

Embrace

YESTERDAY | TODAY | TOMORROW

AMERICA



MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PUBLICATION

ISSUE 22 | SUMMER 2026



WELCOME

From our Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our summer issue of Embrace. As we begin looking toward America's 250th anniversary, this edition reflects on the stories, places and people that continue to shape the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the connections between our history and our future.

Inside this issue, you'll learn more about the work of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution and the important role they continue to play in preservation, education and sharing our nation's history here on the Gulf Coast. Their efforts are a reminder that preserving history is not just about remembering the past but about ensuring those stories remain accessible to future generations.

We're also excited to highlight the Harrison County Library System's America250 grant project, helping to preserve historic photographs, newspapers and records through new digitization and archival scanning technology. These investments will help protect and share important community stories for years to come.

This issue also takes readers to the Pascagoula River, one of the country's last free-flowing rivers and one of the Gulf Coast's most treasured natural resources. Its history, beauty and ecological importance continue to shape life along our coast while providing opportunities for recreation, exploration and reflection.

At the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, we remain committed to preserving and sharing the nationally significant stories, landscapes and culture of our region through partnerships and community engagement. Thank you for being part of that work and for continuing to support the places and stories that make the Mississippi Gulf Coast so special.

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 • CONSERVE • CONNECT



Contents

HISTORICAL

- 07 Daughters of the American Revolution
- 12 Celebration of Freedom: La Pointe-Krebs

INNOVATIVE

- 19 John Paul Jones: *The Ranger*
- 22 From Archives to Access
- 24 Inherited Purpose

NATURAL

- 31 Outpost Spotlight: Eco-Tours of South MS
- 33 Exploring the Outdoors: Pascagoula River and George County Blueways
- 39 Swamp Medicine: Cattails

COMMUNITY

- 41 From Curiosity to Obsession: Orchid Society
- 43 Burns & Blooms
- 45 Rooting for Change

FLAVORFUL

- 49 Bayou Garden Lunch: Blackened Redfish with Lemon Butter
- 50 Spring Greens with Strawberries and Candied Pecans & Southern Peach Cobbler
- 51 Summer of Elvis: Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Center

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Russell Barnes was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1966 and soon after moved to Biloxi, Miss., where he still lives today. He earned a Master's Degree in History from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1997, focusing his thesis on Biloxi's boatbuilding industry. For more than 30 years, he has researched and written about the maritime history of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, particularly fishing and freight schooners from 1865 to 1930. Barnes has also taught history at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi. A lifelong ship model maker, he has built and restored commissioned models for nearly two decades and enjoys reading, research, baseball and movies.



BRETT NELSON

Brett Nelson is a lifelong and proud Mississippi native who enjoys a wide range of hobbies and activities, notably any outdoor adventures the Magnolia State has to offer. A public-school special education teacher, sports coach and bus driver, he has also found opportunity as a stringer for several local newspapers and media outlets, including the Mississippi Press-Register, the George County Times and the Greene County Herald. He is an admirer of childhood memories, an advocate for kindness and understanding and a lover of animals, friends, family, faith and the truth.



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Joseph Graben is the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Program Management in the Office of Innovation Management at the University of Southern Mississippi. He has worked for over 25 years in supporting tech-based small businesses and innovation-based economic development. He currently helps manage the Gulf Blue Initiative led by the University of Southern Mississippi for growing the Gulf Coast's knowledge-based blue economy.



CHELSEA PRINCE

Chelsea Prince quickly fell in love with the Mississippi Gulf Coast's history and its beauty after moving to the area. She is the author of a children's book, Carl the Rooster, founded the Ocean Springs, Mississippi, Historical Archives Facebook Group and now works as the Outreach Coordinator for the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area. She enjoys gardening, beachcombing and exploring with her husband and three children.



DR. AYESHA GRAY

Dr. Gray is a research scientist who studies aquatic ecosystem function and the effectiveness of habitat restoration projects. She develops and conducts ecological research with her colleagues to better understand how fisheries are supported by wetlands, what mechanisms are most important, and how to develop cutting-edge tools and experimental designs to determine ecosystem function and recovery trajectories. She received her Ph.D. working with Charles "Si" Simenstad and the Wetland Ecosystem Team at the University of Washington's School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, and she also has a B.S. in Zoology from the University of Texas at Austin.



