually, what was left of White Castle was divided into two small cottages and moved to the village of White Castle, which now lies behind the protection of the mainline levee system.

BELLE GROVE PLANTATION, LOUISIANA

Mile 191.9 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

When John Andrews of Virginia moved to Louisiana, he soon decided that he would build the finest home that the rich sugar planters of that State had ever seen. His dream house was completed in 1857, and he called it Belle Grove. Built with skilled slave labor, the magnificent structure was made of brick and cypress and had 75 enormous rooms. Door knobs and keyhole guards were made of silver, and all the wood was carved by a master craftsman. The furnishings were as lavish and costly as the house itself, and the garden that surrounded the dwelling was as ornate as it was huge. The plantation itself consisted of several thousand acres of land.

The fortune that Andrews had amassed apparently did not survive the exigencies of the Civil War and its aftermath. Belle Grove was sold by the family in 1867. It changed hands many times in the years that followed, and in the 1940's, stripped of its fine furnishings and falling into ruin, the great house was burned.

CARVILLE, LOUISIANA

Mile 189.3 AHP, Map 48
Left bank, descending

On the last day of November, 1894, a boat left the New Orleans dock pushing a barge with an unusual cargo. On the barge were seven very ill people, several doctors, and some newspaper reporters. The seven passengers were suffering from the dreaded disease that was then known as leprosy, and they were being moved from an abominable "pest house" in New Orleans to a plantation about 25 miles below Baton

Rouge, called Indian Camp plantation. The State of Louisiana hoped to give them better care and more humane treatment than they had ever known before.

From this uncertain beginning in 1894, there eventually developed a U. S. Public Health Service Hospital at Carville, Louisiana, where patients suffering from the ancient disease that has recently been renamed "Hansen's disease," are treated and often discharged to lead normal lives in their home communities.

When the U. S. Public Health Service acquired the State facility at Carville in 1921, the old hospital at Indian Camp plantation was gradually converted into a modern treatment and research center. New drugs and better methods of treatment in recent years have made it possible for most of Carville's patients to be discharged in a very short time.

For patients who must undergo long periods of hospitalization, the U. S. Public Health Service offers a rehabilitation program that is designed to help them to become contributing members of society when they return to their homes. Full-time teachers give elementary and high school courses at the hospital, arrangements are often made for vocational training or college work, and every effort is made to encourage the patient to upgrade the level of his educational achievements.

A swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, and a lake where patients can enjoy fishing and boating are located on the hospital grounds at Carville. Many social and recreational activities are sponsored, and a bimonthly magazine, *The Star*, is staffed with patients.

A recent breakthrough in laboratory research at Carville offers some hope for progress toward the development for a cure for Hansen's disease. In the meantime, seminars and workshops keep doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, and medical missionaries informed about the most effective drugs and the best methods for treating the disease and caring for the patients.

Admission to the hospital at Carville is voluntary, and patients are free to leave at any time they desire to do so. They are, of course, encouraged to stay until discharge can be recommended by the medical staff. At present the hospital has about 300 patients, with perhaps 100 out on passes and leading relatively normal lives elsewhere with the disease under control. Visitors over the age of 16 are welcomed at the hospital. Carville's cheerful atmosphere is a far cry from the old "pest house" of the past that was maintained for the purpose of confining involuntarily persons whose only crime was that they had become the victims of a serious disease for which no cure was known.



CLAIBORNE LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 188.3 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

William Charles Cole Claiborne was born in Virginia, in the portentous year of 1775. At the age of 20, the young man went to Tennessee, where the following year he helped frame a constitution for the new State.

When Claiborne was 26 years old, President Thomas Jefferson appointed him to serve as governor of the Mississippi Territory. In 1803, Governor Claiborne and General James Wilkinson were appointed commissioners to receive possession of the vast territory known as the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson then named Claiborne as the temporary governor of the Orleans Territory and later appointed him its permanent governor.

In September, 1811, Louisiana was getting ready to elect its first State governor, and William Claiborne wrote to his friend Julien Poydras that he had purchased a plantation and planned to become "a plain simple Planter." Claiborne was a candidate for governor of the new State, but he thought his chances of election very slim. He was mistaken; he won the office by a large majority.

In 1817 Governor Claiborne was elected to serve in the U.S. Senate, but he died within a year. He was 42 years old at the time of his death.

Claiborne's plantation was on the west bank of the Mississippi, and the old steamboat landing and the U.S. Coast Guard navigation light in the area still bear his name.

HOHEN SOLMS, LOUISIANA

Mile 185.6 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

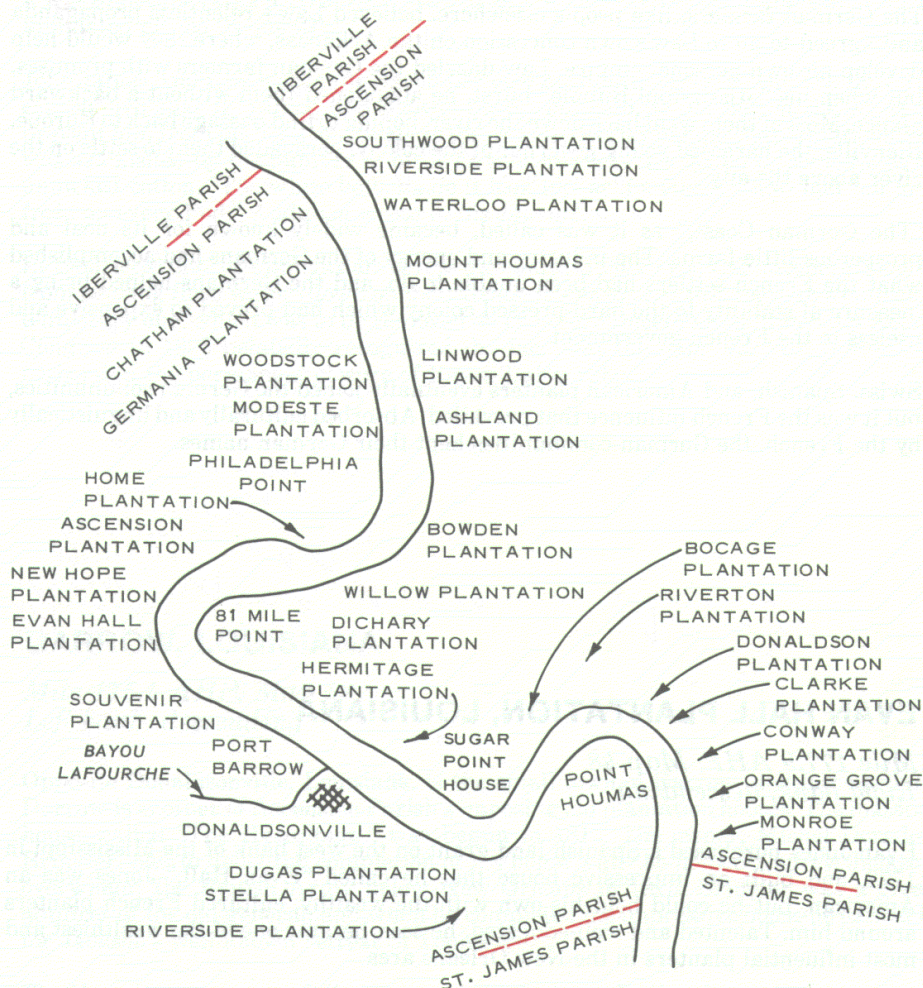
Hohen Solms was a small German community established by John Reuss, who purchased several plantations in the area and operated them under the name of Germania plantation. After the Civil War, Reuss purchased the old Ashland plantation on the left bank of the river opposite Hohen Solms, and renamed it Belle Helene, in honor of his daughter.

Ashland had been built in 1841 for Duncan Farrar Kenner. Kenner was interested in law and political affairs, and was a sugar planter as well. He was a delegate to the secession convention in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1861.

During the war, Kenner was appointed to go to London to negotiate a loan of \$30 million for the Confederacy. He arrived in London in 1865, too late to carry out his

mission. After the war, Kenner obtained a pardon for his participation in secessionist activities and returned to Louisiana. He found his sugar fields ruined and his thoroughbred horses stolen, but he recovered from his misfortunes and at the time of his death in 1887 was the possessor of a larger estate than he had had before the war.

When Kenner built Ashland, he named it for the Kentucky home of Henry Clay, whom he admired tremendously. The two-story house, with its thick walls of solid brick and its handsome brick columns, still stands in a beautiful setting of moss-hung liveoaks, some distance from the river and protected by the mainline levee system in front of it.



PLANTATIONS IN ASCENSION PARISH. Ashland, later known as Belle Helene, was one of the more impressive of the plantation homes in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. An 1896 map shows the location of Ashland and other river plantations in the Parish.

