

Embrace

YESTERDAY | TODAY | TOMORROW

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PUBLICATION

ISSUE 21 | SPRING 2026



WELCOME

From our Director

Dear Friends,

This spring, we turn our focus to the barrier islands that define and protect the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

They are more than beautiful stretches of sand. They shield our communities from storms, sustain our fisheries and marshes, and remind us that the strength of our coast and the health of our communities are inseparable.

In this issue, land, water, and culture come together.

At the La Pointe-Krebs House and Museum, built circa 1757, early settlers shaped moss and mud into bousillage walls that still stand today proof that resilience begins with resourcefulness and a deep connection to place.

The Wolf River and the introduction of three new Blueways in Pascagoula invite us onto the water, not just for recreation, but for understanding the balance between conservation and community.

In Ocean Springs, neighbors work to restore the tree canopy, while artists and storytellers carry forward the spirit of the coast.

From barrier islands to bayous, this issue is about stewardship, heritage, and belonging. Thank you for being part of the work and the story.

Warmly,

Rhonda Price, Director, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area

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OUR MISSION

ENHANCE, CONSERVE AND PROVIDE CONNECTIVITY
to cultural resources of a unique and defined area through identification, interpretation and promotion.

CREATE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES
and serve as a source of pride. Providing increased awareness and appreciation of their environment, history, culture, traditions and lifestyles.

PROMOTE ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY
of heritage resources that benefit the entire region and support the long-term enhancement and conservation of those qualities that make the six counties of the MS Coast NHA unique.

TELLING THE AREA'S NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT STORY
to residents and visitors through activities and partnerships that celebrate the area's unique history, people, traditions and landscapes.

Your MS Coast NHA is a partnership of communities, businesses, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and individuals who value the region's rich cultural and environmental diversity, history, natural beauty and traditions.



ENHANCE • PROTECT • CONSERVE





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Do you have a story that captures the spirit of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, one shaped by memory, heritage or a unique point of view? This is your chance to bring those voices and moments to life on the page.

If you're interested in becoming a contributor, contact RoxAnn Rankin Wicker to discuss your article submission at roxann.wicker@dmr.ms.gov.



ANDREW BARRETT

Andrew Barrett is a lifelong resident of Bay St. Louis and works at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources in the Office of Restoration and Resiliency where he works on community resiliency projects and serves as the Nature Based Tourism Coordinator for the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area. Andrew has a passion for history and nature and enjoys Mississippi stories that spotlight our coastal heritage.



LINDSAY MITCHELL

Lindsay Mitchell serves as the Community Relations Director for the City of Pascagoula, building partnerships between the community and city leadership while helping move key initiatives forward. Known for her direct approach and strong regional network, she works to tell Pascagoula's story and support its continued growth. She is a graduate of The University of Southern Mississippi, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Journalism with an emphasis in Public Relations, and is a Mississippi Business Journal Top 50 Under 40 honoree. Deeply rooted in the Gulf Coast, Mitchell is committed to strengthening our coastal region.



KAT BERGERON

Kat Bergeron, a veteran award-winning journalist, is retired from the Sun Herald on the Mississippi Coast but continues to write her popular Sunday history, folklore and sense of place column, Gulf Coast Chronicles. Her writings on lives lost and buildings, homes and historical sites devastated by Hurricane Katrina were cited in the newspaper's award of the Pulitzer Gold Medal. She lost her own coastal Craftsman cottage in the storm and today homeports in the Virginia Piedmont.



ELIZABETH NOLL

Elizabeth Ann Noll is from the Mississippi Gulf Coast and is interested in everything related to Gulf Coast history! She is an Archive Assistant with the Local History and Genealogy Department of the Harrison County Library System. Her duties include processing collections and assisting patrons with their research on Gulf Coast history or their family genealogy. Elizabeth has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Southern Mississippi. She is currently a student in Simmons University's MLIS program with a focus on archives.



SANDRA BILBO

Sandra Bilbo is the Director of Arts and Environmental Education at the Walter Anderson Museum of Art, where she leads programs connecting art, science and Gulf Coast ecosystems. A Mississippi Gulf Coast native with degrees from Oregon State University and the University of South Alabama, she brings extensive experience in marine science and education, including work with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and Oregon Coast Aquarium.



LARRY TUCEI

Larry Tucei is a Mississippi Gulf Coast resident who spent 30 years at the Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot in Gulfport. He now travels to different states measuring trees, collaborating with fellow experts, and volunteering in outreach and education efforts focused on the natural landscape. His work reflects a deep respect for accuracy, documentation and stewardship. Through these efforts, he helps connect communities to the value and resilience of native trees and forests.



DWAYNE COATS

Dwayne Coats has served as the administrator for the La Pointe-Krebs-House and Museum since 2021. Prior to that he was a CPA and served as a criminal investigator for the Mississippi Department of Revenue for over 30 years. He is married to the former Michele Langston and lives in Pascagoula. He is the father of six children and has four grandchildren.



MELANIE ALLEN/JULIA WEAVER

Julia Weaver, former Ocean Springs Alderman at Large (2005-2009), helped lead the city's Hurricane Katrina recovery, contributed to the award-winning \$16 million Marine Education Center at the Gulf Coast Research Lab, and advanced Gulf-wide land conservation efforts following the BP Oil Disaster. She currently serves as project manager for the Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project. Melanie Allen, a longtime Ocean Springs civic leader, has focused her work on the creative economy, historic preservation, and advocacy for the urban tree canopy and natural capital, serving in leadership roles with the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Historic Ocean Springs Association, and Public Art Project of Ocean Springs, and currently serving as a Commissioner of the Trent Lott International Airport and partner on the Tree Canopy Renewal Project.



SUSAN MARQUEZ

Susan Marquez is a talented writer known for her engaging storytelling and insightful articles. She has contributed to numerous publications, covering topics ranging from culture and travel to personal profiles. Susan's work is recognized for its clarity, warmth, and ability to connect with readers on a personal level. She draws inspiration from her experiences and the people she encounters, infusing authenticity into her writing. Susan resides in Madison, MS, with her husband, Larry, and Paco, their demanding but adorable chiweenie.



HISTORICAL



HORN ISLAND LIGHTSTATION—MISSISSIPPI.

Stands on 21 wooden piling (iron cased), in 12 feet of water and is 17 feet above mean tide. One mile northeast from westerly end of Petit Bois Island, Mississippi Sound. It is unique, in that the supporting piling are not braced. Being very shaky, it is locally called "The Cradle." The former station was washed away; keeper, wife and daughter drowned. Fisherman hold the superstition that this is an unlucky place and rarely pass within hailing distance of it. An explosion of a gas tank partly wrecked this house in June, 1909.



THE HERMIT OF DEER ISLAND

**Contributed by
Susan Marquez**

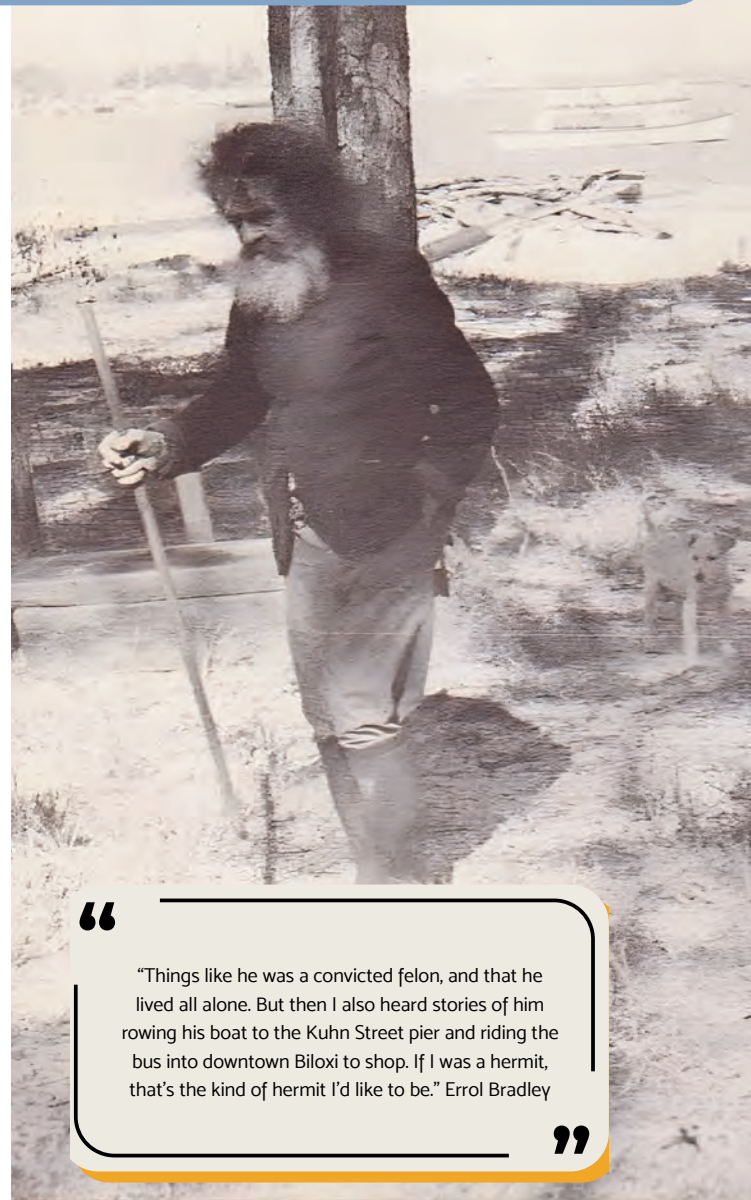
*Photo courtesy of:
LH&G Department/Harrison County
Library System, Scholtes Collection.*

It has been decades since John (Jean) Guilhot walked this earth, but folks in Biloxi have not forgotten the singing Frenchman. Some pronounce his name Gee-yo. Others say Gil-heart. But most simply refer to him as the “Hermit of Deer Island.”

To understand the hermit, it’s important to first understand Deer Island. One of several small islands off the coast of Mississippi, historians say that Deer Island was occupied and used for hunting as early as 8,000 B.C. Artifacts from four major periods have been found on the island and indicate the largest occupation occurred from about 1220 A.D. to 1550 A.D.