SARAH CHRISLER-RUSKEY

Sarah has served as the Director of the Harrison County Library System since 2018. She has served as President of the Mississippi Library Association and is President-Elect of the Rotary Club of Gulfport. She also participated in Leadership Gulf Coast and the Gulf Coast Business Council's Masters Leadership Program. A dedicated runner, Crisler-Ruskey enjoys the coast's great access to wonderful parks and the beach, and hopes to add kite-surfing to her skills. She received her B.A. in French and English from Millsaps College, her M.A. and Ph.D. in French at the University of Texas at Austin, and her MLIS from the University of Kentucky.



ANDREW HEATON

Andrew is a Resource Monitoring Specialist at the Grand Bay NERR. His research and natural resource management interests include long-term monitoring of plant, bird, and herp communities and their responses to pine savanna management and restoration. Prior to his time at Grand Bay NERR he was involved in a variety of research projects including the ecology/conservation of herpetofauna, stranding response and population assessments of marine mammals and turtles, and the ecotoxicology of metals. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Biology from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master of Science degree in Biology from the University of South Alabama.



DEANNE LOVE STEPHENS

Deanne Love Stephens is a history professor at the University of Southern Mississippi. She is the editor of The Southern Quarterly and Executive Director of the Gulf South Historical Association. She has authored two books and numerous articles in multiple journals. Her monographs are Plague among the Magnolias: The 1878 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Mississippi and The Mississippi Seafood Industry: A People's Story.



JAMES "DAN" LEE

James R. "Dan" Lee (Colonel, US Army, Retired) has focused on historic preservation since his retirement in 2011. He and his wife, Michele Gautier Lee, own and maintain several historic properties to include their home, which dates to 1850 and the first home of "Jimmy Buffett." He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Heritage Trust and the Jackson County Historical and Genealogical Society. His essays and stories highlight the little-known events and people that shaped the history of the Gulf Coast from the first colonial settlers through the Second World War.



WILL THOMPSON

William Thompson is a resident of Ocean Springs, Miss., where he remains deeply connected to the community he loves. He is the owner of WP Thompson Consulting LLC and currently serves on the Ocean Springs Zoning and Adjustment Board. With a background in marine biology, he has a strong appreciation for the natural world, from coastal ecosystems to cultivated gardens. Outside of his professional work, he enjoys fishing, gardening and experiencing live music along the Gulf Coast. He also values time spent exploring new places with the love of his life, Gina Applewhite.



JULIA MUDD

Julia Mudd is a Water Resources and Coastal Associate at Moffatt & Nichol and Waggonner & Ball in New Orleans, La. Julia uses Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) and coastal models to test coastal resiliency projects throughout the Gulf Coast. She is passionate about all things water-related, as well as coastal community resilience and environmental justice.



ROXANN RANKIN WICKER

RoxAnn Rankin Wicker, a Gulf Coast native raised between Ocean Springs and Vancleave, is a storyteller with a love for preserving life's sweetest moments. She gathers memories like heirlooms, through writing, journaling and a deep appreciation for Southern history and charm. Whether she's hunting for vintage treasures, reviving old recipes or chasing stories worth telling, her work carries a sense of warmth and wonder. Her world revolves around her two boys, Foster and Matthew Rocco, who inspire everything she creates. And of course, Moose, their English Bulldog, keeps life delightfully entertaining.



HISTORICAL

Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution.



Daughters of the American Revolution



Writer | Deanne Love Stephens

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) is a non-political organization that strives to perpetuate the history of and education about the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. With local groups, or chapters, across the United States and internationally, the DAR has grown in numbers and outreach since its creation in 1890.

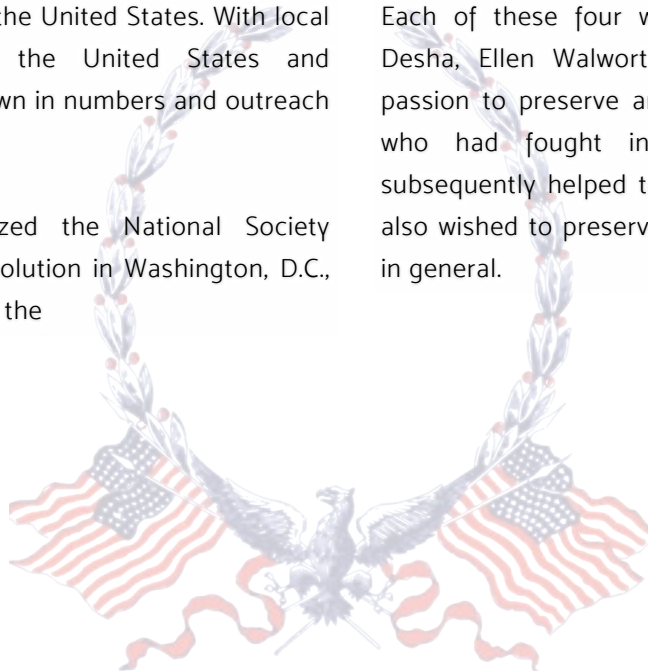
Four dynamic women organized the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D.C., on October 11, 1890, even before the

United States added the Nineteenth Amendment, which legalized the right to vote for all women.