GEISMAR, LOUISIANA

*Mile 185.1 AHP, Map 48
Left bank, descending*

Between 1718 and 1722, a large number of German settlers were recruited by John Law for the Louisiana colony. Law was a flamboyant adventurer and financier who had won the confidence of the French people and their King, and he headed a company that promised to create a new paradise on earth in the New World.

The German farmers, like people elsewhere, believed Law's relentless propaganda and agreed to go to Law's own concession on the Arkansas, where they would help develop his own personal empire. Law dazzled the German farmers with promises, but when his "Mississippi Bubble" burst, he abandoned them without a backward glance. Most of them went back down the river, hoping to find passage back to Europe. Bienville, the harassed young governor of the colony, persuaded them to settle on the river above the city.

"The German Coast," as it was called, became widely known for its neat and prosperous little farms. The industry and energy of the Germans had accomplished what the French settlers had been unable to do, and the Germans helped bring a measure of stability to the hard-pressed colony which had proved so expensive and useless to the French government.

Swiss, Spanish, and American planters eventually joined the German communities, but it was the French influence that prevailed. Absorbed culturally and linguistically by the French, the German communities kept their German names.

EVAN HALL PLANTATION, LOUISIANA

*Mile 177.9 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending*

Evan Jones purchased a Spanish land grant on the west bank of the Mississippi in 1778, and built an impressive house that he called "Evan Hall." Jones was an American, but he could hold his own with the wealthy, cultured French planters around him. Talented and well-educated, he soon became one of the wealthiest and most influential planters in the New Orleans area.

Evan Hall has disappeared, but the well-built brick slave quarters have only in recent years fallen into ruin. There is a large sugar refinery near the site that is known as the Evan Hall Refinery.

BAYOU LAFOURCHE

Mile 175.5 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

“The Fork,” or Bayou LaFourche, was a narrow outlet of the Mississippi that carried excess flows of the great river to the Gulf in flood times. In high water, the little waterway that meandered for 110 miles before it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico was navigable for steamboats but was a mixed blessing for early settlers in the area. While it was sometimes a useful transportation artery, it also allowed their plantations to be inundated all too frequently.

John James Audubon was in the Bayou LaFourche country early in January, 1821. He complained that it “rained and blowed hard,” but said he did not let the weather prevent him from taking a long walk to the swamp that lay behind the plantations. He was astonished by the number of birds he saw, and was fascinated by some fields of unpicked cotton. “The white bolls made it look like as if a Heavy Snow had fell and froze on every Pod,” Audubon wrote in his Journal.

In 1903, local interests built a dam across the mouth of the Bayou LaFourche, to keep it from pouring flood waters down on their fields. It was agreed that the dam would be a temporary one, which was to be removed on or before December 13, 1907. An Act of Congress in 1935 belatedly recognized the fact that the dam was still there, and authorized the permanent closure of Bayou LaFourche.

DARROW, LOUISIANA

Mile 175.4 AHP, Map 48
Left bank, descending

Opposite Donaldsonville, Louisiana, is the small town of Darrow, and just north of Darrow is another of Ascension Parish’s imposing old plantation houses. The massive house, called “The Hermitage,” was begun in 1812. The owner, Michel Doradou Bringier, had to delay the completion of his home while he helped Andrew Jackson overwhelm the British Army below New Orleans in 1815. Bringier was a great admirer of the old general, and when he completed his impressive house he named it for Jackson’s well-known retreat in Tennessee.

The Hermitage was remodelled around 1850. Its large Doric columns are considered to be among the most perfectly proportioned ever constructed in Louisiana, and they suit the dimensions of the great house with a harmony not always attained in southern architecture.

The house and its furnishings were damaged slightly during the Civil War. The Hermitage has not been occupied in recent years and is deteriorating rapidly. Oil wells have replaced sugar as a source of wealth in the vicinity of Darrow, but even oil well fortunes appear to be inadequate for the maintenance of a home the size of The Hermitage.

DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA

Mile 175.2 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

Donaldsonville was already an old community when the United States declared itself to be an independent nation. A trading post had been established there around 1750, and the parish church had been built in 1772.

In 1806, William Donaldson acquired a large tract of land in the area, and laid out a town on the river bank that was first called "La Ville de Donaldson." Donaldson was a native of Great Britain, but he spoke French fluently and was much admired by his French neighbors. An informant writing to President Thomas Jefferson in 1806 said of him: "The people here consider Donaldson a perfect, honest man."

The village at Bayou LaFourche soon became known as Donaldsonville. When it was decided in 1829 that the capitol of the State of Louisiana ought to be located somewhere other than in the city of New Orleans, Donaldsonville offered the legislature a fine brick building that had been built in 1825. The offer was accepted, and the legislature met at Donaldsonville in January, 1830, for a full three-month term. In 1831, the legislators returned to Donaldsonville, but stayed only four days before adjourning and moving back to New Orleans. The State House at Donaldsonville became a school building, and was later demolished.

During the Civil War, Admiral David Farragut became enraged when Union boats were fired upon from the river bank at Donaldsonville, and he ordered the town destroyed. The Union gunboats obediently bombarded the town, and a party of soldiers went ashore and burned some hotels, homes, and wharf buildings in the main section of the town.

On August 11, 1862, the citizens of the little town gathered to discuss the Union attack on the undefended village. They noted uneasily that Farragut had promised to destroy every house in Donaldsonville if his boats were molested again, and the people of the town said that they believed he would not hesitate to do just that. They made a public plea to Confederate sympathizers in the area to refrain from harassing the Union boats.

During the bombardment, the Navy guns had scored a direct hit on a Catholic convent in the town. A group of the nuns went right down to New Orleans and told Benjamin

Butler, the commanding general, exactly what they thought of this kind of warfare. The general was embarrassed, apologized profusely, and said that he would send some of his soldiers to repair the damage to the convent.

The commander of one of the gunboats discovered after the engagement that he had inadvertently fired on a French flag, thinking it was a rebel banner. He apologized to the people for his mistake and confessed his error to Admiral Farragut. The admiral told the gunboat captain not to worry. "There are only two flags on this river that we recognize," he declared. "They are the U. S. flag and the enemy flag. We will fire on the enemy flag wherever we find it, and if the rebels in Louisiana think they can protect themselves by hanging out a French flag, they are very much mistaken."

Since the people who were fired on in this incident were actually French citizens, who had hoisted their national flag with the permission of the French consul in New Orleans, Farragut's nondiplomatic attitude might have created an international incident. Fortunately, the Admiral's stated intention to fire on French flags went officially unnoticed in the general confusion of the war.

The same gunboat captain who reported firing on the French flag made another report about some soldiers he found pillaging and looting private homes in the Donaldsonville area. It was all right to fight the enemy in a "manly" way, he told Admiral Farragut stiffly, but he bitterly resented having to use his Navy vessel to protect Army men who were stealing wine, whiskey, silver, and female wearing apparel from a private residence.

Admiral Farragut shrugged and sent the report on to General Butler. General Butler replied angrily that he saw no necessity for paying any attention to "an improper, bombastic, and ridiculous rodomontade from a mere sub-lieutenant in the U. S. Navy." Farragut responded by sending out a request to all his gunboat commanders that in the future they should be more moderate and discreet if they felt compelled to report pillaging by Army personnel.

On the north edge of Donaldsonville, Union forces took possession of a steamboat landing called Port Barrow, and constructed an earth and log fortification. In 1863, Confederate troops, most of them from Texas, stormed the little fort and occupied it briefly after a dramatic battle. Gunboats were brought up during the engagement, and the rebels were cut off and captured. The town of Donaldsonville suffered some damage again during the bombardment.

Donaldsonville today is a small but busy trade center surrounded by sugar cane and soybean plantations. Many of its citizens are descendants of the Acadian exiles who settled in the area around 1770. It is also the parish seat of Ascension Parish. The population of the town is listed in the Census of 1970 as 7,500, but it is growing rapidly due to industrial development in the area.

There is no small boat marina at Donaldsonville, but fuel and supplies may be obtained on an emergency basis.



BRINGIER POINT, LOUISIANA

*Mile 173.0 AHP, Map 48
Left bank, descending*

The Bringier family, for whom Bringier Point is named, owned several impressive plantation homes along the banks of the Mississippi above New Orleans. Texcuco, located between Burnside and Grammercy, was built in 1855 by a Bringier. Bocage, built in 1801 and remodelled in the 1840's, was a wedding present for a Bringier daughter. The Hermitage, Union, and Ashland, as well as other plantations in the area, were all homes of various members of the Bringier family.