French settlers arrived along the Gulf Coast and Deer Island in 1699 and coexisted with a small tribe of native Americans, the Capinans, who retired from the Pascagoula River to the island. The 1850 census lists 11 people living on the island, representing three families and one single man.

As recent as the early 20th century, around 18 families inhabited Deer Island. Alvin Baker, 83, who currently resides in Biloxi, was born and raised on Deer Island. One of five boys, Baker described his childhood as a simple but happy life. The family grew most of their fruits and vegetables in the once-rich soil. They were almost entirely self-sufficient, thriving on the fish they caught, the game they hunted and the hogs and cattle they raised.



“

“Things like he was a convicted felon, and that he lived all alone. But then I also heard stories of him rowing his boat to the Kuhn Street pier and riding the bus into downtown Biloxi to shop. If I was a hermit, that’s the kind of hermit I’d like to be.” Errol Bradley

”

Photos courtesy of LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System, Scholtes Collection.

In 1915, the Deer Island Improvement Company purchased land on the island to create an amusement park. The park had a dance pavilion, row boat rentals, carnival rides, a penny arcade and daily concerts.

"They also built a movie theatre," said Baker. "A family from Illinois moved down to run the movie projectors. One of the daughters was Pauline Lemien, the seventh and final wife of Jean Guilhot, who met her shortly after arriving on the Gulf Coast in 1920."

"I heard he immigrated to the United States from France and came up through Key West," said Baker. "He worked at a turtle factory, where they captured and processed turtles for turtle soup and such. He then moved to northern Florida where he worked on an orange plantation, then to Foley, Ala., to work on a watermelon farm. He left his wife and three kids there to move to Biloxi, where he worked as a barber."

Baker said that when Guilhot moved to Deer Island to make his home with Pauline, he was working in the oyster business. After she died in 1933, he stayed on the island, tending to his oyster reefs.

"I remember the hurricane of 1947," says Baker. "Everyone was sure Guilhot had drowned. I was just six years old, but I remember he walked out of the woods and everyone yelled, 'he's alive!'"

After the storm, many families left Deer Island. Guilhot's home was badly damaged.

"I know his house burned to the ground at some point," said Baker. "He ended up building a small hut using pieces of driftwood on the former concrete pad for the amusement park. About that time, he began his self-imposed isolation."

The moniker "Hermit of Deer Island" came from a Biloxi boat designer and builder, Louis Gorenflo, who, during the 1950s' was capitalizing off of the growing tourist market in Biloxi by taking tourists out on fishing trips and schooner rides and educating them on the Gulf Coast shrimp and oyster industries. And sometimes he told them the story of the Hermit of Deer Island.



Photos courtesy of LHS&G Department/Harrison County Library System, Scholles Collection.



Though Gorenflo was always scanning the Deer Island coastline for Guilhot, he couldn't manage to get a sighting of him. One day, he poked a stick in the sand on the island's beach and attached a bag with a newspaper and food for the hermit. He returned again and again for weeks, and each time Guilhot got a little closer.

"I think Guilhot was embarrassed to be seen by people because his clothes were tattered and he had long hair and a beard," said Baker. "But that was what Gorenflo liked about him. It perpetuated the story of a hermit living on the island, which was exciting for the tourists."

Baker said it took about six months, but Gorenflo finally established enough trust with Guilhot, regularly providing him with provisions and new clothes, and that the hermit began rowing out to actually greet the tour boat. He would entertain the passengers by singing French songs in his resonating baritone, and the passengers would throw coins into his skiff. Tourist shops sold postcards with Guilhot's scraggly image, which further fueled an exciting fear of the hermit.

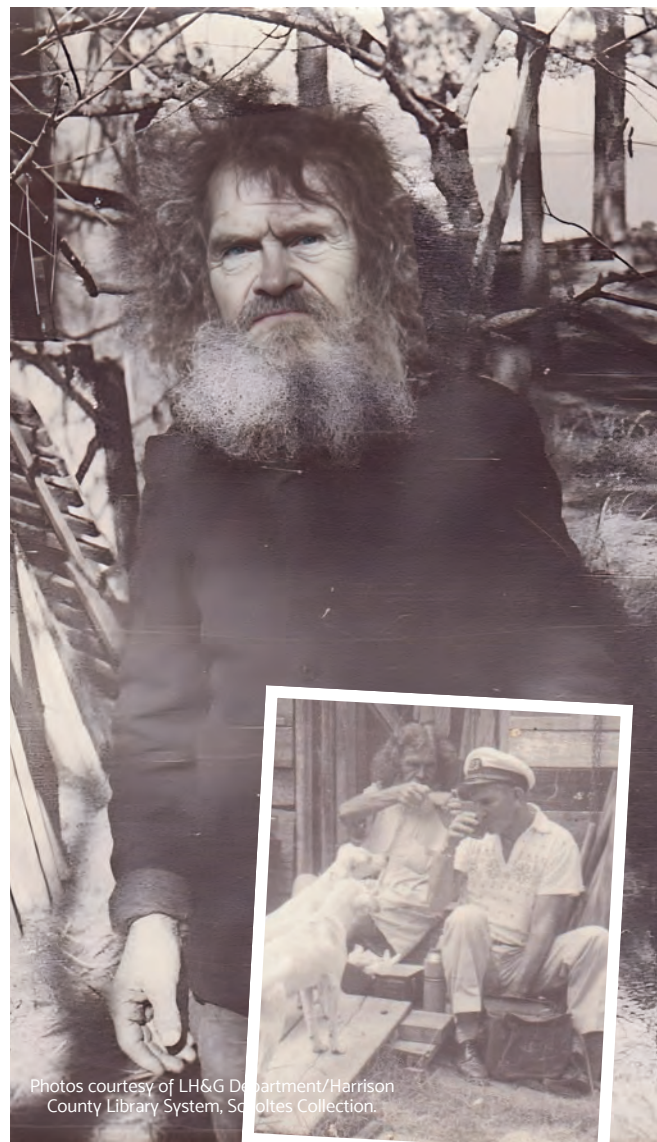
When Gorenflo died, Guilhot resumed his relative isolation.

"He got a couple of dogs to keep him company," recalled Baker. "That soon turned into more dogs, and before we knew it, he had up to fifty dogs that ran up and down the beach. Guilhot said they were friendly dogs, but my dad was concerned they would hurt people."

Guilhot was known to pop in at the Baker home, where he would frequently break into such deafening songs the windows would rattle.

"I heard all kinds of stories about Guilhot over the years," said Errol Bradley, an insurance agent and one-time Biloxi Citizen of the Year. "Things like he was a convicted felon, and that he lived all alone. But then I also heard stories of him rowing his boat to the Kuhn Street pier and riding the bus into downtown Biloxi to shop. If I was a hermit, that's the kind of hermit I'd like to be."

After living on Deer Island for 38 years, Guilhot reluctantly moved onto the mainland when he was no longer able to care for himself. He was taken into the Lamien residence, the home of his step-grandsons, where he spent the last year of his life. The Hermit of Deer Island passed away the next year, in 1959, at the age of 81.



Photos courtesy of LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System, Scholtes Collection.

"I went to the Old Biloxi Cemetery one day and saw that his headstone was a piece of wood, unmarked really, except for someone had written 'Hermit of Deer Island,'" said Bradley. It is believed the headstone was washed away by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As chairman of the culture and heritage committee of the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce, Bradley headed up a 2013 project to replace it with a substantial black granite grave marker, complete with a summary of Guilhot's life story and engraved with his face. He took a crew to Deer Island to gather oyster shells from Guilhot's island home and crushed them to embed in the concrete of the coping on the base of the marker.

"He deserves to be remembered," said Bradley. "He was a main attraction on the Coast for many years."

This story was originally featured in Country Roads, October 2024.

SIX COAST ISLANDS

beckon with history, natural charm

Contributed by Kat Bergeron

Bali Ha'i will whisper,
On the wind of the sea.
'Here am I, your special island,
Come to me, come to me!'

I hope I just made an ear worm into your brain and you are humming that enchanting tune from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, "South Pacific."

I want you to have islands on the brain, not imaginary Pacific islands but our very own sandy spits whose lifeblood comes from the Mississippi Sound and the Gulf.

Cat, Horn, Ship, Petit Bois, Deer and Round islands belong to we the people, not private landowners who would fence us out. For that we should be grateful. We should take the time to know their histories, partake of their pleasures and know why they have such odd names.

You've probably heard Cat Island is called that because the French in 1699 thought those curious ring-tailed animals were cats. Not! You've likely heard Horn got its name from a left-behind French powder horn. Maybe. And perhaps you've heard Ship got that name because it's natural anchorage. Correct!



These Mississippi Gulf Coast islands play a vital role in coastal ecology, helping buffet us from storm surges, providing a natural sandy playground, inviting migrating birds for resting and endangered species, and offering nest sites for sea turtles and fishing opportunities for both human and animal.

Yet, do we really appreciate these offerings at our front door? How long has it been since you took a boat ride to absorb the magic of the islands and the sea?

Not having a boat is no excuse. If you can't bum a ride from a friend, take one of the excursion boats. From time to time, successful entrepreneurs offer trips to the islands, but the most long-lasting is the Skrmetta family.

Ninety-five years ago, the Skrmettas began island ferry rides, an excursion that happily continues today to Ship Island. Additional modern possibilities offer dolphin-watching and cocktail or beer cruises – offerings to please tourist and local alike.

Think how lucky we are to be able to take a healthy dose of Vitamin Sea.

The Mississippi Coast claims 9,500 acres of undeveloped barrier islands, plus or minus the give-and-take of storms and natural erosion.

A barrier is a long, broad sandy island that parallels the shore and is built up and down by waves, currents and winds.

It is called “barrier” because it protects the coastline from erosion. The side closest to the coastline often has vegetation and swampy areas. The exposed outer side, in our case the Gulf side, typically has beautiful beaches and sand dunes.

The condominiums that collapsed near Miami recently is on a barrier island and shifting sands are being studied as a possible reason for the disaster that killed about 100. Attempts to develop Mississippi’s barrier islands never came to fruition, and today these four islands are protected as part of Gulf Islands National Seashore.

When the French landed in 1699 to explore and claim its slice of the New World for King Louis XIV, they anchored off Ship Island but first called it Isle des Surgeres, with Surgeres being the captain of Le Marins, one of the French ships. They later named it Isle aux Vaisseaux, translated Island of Ships because as the first French predicted, the island provided great anchorage.