Each of these four women, Eugenia Washington, Mary Desha, Ellen Walworth and Mary S. Lockwood, had a passion to preserve and perpetuate the history of those who had fought in the American Revolution and subsequently helped to organize the United States. They also wished to preserve and share the history of America, in general.

Florence Harding joined the Captain William Hendricks Chapter in Ohio in 1921. Her DAR insignia pin and ribbon, which also display her ancestor bar with the name Captain Edmund Richards, are located in the NSDAR Archives. Photo Credit: Daughters of the American Revolution Headquarters, Facebook.

At this meeting on August 9th, the DAR's first Board of Management was appointed, with Mary Desha chosen as chairman; Ellen Hardin Walworth, Secretary; Eugenia Washington, Registrar; and First Lady Caroline Scott Harrison proposed as first President General. Photograph of the first Continental Congress in 1892, includes President General Caroline Scott Harrison, Vice President Presiding Mary Cabell, Registrar General Eugenia Washington, Recording Secretary General Mary Shields, Historian General Mary Smith Lockwood, and Vice President General Mary Desha (NSDAR Archives). Photo Credit: Daughters of the American Revolution Headquarters, Facebook.



The women who founded the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution were people committed to helping preserve the rich history of the causes and results of the American Revolution. Evidence suggests that the four founders were inspired by colonial revivalism that resulted from the six-month International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine, or the Centennial Exposition on May 10, 1876.

Celebrating the signing of the United States Constitution in Philadelphia, Pa., approximately 10 million people visited Fairmount Park to view the wonders of progress and the exhibits promoting national pride and the importance of education and progress through industrial innovation. The founders of the DAR believed that women were integral to those goals.

Eugenia Washington (1840-1900) was from West Virginia. She had witnessed the horrors of the American Civil War at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Va. As a result, she believed that it was imperative to educate all women about the culture and history of the American Revolution that had united the American

people and not divided them. Another founder, Mary Desha (1850-1911), was from Lexington, Ky. She had trained as a teacher in Lexington, but she later accepted a teaching position in Sitka, Alaska. There, she found extreme poverty among the indigenous people. She advocated for better conditions then, which resulted in a federal investigation. Mary Desha also functioned as the Assistant Director of the DAR Hospital Corps during the Spanish-American War (1898).

The third founder, Ellen Walworth (1832-1915), hailed from Illinois. She had earned a law degree at New York University and was an outspoken advocate to save and renovate Mt. Vernon, George Washington's home in Alexandria, Va. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, she was the Director-General of the Woman's National War Relief Association. The fourth founding member, Mary S. Lockwood (1831-1922), was from Chautauqua County, N.Y.

She was deeply committed to historic preservation of all genres and involved in promoting organizations for women and recognizing their contributions to the United States. Her home in Washington, D.C., Strathmore Arms, was the meeting place of the organizers and the site of the formal creation of the DAR. She was the only DAR founder to live to see the Nineteenth Amendment for Women's Voting Rights become part of the American Constitution.



Ellen Walworth, Director-General. Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution.



"Mrs. Mary S. Lockwood, The 'Little Mother' of the N.S.D.A.R., standing between the President General, Mrs. George M. Minor, and Mrs. George Thacher Guernsey, Honorary President General and Chairman of the Administration Building Committee at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the D.A.R. Administration Building. Mrs. Lockwood celebrated her 91st birthday on October 24th, 1921. Mrs. Minor is on the right and Mrs. Guernsey is on the left." Caption taken from DAR Magazine, December 1921 issue, page 689. Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution.

In the history of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the organization has supported the United States in various endeavors, such as when Mary Desha was the Assistant Director of the DAR Hospital Corps in the Spanish-American War (1898). The DAR purchased the USS Missouri to transport wounded troops in that conflict.

The DAR headquarters in Washington, D.C., became a War Office building during World War I (1917-1918). Immigrants on Ellis Island received vocational opportunities provided by

the DAR if they were being held before entering the United States, to New York City. The United States Forestry Service has received thousands of dollars for the purchase of trees to renew deforested regions in the United States.