WADE HAMPTON LIGHT

*Mile 172.0 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending*

Wade Hampton of South Carolina had been a captain in the Army during the American Revolution. Later he was made a brigadier general, and was placed in command of U. S. military forces at New Orleans.

Hampton liked Louisiana so well that he moved a large force of his slaves to the State and acquired a plantation above the city at Point Houmas. Thomas Nuttall, an Englishman who had little patience with the institution of slavery, inspected General Hampton's plantation in 1819 and called its owner "a vast monopolizer of human liberty" who possessed 400 slaves and who had collected "an immense fortune of 150,000 dollars" from crops raised in a single year on his Louisiana plantation.

Nuttall said sourly that he did not envy the rich planters of Louisiana. "Between the fears of inundation, the efforts of the enslaved Africans to emancipate themselves, and the fatality of the climate, the opulent planters of Louisiana possess no enviable advantage over the happy peasant who dwells in the security which honest industry and salutary frugality afford him," the Englishman wrote.

General Hampton, of course, might have disagreed with Nuttall's opinion of the relative joys of being a planter or a happy peasant. When he died in 1835, it was reported that Hampton had been the wealthiest planter in the South.



POINT HOUMAS, LOUISIANA

Mile 171.2 AHP, Map 48
Right bank, descending

The Houma Indians had lived on the east bank of the Mississippi until the Tunicas hounded them out of their old home and forced them to seek a new one on the west bank of the river in the area now known as Houma Point.

Henri de Tonti, LaSalle's lieutenant, had called the Houmas the bravest savages on the river, and Father James Gravier who spent some time with them in 1700 added that they were as gentle and kind as they were courageous. He noted with surprise that the Houmas treated their war prisoners with the same gentle courtesy they showed to their own children. The Houma women often wept over the unfortunate captives and did their best to console them for having had the bad luck to be captured in battle.

Father Gravier, who often gave interesting sidelights on the characters of the Indians he visited, also reported that the Houmas were inordinately fond of chickens—not as food, but as pets. He said they had obtained a flock when a vessel was wrecked at the mouth of the Mississippi, and had kept the domestic fowl in their villages ever since, giving them the run of the cabins in the winter. The Houmas would never sell their chickens to voyagers who might eat them, Gravier said, but were glad to give them to anyone who professed to want them for pets.

In 1811, Governor William C. C. Claiborne received a visit from the chief of the Houma tribe in New Orleans. The governor, a kindhearted man, noted sadly that there were less than 80 surviving Houma Indians in Louisiana. He spent \$100 on a present for the old chief, and thanked the Houmas for their many kindnesses to French settlers in the colony's early days.

BURNSIDE, LOUISIANA

Mile 170.3 AHP, Map 48
Left bank, descending

John Burnside, for whom this community is named, was an Irish immigrant who came to Louisiana, became a sugar planter, and died a very wealthy man. He had purchased three or four old plantations on the west bank of the river in the 1850's and in 1857 became the owner of the fine old house that was called Hourmas House.

The original house at Houmas plantation had been built late in the 18th Century under Spanish dominion. It had been occupied for a time by John Smith Preston, the son-in-law of General Wade Hampton. Preston and his wife had preserved the original dwelling and in 1840 had attached to it an entirely new house, which was joined to the

older one by an arched carriageway. The new house was two and one-half stories high, with columns on three sides.

By the time John Burnside purchased the Houmas House in 1857, he was one of the largest slave owners in Louisiana and people were calling him “the Sugar Prince.” He was said to have had 6,000 acres of cane in one unbroken tract in 1861. During the Civil War, Burnside, still a British subject, kept his great house intact and defied the Federal forces to molest him. After the war, he continued planting sugar cane with hired labor.

Long after Burnside’s death, Houmas House was purchased by Dr. George B. Crozat of New Orleans, who restored the dwelling to its former state of perfection.

UNION, LOUISIANA

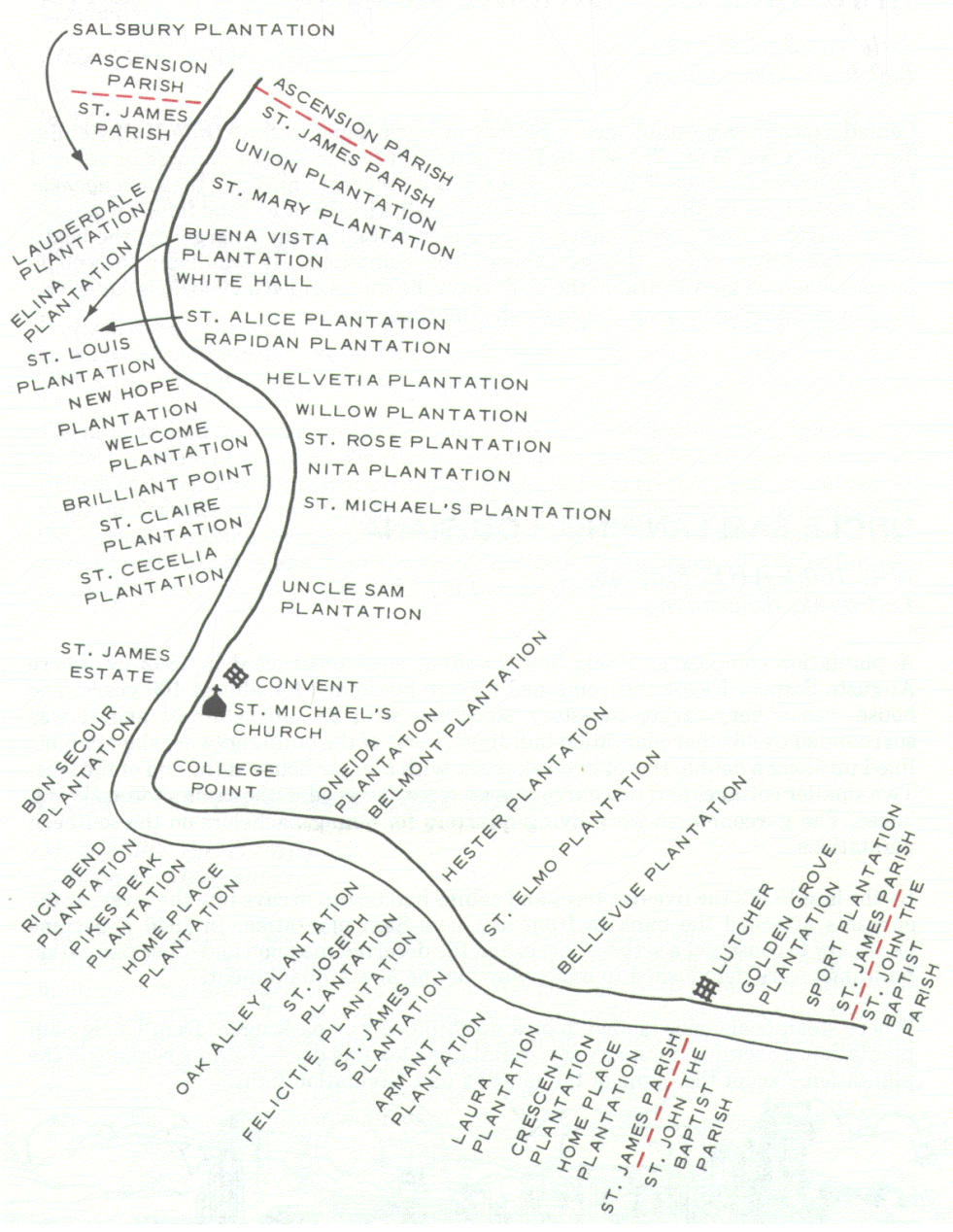
Mile 166.7 AHP, Map 48

Left bank, descending

A daughter of the Bringier family of Louisiana made her home at Union plantation, and the village located on the site today preserves the plantation name.

Around Union, it was formerly the custom of local people to celebrate Christmas Eve by lighting huge bonfires on the levee. Wood was gathered for weeks in advance, and stacked around a tall center pole. When the fire was lit, tall reeds called “roseaux” were tossed into the blaze. They exploded with firecracker noises that gave added excitement to the occasion.





RIVER PLANTATIONS IN ST. JAMES PARISH, LOUISIANA. Union plantation was one of many large and well-known sugar plantations in St. James Parish. The house at Union plantation has long since disappeared, but plantation homes at St. Louis and Oak Alley, on the west bank, still stand.

WHITE HALL PLANTATION, LOUISIANA

Mile 165.5 AHP, Map 49
Left bank, descending

Confederates forces established a battery of seven guns in the White Hall vicinity during the Civil War. The White Hall battery inflicted severe damage on several Union gunboats in 1863. The *New London* was hit several times, and the *Monongahela* received a direct hit that penetrated her bulkhead, killed a sailor, and fatally wounded Captain Abner Read, commander of the Union vessel. In the emergency, the boat's young executive officer, George Dewey, took command. He was later to become famous when, as an Admiral in the U. S. Navy, he commanded a victorious American fleet in Manila Bay during the Spanish-American War.