There is where, at the end of the War of 1812, the mightiest armada to ever approach American shores amassed to descend on New Orleans.

There, during the Civil War, is where federal troops bivouacked to keep an eye on imprisoned Southerners. Decades later, attempts to save Fort Massachusetts, under construction when war broke out, helped lead to formation of the national seashore.

In 1969, Hurricane Camille split the island in two, and for 50 years Mother Nature slowly worked at healing the cut. Two years ago, the Corps of Engineers finished closing the gap. That wasn’t the case for nearby Dog Island, noted by early explorers as a mystery that would come and go. In the 1920s, it was named Isle of Caprice and became a resort popular for gambling and national swimming contests before it disappeared again.

Opposite Page: Historic Photo of Ship Island/Fort Massachusetts, Joe Scholtes Collection/LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System.

Current Page: “Egret Pond in the Heart of Cat Island,” Postcard. Randazzo Collection. Mississippi Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) Database. apps.mdamhs.gov/Public.

Each of the islands spawns its own legends and for Horn that includes a gun powder horn. That story is that when Bienville, brother of the 1699 French leader Iberville, explored the island, one of his men left behind a horn. Or, they believed the land was shaped like a horn. Whichever, early maps call it Isle au Corne, “corne” being French for horn.

When Bienville was the shining star of the French Louisiana colony, which then included Mississippi, the island was called Isle Bienville, but when he fell out of favor with royalty, the name reverted back to Horn. One of its most interesting chapters is in World War II when the Army set up a secret chemical warfare testing camp there.

The Cat Island name also plays in the fact that the LeMoyne brothers, Bienville and Iberville, were French-Canadians. The Cat legend is one of those that just refuses to die or be corrected.

The most cited version goes something like this: The men serving under the LeMoyne brothers thought the funny-looking animals with white rings around their tails must be wild cats, so they named the island Isle aux Chats, “chat” being French for cat.





Horn Island Lighthouse, LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System.

Why the Six Mississippi Barrier Islands Matter

Storm Protection

The islands act as the Gulf Coast's first line of defense, absorbing wave energy and reducing storm surge and erosion during hurricanes and tropical storms.

Wildlife Habitat

They provide essential nesting, feeding, and migratory stopover habitat for seabirds, shorebirds, sea turtles, and other wildlife, many of which are threatened or protected species.

Fisheries Support

The surrounding waters and seagrass beds serve as nurseries for shrimp, oysters, crabs, and fish that sustain Mississippi's commercial and recreational fishing industries.

Coastal Ecosystem Health

Barrier islands help maintain water quality by filtering sediments and nutrients, supporting healthy estuaries like the Mississippi Sound.

Cultural & Historical Significance

These islands hold deep cultural value, with ties to Native American history, early European exploration, maritime trade, and military defense.

Recreation & Conservation

Managed largely as part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, they offer opportunities for boating, fishing, birding, and research, while remaining largely undeveloped and protected for future generations.



The historic discrepancy is that French-Canadians already knew what a raccoon was because they had plenty of them in their North American homeland. Also, they already called their familiar raccoon, “chat sauvage,” French for wild cat. As more proof, French-Canadians and later trappers simply called a raccoon pelt “chat.” So, at best, this popular legend might be considered half right.

Next, Cat Island went to the dogs. Someone with political pull convinced the government during World War II that dogs could be trained to recognize and attack enemy Japanese soldiers on sight.

During this experiment, the dogs were trained on Cat. Twenty-seven Nisei (Japanese-Americans from Hawaii) came to the island every day dressed in padding that didn't allay fears of dog attacks.

The only barrier island to retain its French name is Isle aux Petit Bois, translated “little woods” although today we simply call it Petit Bois Island. We also use the American pronunciation that sounds like “petty boy.”

Interestingly, Petit Bois was once part of Alabama's Dauphin Island, earlier known as Murder Island because of numerous unexplained human bones found there. When Dauphin was split by a 1717 hurricane, the western half kept moving westward into Mississippi and the island's unusual little woods became the permanent name.



History – pirates, buried treasures, military take-overs, local island families, farming experiments – also abounds on two small coastal islands closer to shore.

One early account of the Iberville exploration noted about Deer Island, “To this day it is called Isle aux Chevreuils because of the great quantity of deer to be found on it.”

Whether a land bridge existed at that time to allow deer to travel or whether the island was closer to Biloxi’s shoreline is still debated. Not surprisingly, oral histories from Coast old-timers say Native Americans first gave it the Deer name.

One of the smallest islands, Round near Pascagoula, became the mid-1800s launch pad for a failed revolution by exiles and mercenaries to free Cuba from Spain. Its hurricane-toppled lighthouse is now reconstructed in Pascagoula.

Such island histories are just the tip of the sandberg, definitely worth exploring as your own special Bali Ha’i.

First published in the Sun Herald, Coast Chronicles on July 25, 2021, this story is shared here with sincere thanks and special permission from author Kat Bergeron and Editor Tim Thorsen.



Top: Round Island Lighthouse. Carol Waddell, 1984. Retrieved January 20, 2026 from Mississippi Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) Database. apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public.
Center: “Cat Island Lighthouse,” Postcard. Randazzo Collection. Mississippi Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) Database. apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public.

THE PIRATE LEGEND *of* DEER ISLAND

contributed by elizabeth noll

a murderous pirate, a treasure
and a headless skeleton

Across the Mississippi Gulf Coast, tales of pirates, treasure and ghosts have been passed down through generations. Physical documentation of these stories can be difficult to find, and articles referencing these oral stories are often vague or inflated with fallacies.

In Biloxi, Miss., a legend of treasure buried on Deer Island is common among locals. Beginning in the 20th century, a report of a found treasure appeared in The Daily Herald. Within 20 years, the original story of pirates and buried treasure would become a ghost story.

Rumors of a hidden treasure on Deer Island first surfaced in an April 1, 1902, The Daily Herald article titled “Astounding Discovery!” Due to age, the first column of this article is almost unreadable, but the parts that can be distinguished tell the narrative of an anonymous Biloxi man who discovered buried treasure on Deer Island. This anonymous man was gifted a letter by a man named Don Emilio Cardenas. The document was written by the prominent pirate Jean Lafitte and uses the famous Biloxi Landmark, The Ring in the Oak, to lead this man to the buried treasure just south of the tree on Deer Island.

While entertaining, this article seems closer to an April Fool’s prank than reality. The vast majority of names mentioned in the article cannot be identified as having lived in the area from the late 19th century into the 20th century. There is no mention of Don Emilio Cardenas in census or immigration records. A Catholic Priest named Alphonse Gardierre is also mentioned in the article.



According to the Archdiocese of New Orleans Archive, no priest by that name appears in their records. He is also not listed in the New Orleans city directories. These discrepancies raise further questions about the article’s credibility. A similar story would appear in the 1905 article, “Alleged Pirate Gold in Biloxi is Sought by Organized Company,” in The Sunny South Magazine out of Atlanta. This article narrates how a Biloxi resident, Eugene Tiblier Jr., discovered a sunken ship off the coast of Biloxi in 1893. The last paragraph of the article recounts what could be the origin of the Deer Island ghost story.





“One Tradition with which all the residents “cross de bay” from Biloxi are familiar, is the story that the pirate buried rich treasure somewhere in that neighborhood, and then killed the sailors who did the work, leaving their spirits to guard the spot. The Gold may not yet have been found, but the ghost of the pirate sailors have often been seen” (Holt, 1905, p.1).

In 1914, The Daily Herald reported the discovery of human skeletal remains on the property located on the corner of Beach and Porter Avenue. This would spark renewed interest in the 1905 ghost story.

Eugene Tiblier Sr., father of Eugene Tiblier Jr., appears in Anthony Ragusin’s popular column, “Back with Father Time in the Early Days of the Mississippi Coast,” in The Daily Herald. In the 1922 article, “Headless Ghost Haunted Deer Island in Olden Days,” Tiblier tells of a headless skeleton that had chased unsuspecting fishermen 100 years before this article was published. This skeleton is supposedly a pirate crewmate who was decapitated and left to protect buried treasure hidden on Deer Island. This article could be considered the first time the full ghost story was published in print. Hints of this retelling had circled the papers, but the full ghost story had not surfaced until then.

In recent decades, Kat Bergeron would bring this tale back to life in her column with the Sun Herald called “Coast Chronicles.” Her articles, “Deer Island has its Share of Haunted History” and “Ghosts on the Coast,” would recite the haunting story of ghosts and pirates, told in Anthony Ragusin’s article from 1922.

The Deer Island ghost story has entertained generations across the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but the lack of documentation brings doubt to its legitimacy. Did the legend begin as an April Fool’s prank, or did the legend begin as oral history told by Biloxi locals? The documentation surrounding this legend has evolved over the decades, leaving behind a chilling tale to be told around campfires, adapted by new generations.

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Photographs:

- Ragusin, A. Ring in the Oak [Photograph]. Walter Fountain Image Collection: Nature, Local History and Genealogy Department, Harrison County Library System, Biloxi, MS, United States.
Sholtes, J. Deer Island [Photograph]. Walter Fountain Image Collection: Aerials, Local History and Genealogy Department, Harrison County Library System, Biloxi, MS, United States

A man and a young boy are seated in a simulator, likely for a construction vehicle. The man, on the left, is wearing a white shirt and sunglasses, and is operating a control knob. The boy, on the right, is wearing a blue shirt and is also operating a control knob. The simulator's large screen displays a virtual environment with a blue sky, clouds, and a construction site. A yellow banner with the text "vortex edge max" is visible in the foreground. A green instruction box on the screen reads "Raise boom to match target".

INNOVATIVE

vortex
edge max



PORT AIR SPACE DAY *In The Bay*

FROM THE SEA TO THE STARS

Contributed by Taylor Ladner and Tish Williams

Hancock County, where water, sky and industry have long converged, the Mississippi Gulf Coast continues to demonstrate that innovation is not a recent arrival, but a legacy still unfolding. That truth came vividly to life during the Annual Port–Air–Space Day in the Bay, a signature celebration honoring coastal Mississippi’s past achievements and future promise in aviation, aerospace and STEM-driven discovery.

Sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources in partnership with Partners for Stennis & Michoud and the Hancock County Port & Harbor Commission and corporate tenants at NASA’s Stennis Space Center, Port–Air–Space Day is more than a community festival. It is a living demonstration of how heritage fuels innovation.

Through a \$5,000 sponsorship from the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, thousands of residents and visitors gathered during Second Saturday in November to engage with hands-on learning, industry leaders and economic opportunity, centered on the Gulf Coast’s deep connection to space and ocean exploration.

In 2026, Port–Air–Space Day will return on Saturday, November 14, near the Historic Hancock County Courthouse in Downtown Bay St. Louis, reinforcing the powerful intersection of history and high-tech progress. The event celebrates Hancock County’s six-decade role in advancing science, technology and exploration on a

national scale. Each year, children and families experience innovation firsthand through interactive exhibits led by professionals from NASA's Stennis Space Center, the Port Bienville Industrial Park, Stennis International Airport and Airpark and the Michoud Assembly Facility. From portable planetariums and flight simulators to underwater drones and robotics demonstrations, the event brings science to life, transforming curiosity into inspiration and inspiration into possibility. The Hancock County Historic Society is part of the celebration focusing on Choctaw Indian artifacts found at Port Bienville and the history of how NASA and the U.S. Navy came to make Hancock County home. One of the highlights of the event this year was the opportunity to board the Special Boat Team-22's 33-foot Special Operations Craft-Riverine, used for the clandestine insertion and extraction of Navy SEALs and other special operation forces.

At its core, Port-Air-Space Day in the Bay is about access. By connecting young people directly with scientists, engineers and aerospace professionals, the event creates a tangible bridge between education and opportunity. It encourages exploration of careers in science, technology, engineering and math while reinforcing that those careers can be built right here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, supporting the future workforce for Stennis and Michoud.

That message carries particular weight as Hancock County continues to experience growth in aerospace infrastructure and innovation. Recent investments in advanced maintenance facilities, aerospace operations and technology park development signal a region on the rise. The event also delivers meaningful economic impact.

"Thanks to the support of the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, this year's event was a tremendous success," said Tish Williams, executive director of Partners for Stennis & Michoud and the Hancock Chamber. "It drew visitors from across the region and provided an economic boost to our local small businesses."



"By honoring where we've been while investing in what's next, Port-Air-Space Day captures the spirit of innovation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, deeply rooted, forward-looking, and reaching confidently toward the horizon," said Janice Guido, event founder and chair, and small business owner of Bay Life Gifts in the Bay at Century Hall.



MUD, MOSS & MEMORY

Contributed by Dwayne Coats

Bousillage is a French Colonial wall-filling method that uses a mixture of mud, clay, plant fibers and other organic materials packed between wooden framing. This technique originated in France, but it was adapted extensively in French Louisiana and along the Gulf Coast, where builders modified it to suit the local climate and available resources.

Indigenous building knowledge played an important role in this adaptation, influencing how materials were sourced and combined.

The primary purpose of bousillage was threefold: it provided insulation, served as wall infill and helped with structural stabilization when used in combination with heavy timber framing. While it was not load-bearing on its own, it worked effectively within a wooden structural system.

One of the defining characteristics of bousillage is that it relied entirely on local, natural materials, making it both practical and sustainable. The primary ingredients included clay-rich soil, sand, water and a fibrous binder—most commonly Spanish moss, though animal hair, straw or grass were sometimes used.

Spanish moss was particularly well suited for this purpose. It was abundant along the Gulf Coast, had high tensile strength, and helped prevent cracking as the walls dried. Its fibrous structure bound the mixture together and allowed for slight movement without failure.

The manufacturing process of bousillage followed a series of well-established steps. First, builders gathered their materials locally, collecting clay soil, sand, Spanish moss and water from the surrounding area. The moss then had to be prepared—typically soaked or aged—to soften the fibers and remove impurities.

Next, the materials were mixed together, often by foot, until they formed a cohesive mass. This mixture had to be carefully tested for consistency. It needed to be firm and pliable, cohesive enough to hold its shape, but not so wet that it slumped or cracked as it dried. Achieving this balance required experience and skill, knowledge that was passed down through tradition rather than written instruction. Before bousillage could be applied, the timber framing was constructed. Vertical wooden posts, known as poteaux, were erected first. Between these posts, horizontal wooden laths or sticks—called barreaux—were woven to create a framework.

The bousillage mixture was then packed by hand into this framework, built up in layers and smoothed along the surface. Once applied, the walls were left to air-dry naturally, a process that could take weeks depending on humidity and weather conditions.

Bousillage offered several advantages, especially in the Gulf Coast climate. It helped keep interiors cool in the summer and retained warmth in the winter. Its flexibility allowed for slight structural movement without cracking, making it well suited for humid coastal environments.

Because it was made from renewable local resources, it required no fired bricks or imported materials. Additionally, damaged areas could be easily repaired or patched, extending the life of the structure.

These qualities are evident at the La Pointe-Krebs House, located in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Construction on the house began around 1757, and it remains the oldest standing building in the state. It is also one of the best surviving examples of French Colonial Gulf Coast architecture.

What makes the house especially significant is its combination of construction techniques. It incorporates both tabby concrete and bousillage, reflecting changes in building technology and labor practices over time.

At the La Pointe-Krebs House, bousillage was primarily used in the western room addition, constructed around 1790. It served as interior wall infill between heavy timber framing rather than as a structural element. Bousillage was likely chosen because it was faster to construct, less labor-intensive than tabby and relied on materials readily available on site.

The construction style follows the French poteaux-sur-sol method, meaning posts were set on a sill rather than directly into the ground. This approach helped reduce moisture damage while still allowing the use of earthen wall infill.

When we compare bousillage to tabby at the La Pointe-Krebs House, the differences are clear. Bousillage is made from mud, moss, and clay, while tabby consists of lime and oyster shells.

Bousillage is flexible, while tabby is rigid. Bousillage allowed for faster construction, whereas tabby required more time and labor.



At the house, bousillage appears in the west room, while tabby was used in the central and east rooms. Together, these materials illustrate evolving construction practices across decades.

The cultural and labor context of bousillage is also critical to understanding its significance. While the techniques were brought from France, they were adapted to the Gulf Coast environment. The labor involved was likely performed by enslaved African and Native laborers, whose skilled, experience-based knowledge made this construction possible.

Bousillage represents a blending of traditions—European architectural design, African craftsmanship and Indigenous environmental knowledge—coming together in a single building method.

Preserving bousillage today presents several challenges. Environmental threats such as moisture, insects and structural movement can cause deterioration.

Proper preservation requires the use of breathable lime plasters, careful moisture control and conservation methods that avoid modern cement. Improper materials can trap moisture and ultimately destroy historic bousillage walls.

Bousillage matters today because it demonstrates early sustainable building practices, shows how builders adapted to local environments and preserves cultural knowledge from multiple traditions.

At the La Pointe-Krebs House, it also helps us interpret daily life, labor and construction choices in the colonial Gulf South.

In conclusion, bousillage at the La Pointe-Krebs House represents innovation through necessity, cultural blending on the Gulf Coast and a living example of early colonial craftsmanship. Together with tabby, it makes the house a rare architectural survivor and an invaluable teaching tool for understanding Mississippi's history.

“Together, these materials illustrate evolving construction practices across decades.”



NATURAL





Connecting PASCAGOULA'S WATERFRONT STORIES

Contributed by Lindsay Mitchell

Pascagoula's unique location, situated between the Pascagoula River and the Mississippi Sound, provides endless opportunities for recreation. Not only that, it allows our story to be closely tied to the water, which is something that makes Pascagoula truly special.

The Pascagoula River, the Mississippi Sound, the shoreline, these elements aren't just part of our scenery. They have shaped our history, our culture, our livelihoods and even our legends. These waterways have been a source of pride and connection for Pascagoulans for many generations.

To honor this pride and connection, the City of Pascagoula is pursuing efforts to expand Pascagoula's Blueways with the addition of new trailheads at four important waterfront access points: Lighthouse Park, River Park, Point Park and the boat launch at the LaPointe-Krebs House.

Currently, Pascagoula's Blueways provide a scenic trail for kayakers and paddlers to enjoy our natural resources. However, there is minimal signage onshore enticing people to utilize these beautiful blueway trails. Thanks to a grant from the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, these new trailheads will provide welcoming entries to our blueway trails from land, while also sharing the many wonderful stories that make Pascagoula's identity so unique.



NEW BLUEWAYS
TRAILHEADS COMING SOON

The trailheads will provide clear wayfinding, educational opportunities and a stronger connection between our recreation opportunities and our heritage.

Each trailhead will feature a map of the Blueway and an interpretive sign highlighting a story of our history specific to the location:

- Lighthouse Park will share Pascagoula's nationally known 1973 UFO Abduction story, a legendary event involving two local fishermen who reported being abducted by aliens along the banks of the Pascagoula River.
- Point Park will spotlight Pascagoula's long-rooted history in supporting our nation's defense system through the evolution and impact of Ingalls Shipbuilding.
- River Park will feature the legend of the Singing River and the tale of the love story of a princess and a young chieftain from two warring tribes that leads to the mysterious disappearance of the Pascagoula Indians.
- LaPointe-Krebs House, one of Mississippi's oldest standing structures, will provide historical background of the site and its significance as a treasured heritage landmark.

Together, these trailheads will provide greater awareness to both Pascagoula's Blueways and our history by creating places where outdoor recreation and storytelling meet.

Whether you are a lifelong resident or someone visiting for the first time, we hope these trailheads encourage you to pause, take in our beautiful views and see Pascagoula the way we do. A place unlike any other on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, where history, nature and storytelling all meet at the water's edge.



Photos credit: City of Pascagoula.



WOLF RIVER

Words by Andrew Barrett

Wolf River Canoe Trail is a 15.2 mile, one-way trek from Cemetery Landing to Tucker Road. Privately owned, Wolf River Canoe & Kayak provides shuttle service and several trips depending on your schedule and interests. For more information about the canoe trail and outfitter services, call Wolf River Canoes, 228-452-7666.