Native American education, as well as other socio-economic groups, has been promoted and supported with schools such as Tamassee in South Carolina. Members have sent care packages to soldiers in all

wars, from World War II to modern times. The DAR has also collaborated closely with the American Red Cross, founded by Clara Barton in the American Civil War (1861-1865). The historic preservation of buildings, sites and artifacts has also been a primary concern of the DAR, along with library maintenance across the nation. These and other activities and agendas are only a sample of the DAR's involvement in civic responsibility and engagement.

Women have organized local chapters of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution across the United States, its territories and internationally. 3,000 chapters of the DAR exist in the United States and internationally, with 190,000 members. These are non-profit and non-political. When women create a local chapter, it is a process that is under the umbrella of the National Society.

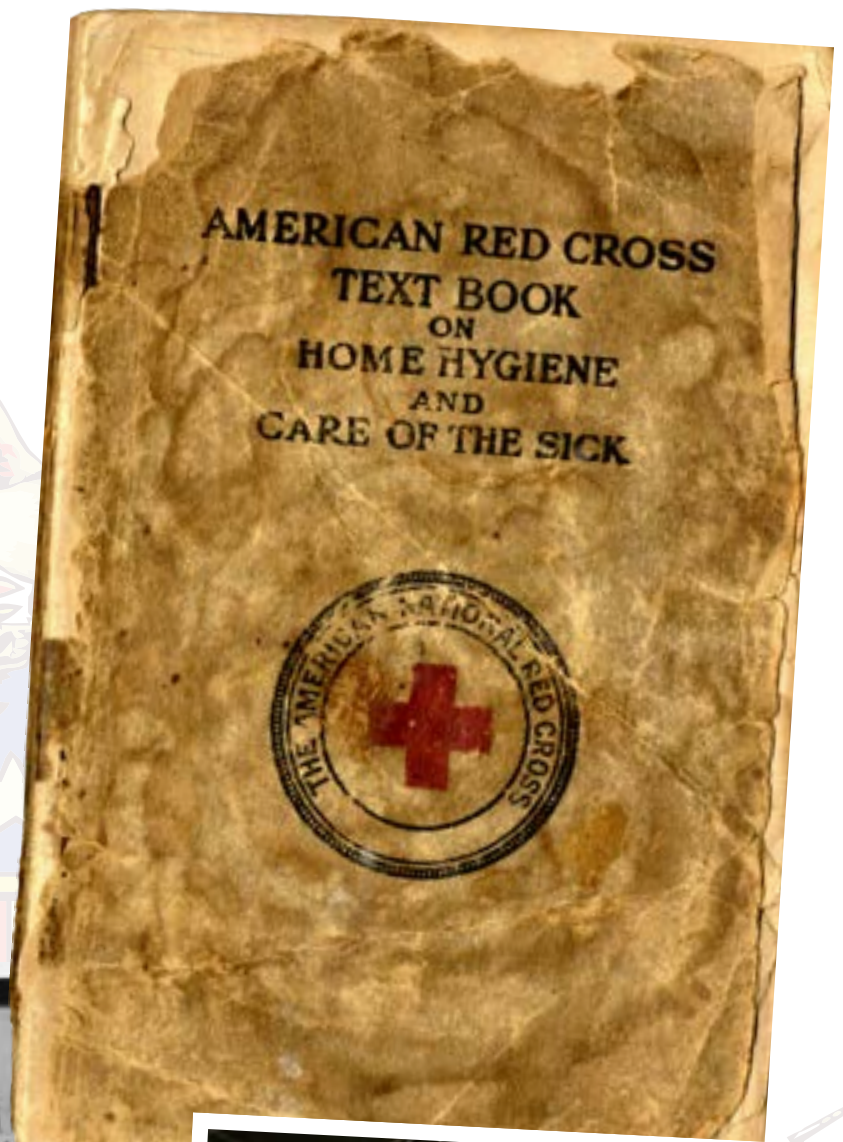
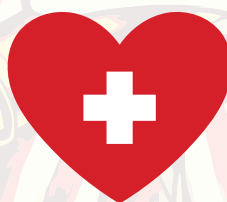


Photo used for the DAR magazine, the Dazzling Daughters and Women in American History. Included are images of the Sybil Ludington statue, Dr. Mary Walker postage stamp image, Red Cross nurse Jane Delano with other nurses, one unidentified female military officer (circa WWII) at DAR, one unidentified woman posed in a uniform (circa 1920s) and a book display featuring historic DAR publications. Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution.