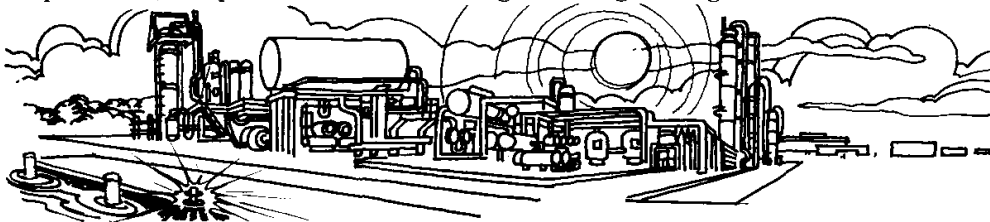
UNCLE SAM LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 160.4 AHP, Map 49
Left bank, descending

A plantation complex at Uncle Sam Landing was constructed in 1842 by Pierre Auguste Samuel Fagot and remained a river landmark for almost 100 years. The house was a very large, two-story structure with 28 tall columns, and it was surrounded by 46 other plantation buildings. Forty of the buildings were slave cabins, lined up along a double row of live-oak trees, with a sugar house at the end of the lane. Two smaller cottages and two garconnières were designed in the same style as the big house. The garconnières were living quarters for young bachelors on the southern plantations.

By the late 1930's the live-oak trees and cabins had begun to cave into the river, as the currents attacked the bank in front of Uncle Sam plantation. In 1940 it became necessary to construct a setback levee, and the deserted mansion and other plantation buildings were demolished to make way for the new embankment.

Where steamboats once landed to pick up shipments or passengers from Uncle Sam plantation, a chemical company now maintains a loading dock. Nothing remains of the plantation, except the name of the landing and navigation light.



CANTRELLE REACH

Mile 160.0 AHP, Map 49

In 1806, William C. C. Claiborne wrote President Thomas Jefferson that Michael Cantrell had been a favorite of the people of Louisiana for 40 years. When Cantrell had served as parish judge, Claiborne told the President, he had once had to pass sentence on his own son-in-law. The young man had been charged with assault and battery, had been tried in the parish court, and had been found guilty. Cantrell fixed him with a stony stare and decreed: "One month in prison and a fine of \$500." It was a good example of the old man's honesty and integrity, Claiborne thought.

Cantrell donated land and money to St. James Parish in 1770 for a church that was to be a river landmark for more than a century. When it was demolished in the late 1930's, some of the materials and furnishings went into the new St. James Church.

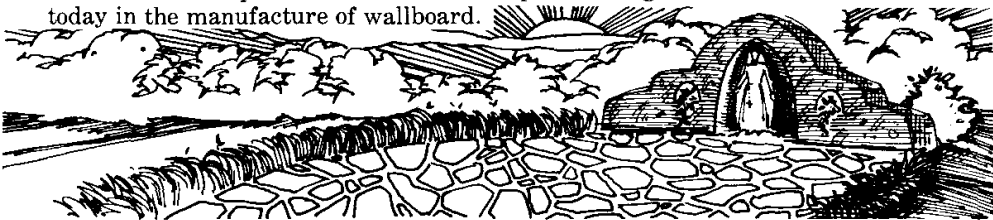
The area around the community of St. James Church is said to have been the site of the earliest settlement made by the Acadians who were exiled from Nova Scotia by the British in 1755. The first documented evidence of the arrival of Acadian refugees is that four families arrived in 1763 or 1764. By 1768 there were said to be about 500 of the French-speaking Acadians in Louisiana, and in 1785 1,600 more of the refugees were brought to Louisiana from France. It is estimated that today about a half-million people in Louisiana are descended from the Acadian (or 'Cajun) settlers.

CONVENT LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 158.7 AHP, Map 49

Left bank, descending

The village and the old river landing at Convent, Louisiana, are named for St. Michael's Convent, established by a group of French nuns in 1825. A long central building completed early in 1848 served as a school for the daughters of the wealthy planters in the area. The school building is no longer in existence, but St. Michael's Church is still in use. The church contains a unique grotto constructed of "bagasse" and shells. Bagasse is the fiber that remains after juice is crushed from sugar cane. Often used in the past as fuel for the steam-powered sugar mills, the material is used today in the manufacture of wallboard.



COLLEGE POINT, LOUISIANA

Mile 157.4 AHP, Map 49
Left bank, descending

College Point took its name from Jefferson College, a school established on the point in 1831. In 1842, it was partially destroyed by a fire, and in 1845 the State of Louisiana withdrew financial support from the institution. In 1855, bankruptcy temporarily closed its doors. Valcour Aime, a wealthy sugar planter, purchased the property at auction and presented it to the Marist Fathers of the Catholic Church, who reopened the school.

In 1927, the college ceased to function again. It was then purchased by the Jesuit order of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Jesuits made it into a retreat for laymen.

ST. JAMES LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 156.5 AHP, Map 49
Right bank, descending

So many legends have been told about the plantation of Valcour Aime that it is difficult at this late date to sort fact from fancy. Certainly there can be no doubt that the owner of "Le Petit Versailles" was an extremely wealthy man whose life-style was spectacular enough to attract wide attention even in an age when lavish living was no novelty to the sugar planters of Louisiana.

From a plantation record that he kept, the following staggering figures describe Aime's operations in 1852. In that year, he had 15,000 acres of land, which he cultivated with the help of 215 slaves. About 800 acres were planted to sugar cane, 300 to corn, 150 to crops belonging to the slaves, and the remainder was swampy forest. His 1852 sugar crop yielded a gross return of almost \$100,000. He had a sugar mill that was operated by an 80 horsepower steam engine. Aime's property in 1852 was valued as follows: \$360,000—value of land; \$100,000—value of buildings; \$60,000—value of machinery; \$170,000—value of slaves; \$11,000—value of livestock. Total value, \$701,000. In 1852, of course a dollar was worth considerably more than it is today and a man who had an income of more than \$100,000 per year could live like a king.

Valcour Aime's plantation home has disappeared, along with the fabulous gardens, with their artificial lakes, miniature river, and small but elaborate fort built for a child's playtoy. Aime's gardner, imported from Paris, was said to have had 30 slaves under his constant supervision. The mansion in which the family lived was built in 1799, and survived until the second decade of the 20th Century, when it was destroyed by fire.

OAK ALLEY, LOUISIANA

*Mile 153.5 AHP, Map 49
Right bank, descending*

Oak Alley was built in 1836 for J. T. Roman III, brother of a Louisiana governor. When Roman acquired the property, it already had a double line of impressive live oaks leading from the house site to the river. The trees had been planted by some earlier settler.

River pilots who could see only the double row of trees from the river gave the house its name. The 28 trees today are each from 15 to 30 feet in circumference, and their branches meet overhead, interlacing to form a shaded avenue about 300 yards long. At the end of the row of trees is the old plantation house, made of brick, covered with a soft, pink plaster.

The house at Oak Alley is 70 feet square, with a large central hall and four rooms on each of its two stories. Its hand-hewn cypress beams, hand-made bricks, and hand-wrought ironwork, together with fine imported mantels and other decorative details, make it one of the most interesting of the surviving plantation homes in Louisiana.



OAK ALLEY. An impressive double row of live-oak trees planted by an early settler gave a plantation home the name by which it is known today. The branches of the live oaks meet overhead and form a shaded avenue. No longer visible from the river, the avenue of oaks can be seen from the river road that lies behind the levee. The plantation house, built in 1836, is almost hidden by the large trees.

VACHERIE, LOUISIANA

Mile 150.0 AHP, Map 49
Right bank, descending

Colonial enterprises were often family affairs, and no one could have been surprised when two grandnephews of Jean Baptiste LeMoyne de Bienville received a large grant of land at “La Vacherie,” on the west bank of the river above New Orleans.

The small community which still bears the name of Vacherie was later established by German and Acadian settlers, who made it one of the area’s early cattle raising centers.

During the Civil War, Confederates planted a battery of six guns at Vacherie, and harassed the Union gunboats as they patrolled the Mississippi between Donaldsonville and New Orleans.

LUTCHER, LOUISIANA

Mile 147.6 AHP, Map 50
Left bank, descending

When the first French settlers in Louisiana were trying to find a money crop that would enable them to survive, many of them experimented with tobacco. The tobacco they raised proved adequate for home use, but had little commercial value, with the notable exception of one strain developed in the area now known as Lucher.