Little Bay Loop

Public Boat Launch: 30° 21' 25.3" N, 89° 16' 23.3" W

The 5-mile loop circles Little Bay just west of Wittman Avenue. From the boat launch, paddle northeast/north to DeLisle Bayou. See beautiful, large, historic oak trees and a few homes and piers along the northern shore of DeLisle Bayou. Once into St. Louis Bay, the trail turns south, following the western extent of the Wolf River marshes to the mouth of the Wolf River. From there, it's a short paddle eastward back to the boat launch. Little Bay Loop provides a leisurely paddle and offers several shortcuts and side adventures to fit your schedule and fitness level. Usually, kayakers will see a few fishermen along the banks and in small boats. Weekends bring heavier motorboat traffic, which can be avoided by paddling close in to the marsh where you may see or hear shore birds, such as marsh hens or clapper rails.

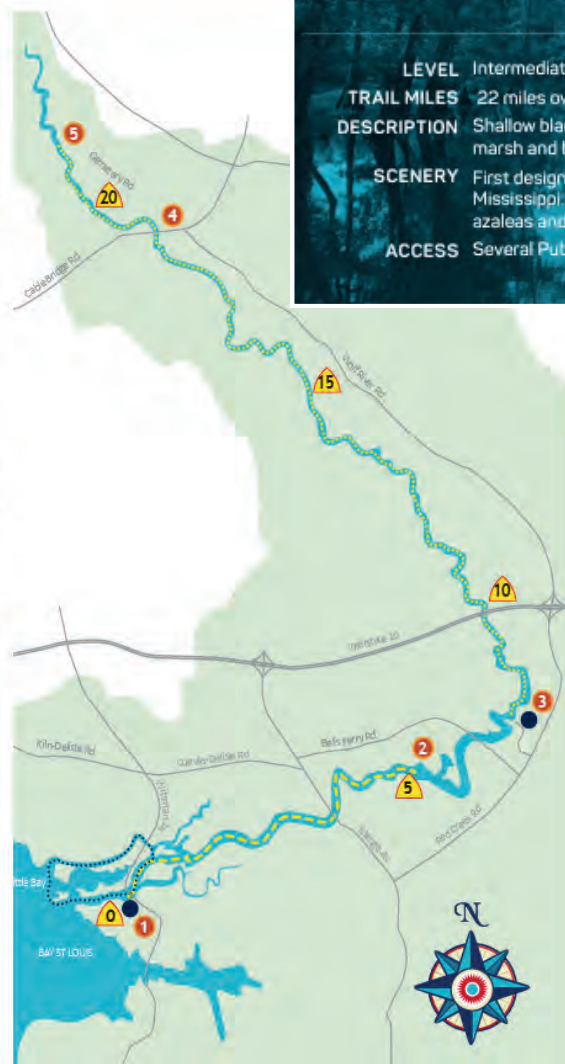
Bells Ferry Trail

from Necaize Boat Launch up the Wolf River 4.9 miles to Bells Ferry Preserve, a natural area managed by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. There is no loop, but plenty of marsh to keep you interested on the way back to Necaize Boat Launch. At the DeLisle Coastal Preserve, there is a nature trail on Bells Ferry Road (accessible by car) that provides a nice half-hour walk to the river's edge. Currently, there is no ramp or take-out, but the trail may be accessible from the water in the future.

MAP LEGEND

- Mile Marker
- Canoe/Kayak Launch
- Wolf River Blueway Trail
- Little Bay Blueway trail
- Point of Interest
- Bells Ferry Blueway Trail

- LEVEL Intermediate to Experienced
- TRAIL MILES 22 miles overall
- DESCRIPTION Shallow black water, sand bars, salt marsh and bottomland hardwoods
- SCENERY First designated scenic stream in Mississippi. Spring offers native azaleas and flowering dogwoods
- ACCESS Several Public Boat Launches



AVOID PADDLING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL. ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET AND CARRY A WHISTLE OR OTHER SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE, PREFERABLY ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE JACKET. PADDLERS SHOULD CHECK WATER LEVEL AND TIDES, WEATHER AND WATERWAY CONDITIONS PRIOR TO EVERY TRIP. REMOVE WHAT YOU BRING, CLEAN UP MORE IF YOU CAN. AVOID TRESPASSING ON PRIVATE LANDS. PLEASE BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND ALWAYS RESPECT THE WILDLIFE. REPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU ENCOUNTER TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.

A group of people are engaged in a tree-planting activity in a sunny, outdoor setting. In the foreground, a pair of hands is shown: one wearing a white gardening glove with green palms and fingers, and the other bare. They are carefully holding a small, young tree with three bright green leaves and a root ball of dark brown soil. The tree is being positioned over a hole in the ground filled with loose soil. In the background, three other individuals are visible, slightly out of focus. One man on the left is using a shovel, a woman in the center is holding a small plant, and another man on the right is holding a blue bucket. The background is filled with lush green trees under a clear blue sky.

LIFE



Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project

Growing Tomorrow's Shade

Contributed by Julia Weaver and Melanie Allen

Before Ocean Springs became the destination location it is today, even before traffic lights timed the seasons and weekends brought crowds to fill downtown, it was simply “town.”

It was coming over the bumpy bridge from Biloxi to see the canopy of trees, the long green tunnel on South Washington Avenue, where branches stitched shade across the street like lace. It was leaning bicycles against the trees outside Lovelace Drugs. It was children sitting on the curb with ice cream melting faster than it could be eaten, grateful for the cool oasis of shelter those tree branches gave on hot afternoons.



Restore, Protect, Expand

That lived experience is exactly why the Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project (OSTCRP) is working to restore, protect and expand the native tree canopy that has long shaped the soul of Ocean Springs, and to ensure that more of our public places and neighborhoods can share in the shade, safety and serenity those trees provide.

Ocean Springs is recognized as a “Tree City USA” by the Arbor Day Foundation, an honor that celebrates communities committed to trees and their ongoing care. Working under the umbrella of the non-profit Historic Ocean Springs Association (HOSA) and spearheaded by project partners Julia Weaver and Melanie Allen, this two year community-driven effort is working to restore and expand this living infrastructure, with a goal of planting 500 trees to create more shaded streets and gathering places that make walking, biking and outdoor play more inviting.





Science, Design, Community Power

With support from a Clean & Safe Water Community Grant, this project blends science, design and volunteer power to grow healthier tree canopies across all six Wards of the City. By strategically planting and caring for native trees, the project helps reduce heat stress, manage stormwater and provide habitat for birds and pollinators.

The first ever city-wide tree canopy inventory of Ocean Springs (including the recently annexed acreage) was prepared earlier this year by the Mississippi Forestry Commission. During the warmer “non-planting” months the OSTCRP team is now hosting public meetings in each ward to gather input from residents to ensure that planning reflects the character and sense of place unique to Ocean Springs neighborhoods.



Planting Momentum

The project kicked off in February by planting 60 Live Oaks in public parks thanks to the support of Hancock Whitney, with thanks also to Ocean Springs Parks & Recreation Director Stephen Glorioso and Ocean Springs Public Works Director Allan Ladnier. That great start energized the whole project team.

Trees are an important and somewhat emotional issue to people in Ocean Springs and we have been fortunate to have eager volunteers join in this effort. We'll need them through this two-year effort, which extends through October of 2027. The project has had great technical assistance from Mark LaSalle, wildlife biologist, and David Minkler, arborist, as well as from the city.

The Jackson County Master Gardeners, Ocean Springs Rotary Club, the Pascagoula River Audubon Center and others helped plant and mulch, and continue now to check on and water the trees.



“Growing trees means growing knowledge right alongside them.”



Stewardship Beyond Planting Day

At its heart, the Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project is about stewardship. It is about recognizing that trees are part of our shared infrastructure, deserving of the same proactive planning and protection as roads, drainage and utilities. It is about caring for what makes Ocean Springs not just beautiful, but livable. Because stewardship requires understanding, 50-percent of this project is dedicated to community education, helping residents learn how to plant wisely, care for young trees and protect the canopy long after planting days are over. In Ocean Springs, growing trees means growing knowledge right alongside them. There will be a variety of species planted during this project, as not all locations are suited for live oaks. Learning how to select the right tree for your location is important knowledge to have.



More Than Shade

The Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project is not simply about planting trees. It is about protecting identity, strengthening neighborhoods and investing in living systems that will serve generations long after today's volunteers have gone home. Trees deserve to be thought of with both sides of our brains in that they stun us with their beauty and they emotionally comfort us with their strength and sense of shelter. But they also deserve respect as the hydraulic powerhouses that they are. A mature live oak is capable of transpiring up to 50 to 100 gallons of water a day. And as for stormwater management, a large live oak with a massive canopy has the capacity to intercept and slow rainfall of nearly 2,500 gallons annually, reducing flooding and protecting local waterways. And as for carbon sequestration, a mature live oak can absorb more than 48 pounds of carbon from the atmosphere in a single year.

This effort reminds us that sometimes the strongest foundations of community begin with something simple, steady and quietly powerful, somewhere we can put down roots, together.



Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal Project

Native Trees for Ocean Springs Landscapes

Choose the right native tree for your space and add beauty, shade, berries and flowers for years to come.

TREE CANOPY BENEFITS

1.4 TONS OF
CARBON MONOXIDE
REMOVED

6.9 TONS OF
NITROGEN OXIDE
REMOVED

30 TONS OF
PARTICULATE
MATTER REMOVED

2.77 MILLION
GALLONS OF
AVOIDED RUNOFF



Follow on Facebook
Ocean Springs Tree Canopy Renewal



Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Red maple is a large deciduous tree that can grow up to 90 feet tall. Native to a wide variety of habitats, red maple is found on soils ranging from wet to dry. Showy flowers appear from February through March, followed immediately by winged samaras (typically red). With its broad, rounded canopy, red maple makes a good, fast-growing shade tree. Sunlight needed: Full to partial Wildlife value: Medium Soil type: Dry to moist Flowering: Winter flowers Fruits: Showy spring fruits



Tulip Poplar

(*Liriodendron tulipifera* Linnaeus) is a large deciduous tree that grows to 100 feet and is found in many woodlands of the eastern United States. Unusual greenish-to yellow flowers appear in April, with persistent seed stalks lasting throughout the year. Tulip tree is oval to pyramidal in form with a tall, straight trunk. The large, tulip-shaped leaves turn a clear, yellow color in fall and are coarse-textured. The tulip tree is stately and formal in appearance. Branches are susceptible to wind damage.