Top: American Red Cross Textbook on Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick, by Jane A. Delano and Anne Hervey Strong. Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution. Below: "Daughters of the American Revolution - Mending Day at Camp Custer - 1919" and shows DAR members among soldiers and others in a tent-like building, mending clothes. Photo credit: Archives at Daughters of the American Revolution.

For example, when the Biloxi Chapter of the National Daughters of the American Revolution formally organized in April, 1950, a group of women who were interested in creating this organization met at Mrs. Lel J. Smith's home.

The state organizing chairperson, Mrs. L. P. Ritchey from Gulfport, attended the meeting, as well as the State Regent, Mrs. E. C. Brewer. Bobby Davidson Smith (Mrs. Lel J. Smith) became the organizing regent for the new chapter, pledging to uphold the objectives of the DAR.

This chapter, since its formation, has been active in education outreach with scholarships and student recognitions, preservation with Rosalie (a Natchez, Miss., home owned by the Mississippi Daughters). Other sites' activities, Constitution Week, Veterans Outreach, Native American education, Good Citizenship, History Programs, tree plantings, library work, genealogy studies and other accomplishments that epitomize the DAR programs.

The Biloxi Chapter is currently one of today's 66 chapters in Mississippi, continuing to highlight and educate about the American Revolution.



Members of the Biloxi Chapter, Mississippi Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Photo credit: Margaret Feeney Fish, Biloxi Chapter NSDAR

A CELEBRATION OF

Freedom

AT THE LA POINTE-KREBS

Writer | *James R. "Dan" Lee*

*A*s we approach America 250, "The Testament of Freedom" by Randall Thompson is a compilation of Thomas Jefferson's writings preceding the Declaration of Independence and the conditions that led to such a momentous act of rebellion. The conditions were set immediately following the Seven Years' War in Europe and known in America as the French and Indian War, which ended in 1763.

This war was extremely expensive for England, whose solution was to impose extreme taxes on its colonies. The Stamp Act, passed by Parliament in 1765, was the beginning of the "Road to War." By 1768, England occupied Boston to enforce the taxes. Frustration in Boston reached the boiling point in 1770 with the Boston Massacre. By 1773, the colonies would establish formal Committees of Correspondence to coordinate mutual support. The Boston Tea Party in December 1773 would cause England to respond in June of 1774 with the Coercive Acts. Followed by the first meeting of the Continental Congress.

Thomas Jefferson would publish his "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," addressed to the king from his "Faithful Subject." This book expounded on the colonists' grievances of Parliament violating the Colonial Charters, infringing on the laws of the various colonies, suppressing the colonies' free trade and sending troops to intimidate the citizens

It warned the king that he could lose his honor and his sovereignty and the colonists could lose their liberties, fortunes and lives.

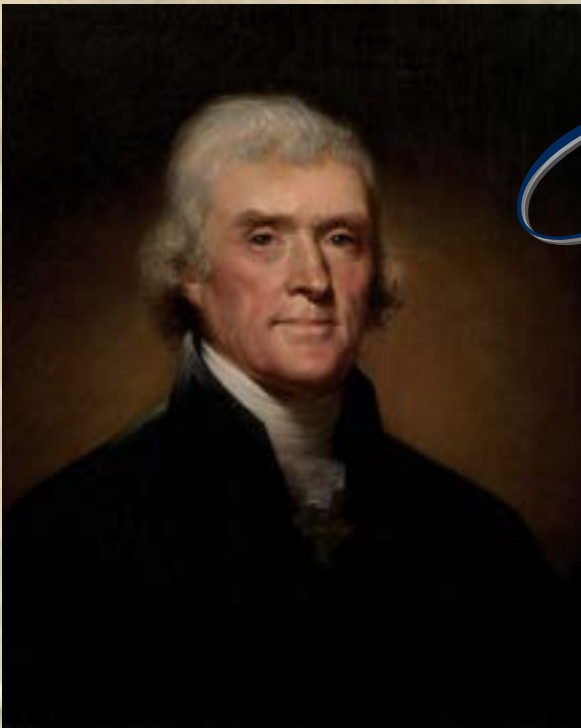
The composition is written in four passages. The first passage begins with the most profound statement, "The God who gave us life gave us liberty!"



The second and third passages are taken from Thomas Jefferson and John Dickinson's "The Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms," approved by the Continental Congress on July 6, 1775, and signed by John Hancock as President and Charles Thompson as Secretary.