The unusual strain of tobacco, called “Perique tobacco” in honor of the lucky man who developed it, is still grown on a narrow ridge of land near Lucher, Louisiana—and nowhere else in the world. It is processed in a small plant located in the little town, and is used by tobacco companies for blending with milder varieties. Perique tobacco is black and strong, and requires three years for curing. It is one of the most expensive tobaccos on the market, and is grown today by many small farmers, some of them descendants of Pierre Chanet (known to his friends and relatives as “Perique”), who developed it so long ago.

The town of Lucher itself was an early sawmill community. When the sawmill had disposed of all the merchantable timber in the area, the town became a rural community surrounded by small farms where vegetables and Perique tobacco are grown.



GRAMMERCY, LOUISIANA

Mile 146.4 AHP, Map 50
Left bank, descending

Grammercy, Louisiana, now the home of the Colonial Sugar Refinery, now has sugar and chemical docks around its old steamboat landing. The area was plantation country until recent years, with several well-known plantation homes located in the vicinity.

Mount Airy was one of the plantations, and the house still stands. It is the familiar Louisiana "raised cottage" type, but has an elaborate cast-iron stairway on the outside, together with a cast-iron gallery and belvedere railings. There are eight wooden columns and several wide doors with decorative fanlights.

Near Garyville, between Grammercy and Reserve, Louisiana, is another famous old plantation house. San Francisco was built in 1850 for the son of a sugar planter. Its style, perhaps for lack of a better name, is often referred to as "steamboat gothic." The house has a profusion of decorative details that make it unique, and has been perfectly restored to its original grandeur.

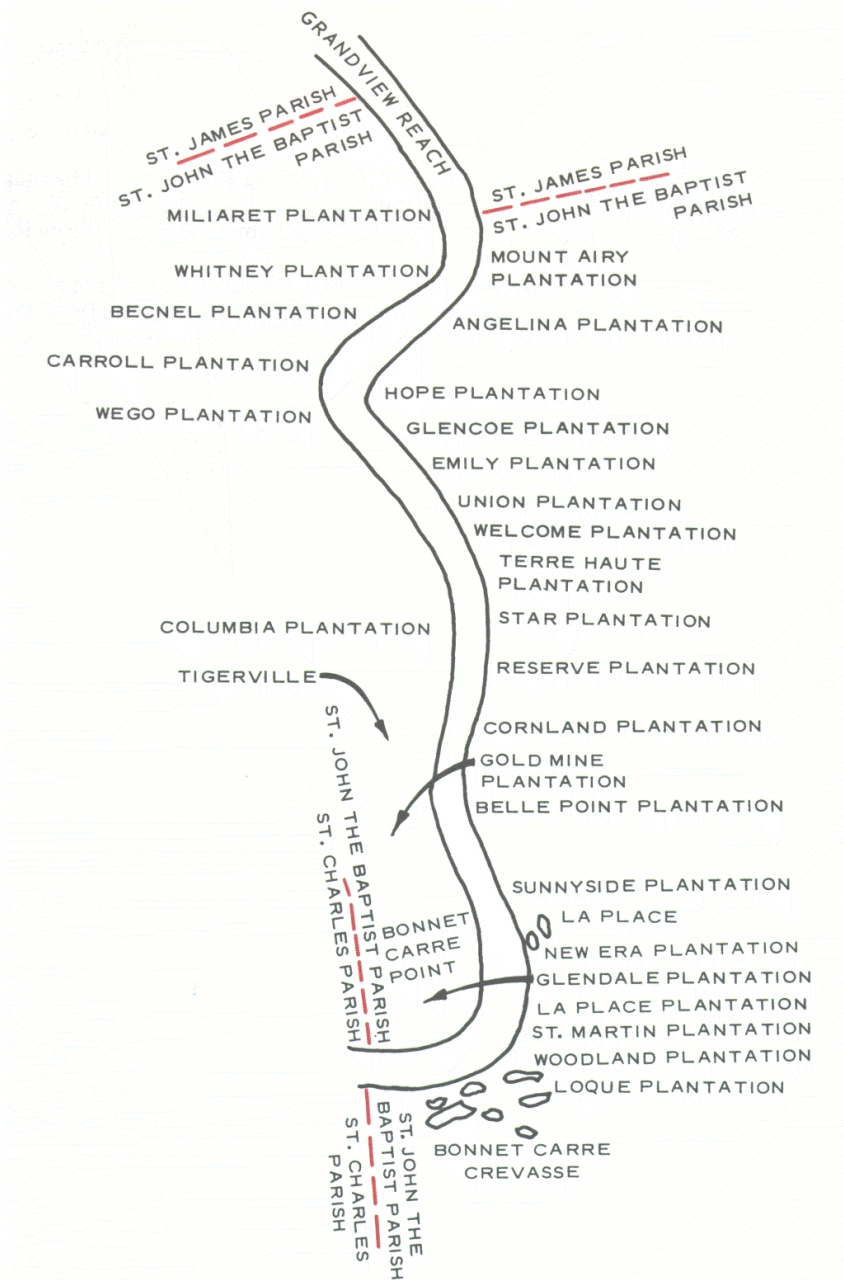
RESERVE, LOUISIANA

Mile 138.6 AHP, Map 50
Left bank, descending

Reserve, Louisiana, is a small town located in the heart of one of the most productive sugar cane producing areas of Louisiana. It is the home of Godchaux Refinery, one of the nation's largest sugar companies.

Sugar cane has been the basis of Louisiana's agricultural economy for almost two hundred years. Early French settlers in the Louisiana colony had tried to produce it in 1725, but the effort was a failure. They tried again in 1762, and failed again. They had turned to indigo and cotton as export crops, but in the closing years of the century, the indigo was all destroyed by insects and the cotton that had to be separated from its seed by hand was hardly profitable enough to make it worth raising.

In 1795, Etienne de Bore, made desperate by crop failures, decided to risk everything he had on one more effort to produce sugar. He bought a supply of seed cane, engaged a professional sugar maker, installed machinery for grinding and boiling the cane, and made \$12,000 on his first crop. His neighbors were quick to follow his example. An influx of refugees from Santo Domingo gave impetus to the industry. The newcomers were familiar with sugar culture and had brought their skilled slaves with them to Louisiana.



LOUISIANA PLANTATIONS IN ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH. Mount Airy and other well-known Louisiana sugar plantations are shown lining the banks of the Mississippi in the above map of a portion of St. John the Baptist Parish. The map was made in 1896, and some of the plantation homes have survived to the present day.

By 1827 there were 308 sugar estates in Louisiana, employing about 21,000 able-bodied slaves in the production and processing of the crop. By 1849 there were 1,536 sugar plantations, employing more than 100,000 slaves in the production of the profitable crop.

The sugar plantations today are highly mechanized, but the method of production remains much the same. Cane is planted by burying stalks end to end in a shallow furrow. The new cane comes from the "eyes" of the old stalk. The growing season is from April to October, and cutting usually begins late in October.

In the old days, the cutting had to be done by hand, but today machines are used. The stalks are loaded into high "wagons" and trundled to the sugar refinery behind a tractor. In the mill the cane is crushed, the syrup is processed, and the sugar is produced and refined.

St. Peter's Church at Reserve, built around 1886, has a fine rose window which is a memorial to one of the Godchaux family. Edward Godchaux was a sugar planter, business man, and philanthropist, and was much respected and admired by the people of the Parish.

BONNET CARRE CREVASSE

*Mile 133.0 AHP, Map 50
Left bank, descending*

The east bank of the Lower Mississippi, opposite Bonnet Carre Point, was an area where it seemed almost impossible to construct a levee that could withstand a major flood. Levees had crumbled in the area many times, and when the flood of 1850 came along, it opened up a crevasse that was more than a mile wide. Water flowed through it for more than six months. The crevasse was closed, and in 1859, another break occurred in the same area. It, too, was almost a mile wide.

By the time the flood of 1871 occurred, local interests had succeeded in closing the wide gap again, but the flood brought a new crevasse. In 1874 another major flood broke the levee again, and the local people and the State of Louisiana gave up in despair. Bonnet Carre Crevasse would have to remain open until some kind of outside assistance could be obtained for the difficult and costly repairs. It was closed in 1883 with funds provided by the Mississippi River Commission.

It had been proposed, some time before the Civil War, that the Bonnet Carre Crevasse area be permanently opened to serve as an outlet for the flood waters on the Lower Mississippi. Engineers were dubious about the wisdom of the plan, fearing that the outlet would enlarge (as natural outlets had done so often) and create new problems.

By the mid-1920's modern equipment and new skills made the plan feasible, but the crevasse itself was not chosen as the most suitable location. The mainline levee system permanently closed the crevasse, and the spillway was constructed about five miles south of the old levee break.