Southern Magnolia

Southern magnolia is a large evergreen tree that grows to 100 feet in height. Tolerant of both wet and dry soils, it grows in older woods, in hammocks and on slopes. Large, showy white flowers appear in spring and are followed by scarlet seeds in late summer. Southern magnolia casts dense shade, so it is best to place these trees in areas that do not require under planting



BRANCHING OUT

How Larry Tucei Found His Second Calling

Contributed by Chelsea Prince and RoxAnn Rankin Wicker

On the Gulf Coast, live oaks have always been more than part of the scenery.

They've shaded generations of families, stood firm through hurricanes and remained rooted as communities grew around them. Understanding their value means understanding something important about the history and resilience of the coast. Larry Tucei has spent nearly two decades helping our communities do just that.

A fourth-generation coastian, Larry was raised in a military family, moving often during childhood as his father's career carried them from place to place. Eventually, the family settled in Gautier, Miss., where Larry became one of the first students to attend the newly formed Gautier Junior/High School. Having experienced several advanced schools during his early years, he often found himself ahead of his peers academically, and, at times, restless within traditional classroom walls. To stay engaged, he turned to hands-on work, helping an uncle with technical tasks that allowed him to learn through doing and problem-solving.

That early exposure to skilled labor set Larry on a path that would become both his profession and his passion. After graduating from high school, he enrolled in the welding program at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gautier, where he began shaping his skills under the guidance of experienced tradesmen. His training started in a fabrication shop owned by well-known Ocean Springs businessman Jesse Carroll and continued with Jackie Hanson, a highly respected local welder who became both mentor and friend.

Through their influence, Larry learned far more than technique; he learned the discipline, precision and pride that define true craftsmanship. Those lessons shaped not only his abilities as a welder but also his steady, patient and exacting approach to work, preparing him for a successful career with companies such as Ingalls (formerly Litton Industries) and SeaFab Aluminum.



Those qualities would define the next three decades of his professional life, as Larry became the first civilian welder at the Combat Readiness Training Center under the Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot in Gulfport, where he would build a 30-year career. It was a profession grounded in structure and standards, where accuracy mattered and details could not be overlooked, skills that would later find new purpose in an entirely different field.

That transition came after Hurricane Katrina.

Like so many along the coast, Larry witnessed firsthand the reshaping of familiar landscapes. Yet amid the destruction, he began noticing something quietly remarkable: the persistence of live oaks, standing firm across the coastline, their canopies scarred but their roots unmoved. At the same time, he observed the vulnerability and recovery of freshwater ecosystems, particularly the cypress forests along the Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area, a protected watershed deeply affected by the storm.

These observations sparked new questions, and those questions led to a study.

In 2006, Larry launched what would become known as the Live Oak Project, driven by a desire to locate, measure and document old-growth live oaks, particularly those with circumferences of 19 feet or more. What began as personal curiosity soon evolved into a focused, science-based effort grounded in collaboration and shared expertise. Through online tree and forestry communities, Larry connected with researchers and ecologists from across the country, including Dr. Robert Van Pelt of the University of Washington, whose extensive work in old-growth forests helped shape Larry's understanding of forest metrics and documentation standards.

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Amid Katrina's ruin, Larry saw what refused to fall, live oaks scarred but standing, their roots unmoved, and in that quiet persistence, a new purpose took hold.

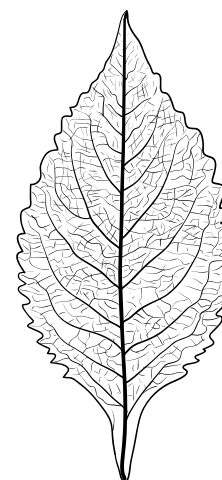
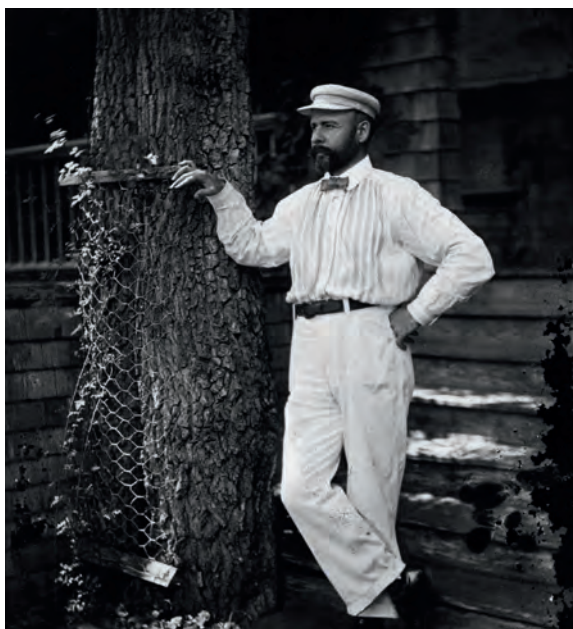
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Top Row; W.B Schmidt at his Ocean Springs Front Beach home and Larry Tuciey over a century later next to the same live oak

Bottom Row: Famed architect Louis H. Sullivan at his Ocean Springs East Beach home and Larry Tucei over a century later. The home has been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina but the tree is still standing.



Equally influential was Robert Leverett, often called the “Old-Growth Forest Evangelist,” who played a pivotal role in helping Larry develop the analytical tools needed to build a credible and lasting database. Leverett assisted in creating spreadsheets and data models that translated tree measurements into estimates of carbon sequestration and overall environmental impact. This framework allowed Larry to calculate critical details such as tree age, volume, growth rates and long-term ecological value, transforming individual measurements into meaningful environmental data and giving the Live Oak Project both scientific depth and conservation relevance.

Through these relationships, he became actively involved in discussions, lectures and field gatherings, eventually joining the Native Tree Society, where he continued

learning from leading scientists, arborists and naturalists. With each new connection came a deeper understanding, not only of how to measure trees, but of how forests function as living systems and historical records.

Out of that knowledge grew a long-term vision: to build a comprehensive tree database that could serve science, conservation and historical preservation alike.

Today, that database reflects years of steady, volunteer-driven work. Larry has measured thousands and documented over 300 live oaks on a national listing, including extensive records across Mississippi’s National Forests: De Soto, Bienville, Tombigbee and Delta, with approximately 90-percent of entries containing precise GPS coordinates.

His documentation has also supported similar preservation efforts in Louisiana, including detailed listings of historic plantation landscapes such as Oak Alley, St. Joseph, Evergreen, Destrehan, Felicite, Ormond, Laura, Hermitage and Houmas House Estate and Gardens.

These records provide more than measurements. They establish continuity, allowing communities, researchers and future generations to track growth over time and better understand the longevity and environmental value of these trees.

Nowhere is that continuity more visible than in Ocean Springs.

After launching the Ocean Springs Live Oak Listing in 2023 as part of his Live Oak Project, Larry took a two-year hiatus before returning to Ocean Springs in 2025 with renewed dedication. He now devotes countless volunteer hours to measuring and documenting live oaks across many coastal communities.

His work expands on the original listing developed by Ocean Springs resident Ethelyn Connor for the Société des Arbores, now the Garden Clubs of Mississippi, enabling the community to compare current data with historical records and create a living timeline of growth and preservation. With over 100 documented trees, Ocean Springs now leads the Gulf Coast in recorded old-growth oak documentation.

As word of this work has spread through social media and local news, homeowners across the Gulf Coast have begun requesting that Larry document the live oaks on their own properties. Many are eager to know the age and stature of trees that often predate their homes, and in some cases, the neighborhoods themselves. What begins as curiosity often becomes stewardship, as understanding leads naturally to preservation.

Larry's dedication to heritage and education extends beyond forestry. Over the last six years, he has volunteered his weekends at the Mississippi Aviation Heritage Museum, bringing the same attention to history and preservation that defines his environmental work. In both spaces, the goal remains the same: to protect what tells the story of who we are and how we arrived here.



”

**What begins as curiosity
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“

**My work is important for science
and public awareness. My wish is
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future. My goal is to protect all
trees, especially old-growth
forests and live oaks.**

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When asked about his motivation, Larry is quick to point toward the future.

“My work is important for science and public awareness,” he says. “My wish is to educate children; they are the future. My goal is to protect all trees, especially old-growth forests and live oaks.”

In retirement, Larry continues to pour his time into this passion, visiting properties, documenting trees, maintaining records and steadily expanding what is now one of the most comprehensive live oak listings throughout the southern region. He shares regular updates in the Ocean Springs Historical Archives Facebook group and encourages residents to reach out to him directly with tips, locations or questions.

In many ways, his work mirrors the trees he studies. It is steady, unassuming and built for the long term. It does not seek recognition, but it leaves a record. And in a landscape shaped by storms and change, that kind of commitment carries lasting weight.

Because when old-growth trees are preserved, so too are the stories, the shelter, and the living connection between past and future. Through the careful work of people like Larry Tucei, the Gulf Coast is not only remembering its natural heritage, it is also actively choosing to protect it.

One 200-year-old live oak can take in more carbon than 1,000 sapling pine trees.



Rep. Hank Zuber

Tree Replenishment Initiative

“This project is not about today.
It is about tomorrow”

In 2023, Republican State Representative Hank Zuber, who represents District 113 in the Mississippi House of Representatives, secured funding to launch a tree canopy restoration project in Ocean Springs. The initiative focuses on restoring and expanding the urban tree canopy to improve environmental health, enhance walkability and preserve the city’s historic character. Representative Zuber is a strong supporter and partner in the other local tree initiatives, and this project reflects a true team effort to invest in Ocean Springs’ natural and cultural landscape.



“We have a strong team in place that is currently identifying and evaluating locations to plant up to 200 majestic live oaks throughout Ocean Springs. This effort is especially important as we work to restore and replenish our live oak canopy, which has been significantly reduced over time by Hurricane Katrina, natural aging and encroachment from sidewalks and new construction.

We believe thoughtful planning and strategic placement of these trees are vital to the continued quality of life, economic well-being and overall character of Ocean Springs, particularly in our downtown area. Live oaks are not just trees. They are part of our identity, our history and the everyday experience of living and working in this community.

Many potential planting locations have already been identified, and we are hopeful that, with the consent of property owners, we will soon be able to move forward. Once approvals are in place, the plan is to put these live oaks in the ground in early spring, giving them the best chance to thrive for generations to come.