Even though the American Revolution had already begun with the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, most of the colonies were striving to maintain their allegiance to England. Most felt that it was a Massachusetts problem. This was written shortly after the defeat of the colonists at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Finally, on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress would approve and sign the Declaration of Independence. Passage two begins "we have counted the cost."

Passage three begins "we fight not for glory." The passage also contains the most serious prayer, "we devoutly implore the Divine Goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict." The testament concludes with passage four taken from the words of Thomas Jefferson writing to his friend and fellow patriot John Adams on September 12, 1821. The letter expresses his hope for the cause of freedom spreading throughout the world. The fourth passage ends with "Life and Liberty."



Sea Shanties Narrative

"Sea Shanties" were popular tunes sung by sailors to de-stress from the rigors of life at sea and of war. Sailors were also given a round of "grog" for the same purpose daily and after a rather gruesome battle. If you are not familiar with "grog," it's a mixture of rum, water, lime juice and sugar. The men's ensemble singing sea shanties were portraying the crew of the USS Morris.

The USS Morris was a former British vessel that had been captured on the Mississippi River in 1778 but was sunk by a hurricane the following year. The replacement USS Morris was given to the Continental Navy by Governor General Bernardo Galvez of Spanish Louisiana to deal with British military shipping entering Lake Pontchartrain from the Mississippi Sound. Its executive officer, Pierre Rousseau, led the boarding party that successfully captured the British vessel "West Florida."

He was given command of the ship and promoted to captain. The ship was renamed the "Galveztown" and served as the flagship for General Bernardo Galvez during the siege of Mobile and Pensacola.

All men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

-Thomas Jefferson

The La Pointe-Krebs House and Museum hosts an annual cemetery tour that offers both education and a meaningful tribute. The patriotic 2025 event celebrated the families who lived through the era of the American Revolution.

La Pointe-Krebs Cemetery Stories

George Farragut's Legacy

The first character visitors to the cemetery tour encountered was George Farragut. George Farragut was born on the island of Minorca, a British Crown Colony in September of 1755, but of Spanish heritage.

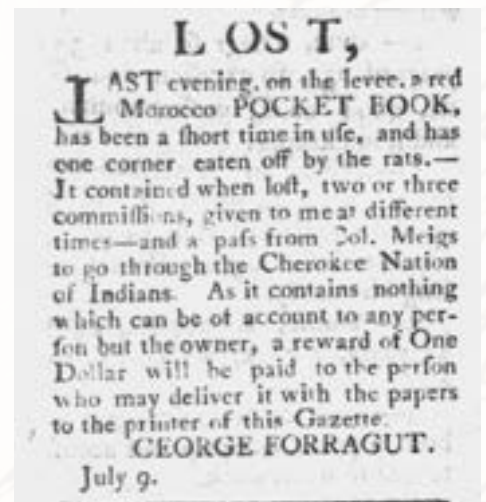
In early 1776, he sailed his merchant vessel to Santa Domingue and exchanged its cargo for weapons and powder and then proceeded to Charleston, S.C.

He was soon commissioned as a lieutenant aboard the Vixen, a 12-gun sloop. He would serve as a naval officer in the battles of both Savannah and Charleston, serve as a Prisoner of War, be released in a prisoner exchange and go on to serve as an artillery and cavalry officer until the war's end. After the war, George would marry Elizabeth Shine of North Carolina, and move west into Tennessee to raise a family. However, the family would move to New Orleans after George returned to Naval service.

From 1810 to 1811, he was the sailing master of an expedition sent by Governor Claiborne of Louisiana to secure the disputed lands around Pascagoula from the Spanish. His daughter, Nancy, died while they were still in New Orleans. George would die at his home on the Pascagoula River on June 4, 1817, exhausted from a life of service to his adopted country.



Farragut's Flag - A 13 star flag which was flown onboard the USS Hartford at the Capture of New Orleans in April 1862. The Hartford was commanded by Flag Officer David Farragut and it belonged to him. The flag was first owned by his father George Farragut (1755-1817), a veteran of the Revolution and the War of 1812.



*July, 1805, Orleans Gazette
Major George Farragut lost his pass for travel through Cherokee Nation.*

Hugo Ernestus Krebs & Marie Ann Chauvin

Hugo Ernestus Krebs and his second wife, Marie Ann Chauvin de Joyeuse of Kaskaskia, New France, thought that the turmoil gripping the other British colonies along the East Coast would not affect their lives. Hugo had inherited the land from his first wife, Arie Josephine Simon de la Pointe, the daughter of Joseph Simon de la Pointe, a French Naval Officer. Following the Seven Years' War, their home on the Pascagoula River became part of British West Florida.