HYMELIA CREVASSE

*Mile 131.5 AHP, Map 50
Right bank, descending*

The crevasse at Hymelia plantation occurred on March 26, 1903, and was the most disastrous break in the levees in that major flood year. The levee at Hymelia had been considered perfectly safe, and it was with real astonishment that an observer reported discovering a hole ten feet in diameter at the base of the earthen embankment. The hole enlarged very rapidly, the top of the levee collapsed, and within three hours the break was over 200 feet wide.

For the next few days, desperate and costly efforts were made to close the Hymelia Crevasse. More than 1,000 laborers were put to work constructing pile and wood cribbing, and a sandbag fill. They were making good progress when a barge crashed into the cribbing on April 7 and wrecked it. The workers tried frantically to repair the damaged section, but their task was hopeless. Early in May the work was suspended, after the expenditure of a vast amount of money, materials, and labor to no purpose.

The water that poured through Hymelia Crevasse inundated plantations and villages below, but the long effort to save the levee had given the people time to evacuate their homes before the flood waters reached them. Some plantation owners were able to construct emergency levees to protect them from the water.

During the flood of 1912, there was a similar emergency at Hymelia. The levee collapsed on March 13, 1912, at eight o'clock in the morning, and the local levee board rushed laborers and materials to the area and began to try to close the crevasse. Local interests soon came to the end of their limited resources, and for a time it appeared that the flood waters would flow unimpeded over the plantations and towns below Hymelia. Fortunately, the Mississippi River Commission and the Army Corps of Engineers stepped in to assist the hard-pressed flood fighters, and undertook the responsibility for closing the crevasse. Damages had been estimated at \$25 million in 1903. In 1912 they were much less, for the crevasse was successfully closed.

BONNET CARRE SPILLWAY

*Mile 128.0 AHP, Map 51
Left bank, descending*

The Bonnet Carre Spillway is one of the important elements in the overall plan for the protection of the Lower Mississippi Valley from major floods. Designed to ensure the safety of New Orleans and the levee system above and below the city, the spillway structure and the floodway that carries the flood flow into Lake Ponchartrain have a design capacity of 250,000 cubic feet per second.

The Bonnet Carre area, where crevasses had been so frequent before 1900, was a natural choice for the location of the flood outlet. The spillway project was completed in 1935, at a cost of more than \$14 million, and consists of a concrete control structure with 350 individual bays which can be opened or closed by lifting or dropping the huge timbers that are called "needles." The Bonnet Carre Spillway was used in 1937, 1945, 1950, 1973, and, briefly, in 1975. In every case, the spillway relieved the pressure on the levee system below and served the purposes for which it was designed.

In 1965 the structure suffered considerable damage when Hurricane Betsy swept across it, blowing out all 7,000 of the timber needles. The winds of more than 100 miles per hour blew down trees in the area, damaged fences, and destroyed all the signs. Repairs were made after the storm, the timber needles were quickly replaced, and no permanent damage was done.



BONNET CARRE SPILLWAY. The above photo of the Bonnet Carre Spillway was taken during the flood of 1973, when the control structure was opened to relieve pressure on the mainline levee system. The Mississippi River is in the foreground, and at the foot of the floodway is Lake Ponchartrain.

The same hurricane in 1965 had wrecked or stranded 176 vessels between Baton Rouge and the Gulf. The storm came out of the Gulf of Mexico, hit the shore just west of Grand Isle, lashed New Orleans with 125 miles per hour winds, and passed west of Baton Rouge with winds still blowing harder than 100 miles per hour. In Louisiana, 81 people died in Hurricane Betsy, 17,600 were injured, and 250,000 had to be evacuated from their homes. Total damages were estimated at about two billion dollars.

During the flood of 1973, a serious emergency arose just above the Bonnet Carre Spillway when a caving river bank threatened the integrity of the mainline levee at Gypsy plantation. To prevent a levee failure that would have been disastrous, the Corps of Engineers had to construct a setback levee. The only feasible location for the setback, unfortunately, was right through the middle of the small community called Montz, Louisiana, which lay directly behind the levee. The 44 families who lived in the village were consulted, and after being informed of the very real danger of a crevasse, agreed to the relocation of their homes. Some of the houses were moved, other were demolished, and the residents of the community were relocated in other communities. The town of Montz, Louisiana, ceased to exist. The engineers constructed the setback in record time, and the levee was saved.

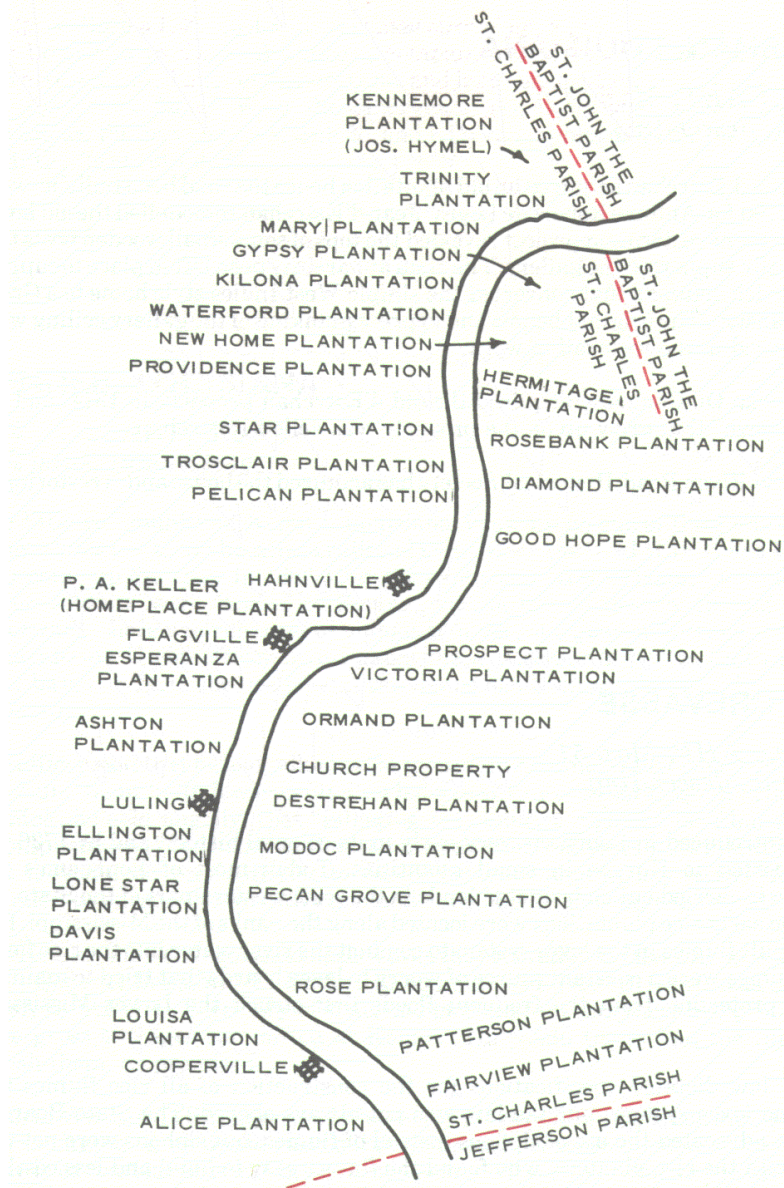
ORMAND LANDING, LOUISIANA

Mile 122.5 AHP, Map 51
Left bank, descending

The plantation house at Ormand is believed to be one of the oldest still standing in Louisiana. Its central portion is framed in cypress timbers, mortised and pegged, and the frame filled with a mud, moss and brick mixture, lathed and stuccoed over. This is the oldest type of construction found in Louisiana, and indicates that the house was built before 1790. Two brick wings appear to have been later additions to the house.

Just below Ormand plantation was an old building that had served as a river landmark from 1806 to 1930. German settlers in the area had built a log church on the river bank in 1740, and in 1806 had replaced it with a neat frame building. They painted the church red, and the steamboat pilots called it "Red Church."

When the Red Church was found to be riddled with termites in 1930, it was demolished and replaced by a new brick one. A statue of St. Charles, more than 100 years old, was taken from the old church and is still in use in the new one.



RIVER PLANTATIONS IN ST. CHARLES PARISH, LOUISIANA. An 1896 map, published by the Mississippi River Commission, shows most of the best known plantations that were located on the banks of the Mississippi in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana. At Ormand plantation, on the left bank descending, is one of the State's oldest surviving plantation homes. The Destrehan plantation house is now in the process of being restored, and on the opposite bank of the river is the Keller Homeplace, a beautifully restored house, with many of the plantation buildings around it still standing.