This project is not about today. It is about tomorrow. It is about ensuring that future generations of Ocean Springs residents can enjoy the shade, beauty and sense of place that live oaks provide. We know that growth without respect for nature and green space is a dead end. Responsible, well planned growth that includes projects like this is not only the right thing to do, it is also economically sound.

By investing in our tree canopy now, we are investing in the long term health, resilience and beauty of Ocean Springs.”

- Rep. Hank Zuber





Contributed by Sandra Bilbo

If there's anything we can learn from his artwork, it's that Walter Inglis Anderson spent much of his life outdoors and traveling. During museum tours, I often ask questions like, "Where do you think Walter Anderson spent most of his time?" or, "What do you notice about the subjects he liked to paint?"

At the Walter Anderson Museum of Art (WAMA), those answers surround us. His green skiff he used to row to Horn Island hangs above the hallway between two iconic block prints depicting freshwater and saltwater. In the west gallery, his bicycle is displayed alongside paintings of New Orleans. Nearby, a large triptych with a map of Horn Island invites viewers into an almost I Spy-like experience. In the east gallery, portraits of people in his life are displayed alongside watercolor and ceramic works of cats napping or at play. We also see some of Anderson's furniture, including the iconic Blue Jay Table (c. 1934), with legs designed to look like blue jays

The objects and artwork in the museum's galleries and collections tell many stories, timestamped across Anderson's lifetime (1903-1965). What drew me to the Museum was that

the artist was a naturalist, just like me. He lived through a time where much of the Mississippi Gulf Coast remained undeveloped, with natural spaces that were abundant and largely untouched. His artwork serves as a record of the plants, animals and habitats that many working in conservation and habitat restoration hope to protect.

My own journey to the Walter Anderson Museum of Art still amazes me at times. I am a Mississippi Gulf Coast native, born to Vietnamese immigrants, who developed a love for the outdoors, nature and science at a young age - thanks to my dad's love for fishing, which included many trips to Horn Island.

A couple of science degrees later, I've worked at a history museum, aquarium, university research lab and a state government agency. Each position deepened my passion for conservation and resource management, especially through outreach, education and hands-on learning. If experiential learning is what sparked my love for science, perhaps it can do the same for others and help them appreciate the natural wonders of our Mississippi Gulf Coast.

I joined WAMA during a time of growth and expansion, energized by new programs and opportunities tied closely to our mission: to empower lifelong curiosity and connection to the natural world through the art of Walter Anderson and kindred artists. The museum's expansion reflects this vision, transforming not just where we experience art, but how we engage with art and the environment.

Around the same time I joined the museum, construction and renovations were underway for The Traveler Café & Art Experience (The Traveler Café for short). Housed in a renovated 100-year-old home, The Traveler Café invites visitors to linger, reflect and extend their museum experience beyond the galleries. Where a bedroom once stood is now where espresso is made. Barn doors painted by Anderson's daughter, Leif, open into a dining room anchored by Shane Sekul's Blue Jay Table (c. 2025), a contemporary reinterpretation of the original. The table serves as a gathering place where book clubs meet, murder mysteries are solved and conversations unfold over coffee served in mugs from Shearwater Pottery.

The Traveler Café's artwork exists at the intersection of legacy and creative exploration. Works by Anderson family members establish a sense of lineage and familiarity, while bold statement pieces highlight local artists from throughout Mississippi. The Traveler Café is a tribute to Walter Anderson's adventures, where he deepened his connection to humanity and nature.



My role at WAMA continues to connect Anderson's art with our natural world. I've led programs that bring art and science together through shared experiences outdoors, such as camping, kayaking, observing and artmaking. At Oldfields where Anderson lived and produced his iconic block prints, we kayaked the waterways in a way that echoes Anderson's own trips by skiff. Birdwatching in neighborhoods and at the beach near the museum teaches us patience and the power of observation. Tending pollinator gardens and practicing ecological monitoring through tools like iNaturalist became opportunities to slow down, look closely and notice patterns - skills essential to both art and science.

These experiences often ended with artmaking or a revisit to the museum galleries, encouraging simple reflections shaped by what we had just seen and felt. Student programs with the Charnley-Norwood House now include nature walks in the green spaces and nature journaling to practice observation and sketching skills. Exploring that space invited students to consider how history, environment and imagination intersect, and how a home itself can shape the way we observe and understand the world around us.



**“MY STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE NATURE AND ART IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS HISTORICALLY SPECIAL.”
- OCEAN SPRINGS UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER.**

Back at Oldfields, plans are underway to install a living shoreline to protect the historic home, with students working alongside Mississippi State University’s Coastal Research and Extension Center to plant marsh vegetation. The project grew out of my first solo visit to Oldfields, when simply standing at the shoreline led me to ask, “Does Oldfields need a living shoreline?” From that moment of observation and curiosity, the idea took shape through conversations with partners and an understanding of the resources needed to make it possible.

This work is where care for the land becomes both a scientific practice and a creative act.

Both The Traveler Café and the arts and environmental programs at WAMA create access by giving people space to learn about humanity and nature through direct experiences. The Traveler Café soon will celebrate its first anniversary, and we’ve got another year of science and outdoor opportunities ahead! As the museum expands, so does the way we think about learning: not as something confined to our beautiful galleries, but rather by the relationships formed between people, art, and the environment.







Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just getting your hands dirty for the first time, Mississippi Gulf Coast Garden Clubs are the perfect place to dig into something new.

Garden clubs along the Mississippi Gulf Coast are part of a long-established statewide and national framework dedicated to beautification, conservation and education. Local clubs are federated through The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., an organization formed in 1929 to connect individual clubs, share resources and strengthen community impact through coordinated efforts.

Garden clubs are organized geographically into districts, including the Spanish Trail District, which encompasses many Mississippi Gulf Coast communities. Through this district structure, local clubs participate in regional meetings, training opportunities and collaborative projects that extend beyond individual cities and towns.



Photo: Cleveland Ave. Ocean Springs Garden Club, Facebook.



Environmental education is a core focus of many garden clubs. Members promote sustainable gardening practices suited to the Gulf Coast's climate, including the use of native plants and pollinator-friendly landscapes. These initiatives support local ecosystems, conserve water and provide habitats for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

Education is a central component of garden club work. Clubs promote gardening practices suited to the Gulf Coast's climate, including the use of native plants and pollinator-friendly landscapes. Members host workshops, invite guest speakers, organize plant sales and offer garden tours. These activities provide learning opportunities for members while also serving the broader community through outreach and education.

Getting involved in a garden club is straightforward. Interested individuals can start by identifying a local garden club in their city or county. Most clubs maintain websites or social media pages where meeting times, events and contact information are listed. Prospective members are typically encouraged to attend a meeting or event as a guest to learn more about the club's activities and expectations.

Membership requirements vary by club but are generally accessible and welcoming. Many clubs require annual dues, regular meeting attendance and participation in service or committee work. Prior gardening experience is not usually required, as education and mentorship are core components of garden club culture.

By joining a garden club, individuals gain opportunities to contribute time and skills to meaningful community projects while learning from others with shared interests. Garden clubs continue to play an important role along the Mississippi Gulf Coast by strengthening community engagement, supporting sustainable landscapes and preserving the region's public spaces through organized, volunteer-led efforts.



Harold and Jan Walters, Sue Benton, chairmen, Beautification Award Committee. Gautier Garden Club, Facebook.



St. Joseph Catholic Church, Facebook. Moss Point Garden Club.



Home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Taylor, Ward 6. City of Moss Point.

WHY JOIN A GARDEN CLUB

- LEARN GARDENING TECHNIQUES SPECIFIC TO THE GULF COAST CLIMATE
- CONNECT WITH OTHERS WHO SHARE AN INTEREST IN PLANTS AND CONSERVATION
- GAIN ACCESS TO WORKSHOPS, SPEAKERS, AND HANDS-ON LEARNING
- PARTICIPATE IN PROJECTS THAT VISIBLY BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY
- CONTRIBUTE TO THE LONG-TERM CARE OF LOCAL PUBLIC SPACES

GARDEN CLUBS OF SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

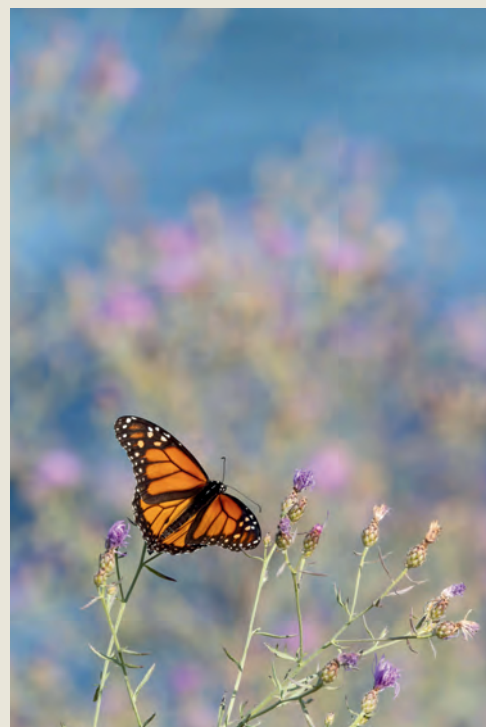
- BAY WAVELAND GARDEN CLUB
- BAYOU VIEW GARDEN CLUB
- BEACH GARDEN SOCIETY OF THE MS GULF COAST
- BILOXI GARDEN CLUB
- COASTAL GARDEN SOCIETY
- DIAMONDHEAD GARDEN CLUB
- DOGWOOD GARDEN CLUB
- GARDEN GATE GARDEN CLUB
- GAUTIER GARDEN CLUB
- GULF HILLS GARDEN CLUB
- IVY LEAGUE (LUCEDALE) GARDEN CLUB
- LONG BEACH GARDEN CLUB
- PASS CHRISTIAN GARDEN CLUB

LET'S GROW FOOD, FLOWERS AND FRIENDSHIPS...TOGETHER



GET STAMPED!

crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu



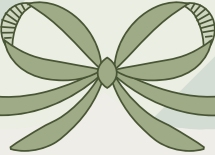
Visit THE CROSBY ARBORETUM



The Crosby Arboretum in Picayune is a native plant conservatory that showcases the natural landscapes of south Mississippi's Coastal Plain. It serves as a living museum with walking trails, habitat exhibits and educational programs that help visitors explore and understand the region's ecology and conservation story.