Consequently, Hugo and his prospective son-in-law, a former French Naval Officer, Antoine Narbonne, took the Oath of Allegiance to his Britannic Majesty, King George III, on October 2, 1764. Some of their neighbors, such as the Rilleaux's, with strong family and financial ties to New Orleans, moved into Spanish Louisiana rather than execute the British Oath. The Krebs' home was ideally situated between British Mobile and Spanish New Orleans, allowing them to openly trade with both primary markets. Due to the strong French and Spanish influences in West Florida, the British Parliament decided not to impose the same coercive taxes there as they did in the other colonies.

The British established the capital of West Florida in Pensacola, although the colony's wealth resided in Natchez. Many British loyalists, such as James Willing, a friend of the Governor, BG Frederick Haldimand, would accept land grants to establish plantations in the Natchez area. BG Haldimand visited the Krebs while en route to visit his property in Natchez. The General found the Krebs' hospitality quite refreshing in comparison to the Spaniards who remained in Pensacola. His friend Mr. Willing would find the glamour of New Orleans much more appealing than the life of a plantation owner.

While in New Orleans, Mr. Willing made friends with Mr. Oliver Pollock, a quite successful merchant, also a native of Pennsylvania. Pollock's family had many land holdings and businesses throughout the colonies. Unfortunately, Mr. Willing's businesses in Natchez failed, forcing him to return to Pennsylvania in disgrace.



Marie Ann Krebs also preferred the luxury of New Orleans and continued to suggest that Hugo should retire, move to New Orleans, enjoy the fruits of his labor and turn his affairs over to his son Joseph. Hugo responded that it was not a good time. A growing sense of rebellion was sweeping through the colonies. Although West Florida remained loyal to King George, Hugo feared that their involvement was inevitable.

The Krebs moved to New Orleans due to Hugo's failing health, where he died just two months after the 13 Colonies formally declared their independence from Britain. Hugo's fears would manifest themselves a few months after his death. General Bernardo Galvez would become the Governor of Spanish Louisiana and begin clandestine support for the revolution in coordination with Oliver Pollock, serving as supply agent for the Continental Congress. James Willing would receive a commission from the Continental Congress and lead an expedition down the Mississippi to New Orleans, raiding Loyalist plantations.

Marie Jeanne Krebs Narbonne & Anne Narbonne Grimarest

The story continues with Marie Jeanne Krebs Narbonne and her daughter, Anne. The war reached them in 1779 following Galvez's seizure of Fort Bute at Manchac on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Marie Jeanne was very worried about the Spanish attacking Mobile since her husband, Antoine, was the Mobile militia commander. Instead of fighting against the Spanish, many local militia members joined with the militias from Louisiana to drive the British out of West Florida. Marie Jeanne's brother-in-law, Jean Francois de Gradenigo, was a member of the Louisiana Militia that served with General Bernardo Galvez at Ft. Bute and Ft. Richmond in Baton Rouge.

Antoine Narbonne had been a French Naval officer and Spain had officially entered the war as an ally of France; his decision was quite simple. He formally pledged his allegiance to King Charles III of Spain, eight days after the British surrendered Mobile on March 14, 1780. His brother-in-law, Joseph Krebs and his young friend Pierre Trouillet, the fiancé of his daughter Isabelle, took the oath as well.

Anne Narbonne would meet a dashing Spanish officer, Don Enrique Grimarest, who was named to be Governor of the Mobile District for heroism during the capture of Mobile by General Galvez. Although quite young, she requested her parents' permission to marry the young Spanish Officer before General Galvez moved to Pensacola. Her father and Pierre Trouillet had been asked to join the Spanish fleet to ferry troops to Pensacola on their sloops.

Don Enrique Grimarest felt certain that General Galvez would have no problem in taking Pensacola. Apparently, he and General Galvez had a well-informed spy that provided them with detailed information on British positions and movements. This spy forewarned the Spanish of the pending British counterattack near the Rochon plantation on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. The Rochons were cousins to the Narbottes, with both families having Joseph Simon de la Pointe as an ancestor.

Anne would marry Don Enrique and live at the LaPointe-Krebs house. Sadly, she died childless within two years. Galvez would seize Pensacola with the help of many friends and relatives of the Narbonne family.