DESTREHAN, LOUISIANA

Mile 121.1 AHP, Map 51
Left bank, descending

In 1802, Jean d'Estrehan acquired an old plantation house that had been built between 1787 and 1790 for Antoine Robert de Logny. Jean d'Estrehan remodelled the old house in 1840. A recent restoration project revealed the tops of some small wooden posts that had originally supported the gallery. They had apparently been left in place to support the large brick columns that converted the simple West Indies style home to a Greek Revival mansion. The original beams and cypress planking of the gallery ceiling were also uncovered in the restoration work.

Pan American Oil Company acquired the old d'Estrehan property in 1914, and the "company town" that grew up on the property was called Destrehan.

Recently the River Road Historical Society has acquired the house and is restoring it.

DAVIS CREVASSE

Mile 119.0 AHP, Map 51
Right bank, descending

Rice was introduced in Louisiana very early in its colonial history, and by 1726 was being exported to Europe in small quantities. Today most of Louisiana's rice production is carried out on irrigated lands in the southwestern part of the State, but some of the early rice plantations were located along the banks of the Mississippi. Rice planters built flumes in the levee system to conduct the river water into the rice fields, and the flumes were a constant source of worry to levee boards that tried to maintain adequate protection from the frequent floods that struck the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Louisiana law dictated specifications for the construction of all rice flumes that pierced the levee system, but the law was not always obeyed. The State Board of Engineers advocated the use of siphons instead of flumes, but siphons were not very popular with the rice planters, who found the flumes easy to build and less costly to operate.

By 1884 the State laws were very strict, and rice planters were required to remove all below-standard or unlicensed flumes. Cutting the levee for new rice flumes was expressly prohibited.

At Davis plantation, an old rice flume had been filled, apparently not very expertly, and on March 8, 1884, at 1:00 o'clock in the morning, the loose earth began to ooze out of

the levee. Soon a 1,000-foot-wide crevasse opened up, and the flood waters poured into two Louisiana parishes. A railroad company whose rail line was affected by the crevasse expended a lot of money, time, and labor on an attempt to close the crevasse, but the effort failed. With the emergency repairs washed away, the railroad abandoned the crevasse on March 20, and it flowed unimpeded over the country below until the flood subsided.

KENNER, LOUISIANA

Mile 113.0 AHP, Map 51
Left bank, descending

The little community of Kenner, Louisiana, grew up on one of the Kenner family's many plantations, and became a railroad stop before the Civil War. When Farragut's fleet came up the river in 1862 after the capture of New Orleans, two regiments of Union soldiers were landed at Kenner with orders to destroy the railroad line. Afterward, there were charges of pillage, plunder, and general outrage at Kenner. A high-ranking Union officer investigated the matter and reported that the charges were based on fact. The behavior of the troops had been nothing less than brutal, he declared.

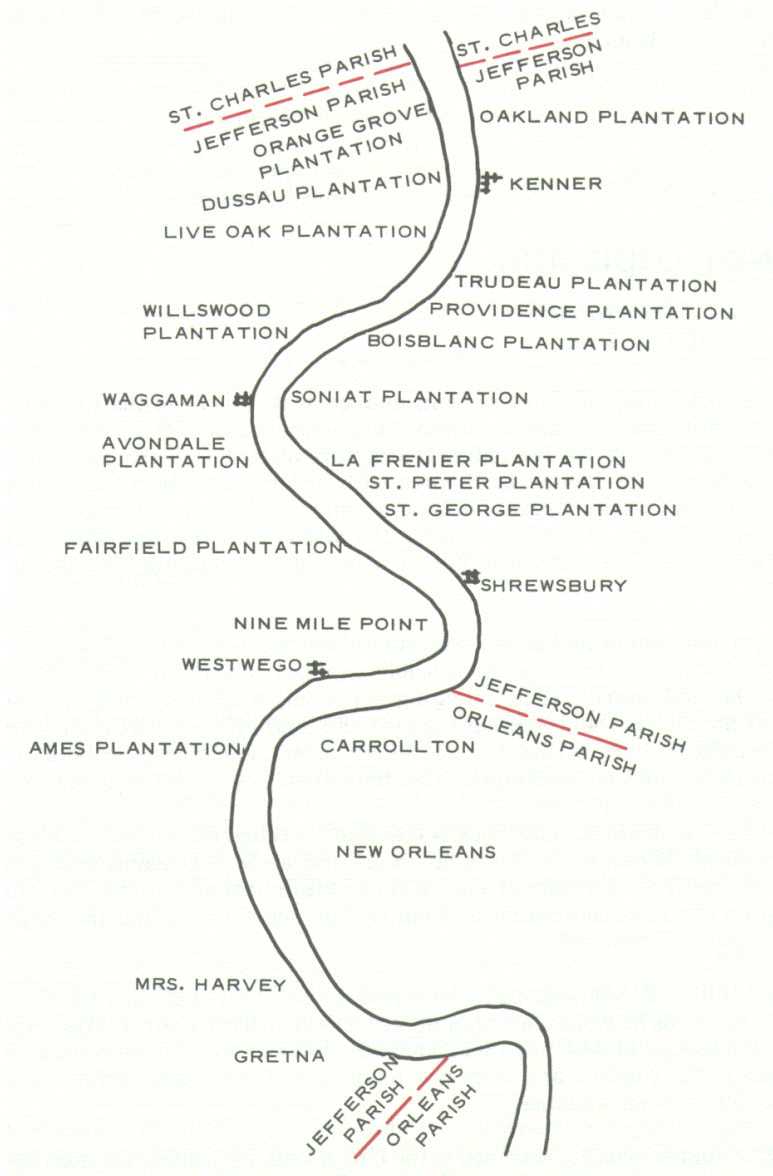
The officer said that he had talked to the men of the regiments involved in the incident, and found them "with few exceptions wholly destitute of a moral sense." They seemed to think, he said angrily, that "pillaging is not only a right in itself but a soldierly accomplishment." He believed that the men and their officers were all in league, and that it would be very difficult to secure evidence against any individual, but he intended to pursue the investigation and try to bring the culprits to justice.

The Kenner incident sent out shock waves that travelled all the way to Washington, D. C. General Benjamin F. Butler, in command at New Orleans, was questioned closely by the U. S. Secretary of War, and had to admit that there had probably been some gross outrages committed at Kenner. He would try to find the culprits and punish them, he promised.

General William T. Sherman could have told the people of Louisiana and the officials in Washington, as he would later tell the citizens of Warren County, Mississippi, that "War is barbarism at best." In 1862, however, civil war was still new to the people on both sides of the conflict, and there was much talk of "civilized warfare," and honor and decency between enemies.

Looting, of course, was not confined to the Union side. The rebels, too, soon learned to raid friends as well as foes to fill their needs. Planters on the Lower Mississippi learned to bury money, silver, china, and other items of value to keep them out of soldiers' hands. During the siege of Vicksburg in 1863, a grieving mother who lived on

a plantation outside the city reported sadly that the Union soldiers had dug up the body of her recently deceased infant on three different occasions, looking for her china and silver. The child had been buried in a flower garden near the house.



LOUISIANA PLANTATIONS IN JEFFERSON PARISH. River plantations in Jefferson Parish, just above New Orleans, are shown on a map published in 1896 by the Mississippi River Commission. Avondale plantation, on the west bank, is now a huge shipyard and the Harvey property above Gretna is the site of the Harvey Canal.

AVONDALE SHIPYARD

*Mile 108.3 AHP, Map 51
Right bank, descending*

Avondale began its shipyard operations in 1938, on the west bank of the river at Avondale plantation, where the rails and ramp of the old Southern Pacific Railway ferry could be utilized as a part of the shipyard equipment.

When the United States became involved in World War II, Avondale received government contracts for ships and equipment needed for the war effort. At the end of the war, the growing little shipyard was diversifying and expanding. Avondale was soon building dredges, fishing boats, offshore oil drilling rigs, and sugar mill equipment, as well as ocean-going and river vessels.

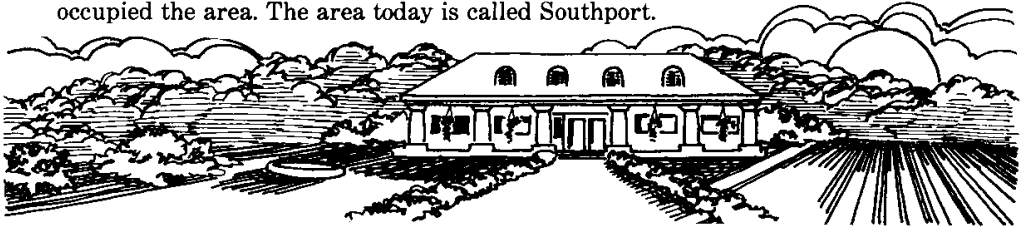
Later conflicts in Korea and South Vietnam led to more government contracts for the company that had already proved its ability to accelerate its operations to meet the urgent needs of the U. S. military forces and the merchant marine fleet. Today the Avondale operations have been further diversified until it is involved in almost every conceivable kind of marine-oriented business.