FLAVORFUL



WELCOME TO THE

Garden Club BRUNCH

FEATURING

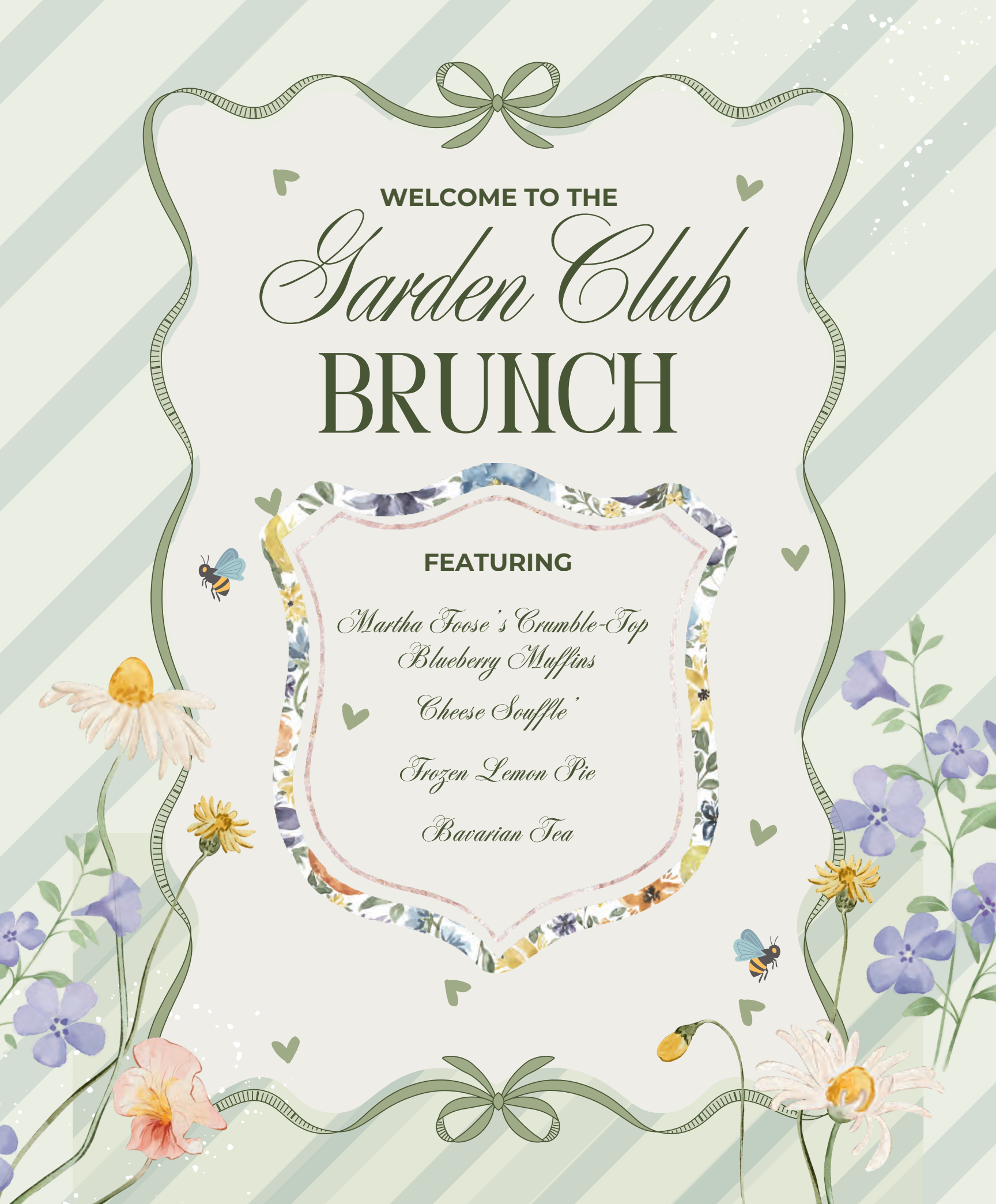
*Martha Foose's Crumble-Top
Blueberry Muffins*



Cheese Souffle'

Frozen Lemon Pie

Bavarian Tea





Martha Foose's Crumble-Top Blueberry Muffins

Courtesy of Loblolly Bakery, Hattiesburg

For the Muffin Batter

- $\frac{2}{3}$ c. granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. full-fat yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. vegetable oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c. whole milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla bean paste or extract
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. fine sea salt
- 1 c. fresh or frozen blueberries

For the Crumble-Topping

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c. granulated sugar
- generous pinch kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. melted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon



Directions

Make the crumble topping: Heat oven to 375°F. Line 9 cups of a muffin tin with paper liners, skipping 3 of the cups to encourage even baking and allowing room for the muffins to rise. Spray the top of the tin and liners lightly with non-stick spray. In a small bowl, using a fork, whisk together the flour, sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Add the melted butter and combine with the fork to form a crumble streusel. Set into the freezer until ready to top the muffins. Make the muffin batter: In a medium bowl, whisk together the sugar, egg, yogurt, oil, milk, and vanilla. Set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Add the yogurt mixture and stir with a flexible spatula until the two mixtures are just combined. Sprinkle the blueberries over the batter and gently fold them into the batter. Allow the batter to rest for 3 minutes. Fill each of the 9 prepared muffin cups with batter just about to the top. Top each with a mound of the cold crumble topping. Bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the muffin comes out clean. Let the muffins cool in the tin for 3 to 5 minutes, then remove from the tin to a wire rack to cool.

Cheese Souffle

Mrs. Monroe Stewart, Flower Art Garden Club, Poplarville, Miss., 1951. Readapted.



Ingredients

- 4 slices of thick bread
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. heavy whipping cream
- 4 eggs
- 1 c. shredded white cheddar cheese
- 1 tsp. salt & pepper
- garnish with paprika and parsley (optional)

Directions

Preheat oven at 350 degrees. Remove crust from bread and discard. Place bread in bottom of a small-oven safe baking dish. Pour 2 cups of heaving whipping cream over bread to soften, reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. In a separate bowl, separate egg yolks and egg whites. Beat yolks well, add $\frac{1}{2}$ c. heavy whipping cream. Pour over bread, but do not beat. Add cheese and salt, pepper. Using a mixer, beat egg whites until stiff, gently fold into mixture. Bake for 30 minutes uncovered, until center is firm. Garnish with a pinch of paprika, sprinkle with parsley on top. Let cool for 15 minutes before serving.

Frozen Lemon Pie

Mrs. W.J. Howse, Flower Art Garden Club,
Poplarville, Miss., 1951. Readapted.

Ingredients

- 1 lemon (juice and grated rind)
- 2 eggs
- ½ c. granulated sugar
- 8 oz. Cool-Whip
- 20 vanilla wafers or graham crackers

Directions

Separate the eggs, setting aside one egg white in a clean bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together one egg yolk and one egg white until pale and slightly thickened. Whisk in the lemon juice, sugar, and lemon zest until fully combined. Transfer the mixture to the top of a double boiler set over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring constantly with a whisk or silicone spatula, until the custard thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Do not allow the mixture to boil rapidly. Once thickened, remove from heat and allow the custard to cool completely to room temperature. While the custard cools, beat the reserved egg white until soft peaks form. Gradually add 1 teaspoon of sugar and continue beating until glossy peaks form. Gently fold the Cool Whip into the beaten egg white, using a light hand to maintain volume. Once incorporated, fold in the cooled lemon custard until just combined and smooth. Line a tray or shallow dish with vanilla wafers or graham crackers. Pour the lemon mixture evenly over the crust layer. Sprinkle crushed wafers or graham cracker crumbs over the top.



Bavarian Tea

Mrs. Lawrence Seal, Flower Art Garden Club,
Poplarville, Miss., 1951. Readapted.

Ingredients

- 1 gallon of water
- 6 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5 black tea bags
- 1 c. orange juice
- 1 c. lemonade
- 2 c. of granulated sugar

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a saucepan. Remove from heat and add the tea bags, cinnamon, and cloves. Cover and steep for 10-15 minutes, allowing the spices to fully infuse. Remove and discard the tea bags, cinnamon stick (if using), and cloves. While the tea is still warm, stir in the sugar until completely dissolved. Pour the sweetened tea concentrate into a large pitcher or gallon container. Add the orange juice, lemonade, stirring well to combine.

Serve hot or cold.



The Traveler

CAFE & ART

Recipes, photos submitted by Dannie Landry, Chef-Operator, The Traveler

Ingredients

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour (or GF 1:1 blend)
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ¾ cup honey
- 3 large eggs
- Zest of 1 orange + 1 lemon
- ¼ cup fresh citrus juice (orange or lemon)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt

Method

1. Whisk eggs, honey, olive oil, zest, and juice until smooth.
2. Fold in dry ingredients gently.
3. Bake at 350°F for 35–40 minutes until just set.
4. Cool completely before slicing.

Service Finish (optional)

- Light citrus glaze or
- Powdered sugar dust + orange zest

CITRUS OLIVE OIL CAKE



A tender olive oil cake kissed with fresh citrus and lightly sweetened with honey



COOKTIME
35–40 MIN



SERVINGS
10–12 SLICES



SINGING RIVER CHICKEN SALAD

Ingredients

- 2½ cups cooked, shredded chicken
- ¾ cup Duke's mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ½ cup finely diced celery
- ¼ cup sliced green onion
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1½ tablespoons Creole mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1–2 tablespoons chow-chow or dill relish (to taste)
- ¾ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¾ teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Method

1. In a large bowl, whisk together mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice, mustard, honey, chow chow, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper until smooth.
2. Fold in the chicken, followed by celery, green onion, dill, and parsley. Mix gently until evenly combined.
3. Chill for at least 1 hour before serving.



HIBISCUS SUNRISE

Ingredients

- 4 oz prosecco
- 2 oz fresh orange juice
- ½–1 oz hibiscus syrup
- Orange wheel or edible flower, for garnish

Method

Add orange juice to a flute or wine glass. Top with prosecco. Slowly drizzle hibiscus syrup down the inside of the glass to create a layered sunrise effect. Garnish and serve immediately.





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