SOUTHPORT, LOUISIANA

*Mile 104.5 AHP, Map 52
Left bank, descending*

In 1721, Father Pierre Charlevoix stopped at a settlement, called Tchoupitoulas, located a short distance up the river from New Orleans. He observed with great satisfaction that the two Canadian brothers named Chauvin, who lived there, had developed a fine plantation at Tchoupitoulas. The Chauvins had brought nothing with them to Louisiana except their energy, industry, and intelligence, the French priest said, and they had quickly proved that settlements in the colony could be successful, if only the people were willing to work. The Chauvins were certainly showing up "those lazy fellows whose misery unjustly discredits the country," Father Charlevoix said.

The Tchoupitoulas plantation had been named for a tribe of Indians who formerly occupied the area. The area today is called Southport.



HARVEY CANAL AND LOCK (Intracoastal Waterway)

*Mile 98.5 AHP, Map 52
Right bank, descending*

The Harvey Canal, located on the west bank of the Mississippi opposite New Orleans, connects the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway with the Mississippi at New Orleans by way of a 6.5-mile canal that was built by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Harvey Canal had its origin in a private canal that was in use long before the Corps facility was built. The canal had been opened up by a sugar planter in the area for drainage purposes. Some accounts say that Noel d'Estrehan had his slaves dig the canal, and other say that it was dug by German immigrants who were paid in land. In any case, the canal proved useful for many purposes, and at one time boats that wanted to use it were hauled over the levee on a contraption that the boatmen called "the Submarine Railroad."

In 1845 Joseph Hale Harvey of Virginia married one of d'Estrehan's daughters, and built an elaborate home near the canal. He widened and deepened the waterway, and the river pilots called his ornate, turreted house "Harvey's Castle" and his canal "Harvey Canal."

In 1942 the Harvey family sold the canal and its appurtenances to the United States Government. The house was demolished, and a new lock gate replaced the crude one that had been in use for many years. The new lock was opened for navigation in 1934.

The Harvey Lock is open to all water traffic, free of charge. It is in operation day and night, every day in the year. In 1974, 6 million tons of cargo passed through the lock. Pleasure boats as well as commercial vessels use it as a route to the GIWW west to Brownsville, Texas.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

*Mile 95.0 AHP, Map 52
Left bank, descending*

On January 11, 1812, the SHIP NEWS column of a newspaper published in New Orleans, Louisiana, announced the arrival of ships from England, Jamaica, Cuba, and the east coast of the United States. At the bottom of the list was this laconic note:

"Arrived at the levee: Steam Boat NEW ORLEANS from Pittsburgh"

Two days later, the same newspaper gave a more detailed report of the arrival of the first steamboat at the New Orleans waterfront. It read as follows:

The Steam Boat NEWORLEANS, from Pittsburg, (sic) arrived here on Friday evening last. The captain reports that she has been under way not more than 259 hours from Pittsburg to this place, which gives about eight miles each hour.

The NEW ORLEANS steam Boat was built at Pittsburg by the Ohio Steam Boat company, under the patent granted to Messrs. Livingston and Fulton of New York. She is intended as a regular trader between this and Natchez and will, it is generally believed, meet the most sanguine expectations of the company.

New Orleans was already an old city when the first steamboat on western waters tied up at the old levee among the sailing ships and flatboats that had made it a busy, bustling little metropolis.

In September, 1717, John Law's Company of the West had decreed that a town be established on the Lower Mississippi, about three leagues from the river's mouth, and that it should be called New Orleans. The orders received by Bienville, who was struggling to keep the colony alive, suggested that the new capitol of Louisiana ought to be located between Lake Ponchartrain and the Mississippi, so that access could be had from either side by water.

Bienville reported in June, 1718, that he was working on the construction of New Orleans, but two years later a traveler noted that the so-called "city" consisted of a hut roofed with palmetto leaves. About a month later, another report said that there were three houses and a warehouse on the site.

Fever, floods, and fires made Bienville's task a difficult one, but by March, 1721, the section of the city that is today known as the "Vieux Carre," was laid out and a census of the inhabitants of the city claimed a population of almost 250. Later the same year, another census listed 470 people, 173 of whom were slaves and 21 of whom were Indians—also slaves.

Father Pierre Charlevoix, a visitor to New Orleans the next year, commented thoughtfully that its buildings and houses would be a disgrace to the smallest hamlet in France, but added that the situation had so many advantages that if the city and the colony survived at all, New Orleans would some day be a great and wealthy city.

Father Charlevoix was a shrewd observer, and he correctly assessed the full potential of the city. It survived the fires, floods, hurricanes, and political upheavals that made it a French, Spanish, and finally an American city that became the trade center of the Mississippi Valley. Sugar, cotton, rice, slavery, steamboats, and sailing ships all played their part in the development of the great port city. Wealthy planters made it the social center of the South, and immigrants from all over the world made it their home.

When the Civil War began, the queen city of the Mississippi became one of the first objectives of the Union forces. Plans were made; orders were issued. The

Confederates, on the other hand, seemed strangely oblivious of the importance of the city that was already theirs. General Mansfield Lovell, placed in command of the city's defenses, complained in vain to rebel authorities that the forts below New Orleans were entirely inadequate and that it would be impossible to defend the place with the feeble force under his command. Regiment after regiment left the city, hastening up to Kentucky, Virginia, and to other areas that the military minds of the Confederacy considered more important than the city of New Orleans.

Admiral David G. Farragut, commanding the Union fleet, approached the mouth of the Mississippi in 1862, and his orders were plain, clear, and uncompromising. He was to reduce the forts below the city, take New Orleans, and hold it until it could be occupied by Federal troops. "The Department and the country will require of you success," Secretary of Navy, Gideon Welles, told the Admiral.

Farragut was lucky, as well as capable. Chaos reigned supreme at New Orleans, and the Confederate forces could hardly have been more vulnerable. The Union fleet fought its way easily past the two feeble forts, made mincemeat out of the so-called Confederate defense fleet, and demanded the surrender of New Orleans.

"The city is undefended, and is yours by the power of brute force," the mayor of the city replied bitterly, and the Union forces took possession of it. They occupied it during the war, and left it filled with strife and political turmoil when they had finished "reconstructing" it after the war.

When a semblance of normality began to return to the South, its greatest city began another period of phenomenal growth and prosperity. Today it is the world's third largest port, and its 300 piers and docks are constantly crowded with ships flying the flags of many nations, as well as with diesel towboats and barges that bring the products of the nation to New Orleans for export.



PORT OF NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans likes to advertise itself as the “the city that care forgot,” and “the fun capitol of the world,” but it has not really entirely escaped the problems with which other great urban centers struggle today. It has, however, retained a great deal of its old-world charm and many relics of the past. Tourists find it fascinating, and swarm through the French Quarter at all seasons of the year. Mardi Gras in New Orleans is organized madness, but there are those who enjoy every moment of the balls, parades, and other seasonal festivities.

One of the newest attractions of the city is a new all steel, sternwheel steamboat called the *Natchez IX*, which offers excursions up and down the river in the New Orleans port area. The beautiful steamer can carry 1,600 passengers, and gives visitors to the city and opportunity to see the merchant ships, tankers, freighters, tugs, and towboats that make New Orleans one of the world’s important port cities.

Pleasure boat marinas at New Orleans are not located on the riverfront, but on Lake Ponchartrain. From the Mississippi, pleasure craft pass through the Inner Harbor (Industrial) Canal at Mile 92.6 AHP to Lake Ponchartrain, 5.5 miles east of the river.

Navigation locks on either side of the Mississippi at New Orleans provide passage into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway for east or west bound voyagers. In 1974, the New Orleans port handled more than 144 million tons of cargo, and this indicates how heavy commercial traffic is in the area. Small craft owners should exercise great caution.

INNER HARBOR NAVIGATION LOCK AND CANAL (Intracoastal Waterway)

*Mile 92.6 AHP, Map 52
Left bank, descending*

The Inner Harbor Navigation Lock and Canal belong to the State of Louisiana and have been in use for more than half a century. The Corps of Engineers operates the lock and part of the canal, and the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans operate the remainder.

The lock is 640 feet long, 75 feet wide, and has a depth of 31.5 feet. The canal provides access to both the Intracoastal Waterway east of New Orleans, and to Lake Ponchartrain.

A new ship lock and connected channel from the Mississippi River to the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet waterway have been authorized.

A vast amount of iron, steel, grain, shells, chemicals, and petroleum products go through the Inner Harbor Navigation Lock and Canal.