Anne Narbonne, and her husband, Enrique Grimarest, now the Governor of Mobile, had the house "converted into a fortified residence." It is after this that it gained its title "The Old Spanish Fort." It stayed in the Krebs family for generations.



Petit Jean & Vincent Rilleaux

Our story concludes with Petit Jean, the spy that Madame Grimarest mentioned and Vincent Rilleaux, the hero of Manchac. Petit Jean was an enslaved cattle driver in the service of Mr. Lusser of Mobile. Petit Jean heard the British were offering slaves their freedom, but he was skeptical of British promises. His experience with the French and Spanish treatment of slaves had been much more positive. With that in mind, he decided to place his allegiance with General Galvez.

General Galvez knew the value of good intelligence. Vincent Rilleaux attributed Galvez's success at Manchac to the maps of Fort Bute provided by Galvez's father-in-law, Gilbert Antonie de St. Maxent. General Galvez knew that the support of the local populace and their knowledge of the enemy was vital to military success on the battlefield. Petit Jean's story began in May 1777 when he was driving cattle across the flatlands north of Mobile. Petit Jean encountered an encampment of Chickasaw, Creek and Choctaw warriors there to negotiate with the British to defend West Florida from possible Spanish attack.

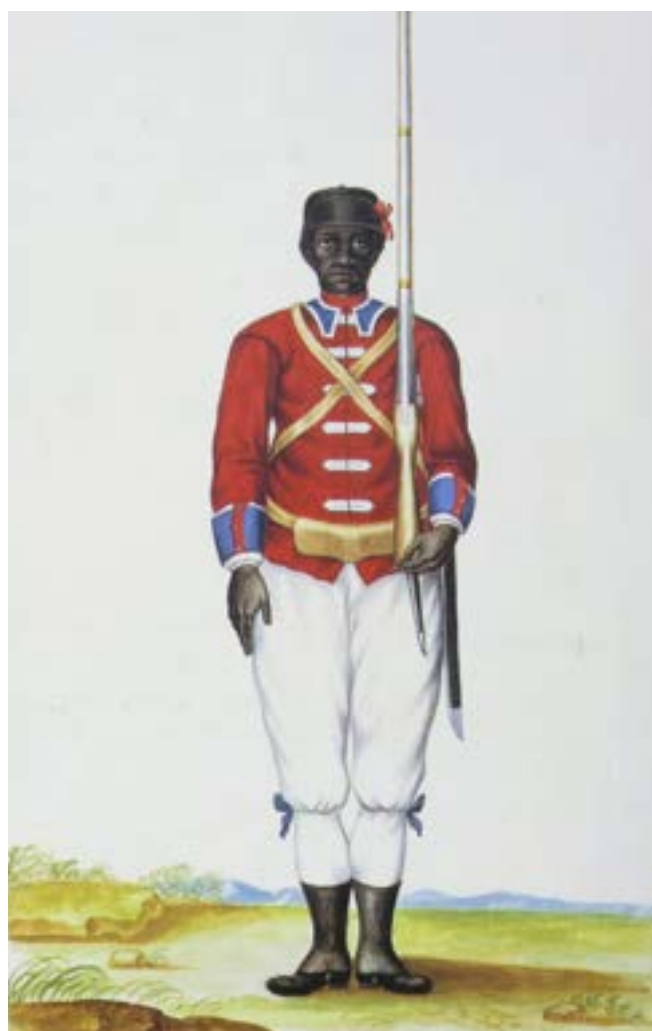
He passed this information to the local militia, knowing that any large gathering of warriors was a bad omen.

With that, his career as a Spanish spy had begun. He became a trusted spy for General Galvez and a message courier. After the Spanish secured Mobile, Colonel Grimarest would ask him about local knowledge and opinions as well as British and native warrior movements. Petit Jean, as courier, brought the message to New Orleans to muster Vincent Rilleaux's Regiment.

Vincent Rilleaux is best known for his exploits in capturing British vessels on the Mississippi and leading the Amite River Ambush. His story as both a ship captain and an infantry soldier in the New Orleans Regiment is typical of many residents who had families and property to protect.

Petit Jean would have the honor of commanding a Company of Free Black soldiers during the siege of Pensacola to ensure his freedom and become a true part of the greater Mobile community. Petit Jean and his wife were lost to history after the Spanish Census of 1786, where he is listed as a free Mulato.

Vincent Rilleaux would go on to have a large, prominent family in New Orleans. If you have ever eaten at the famous Brennan's restaurant in New Orleans, you have been in the Rilleaux house.



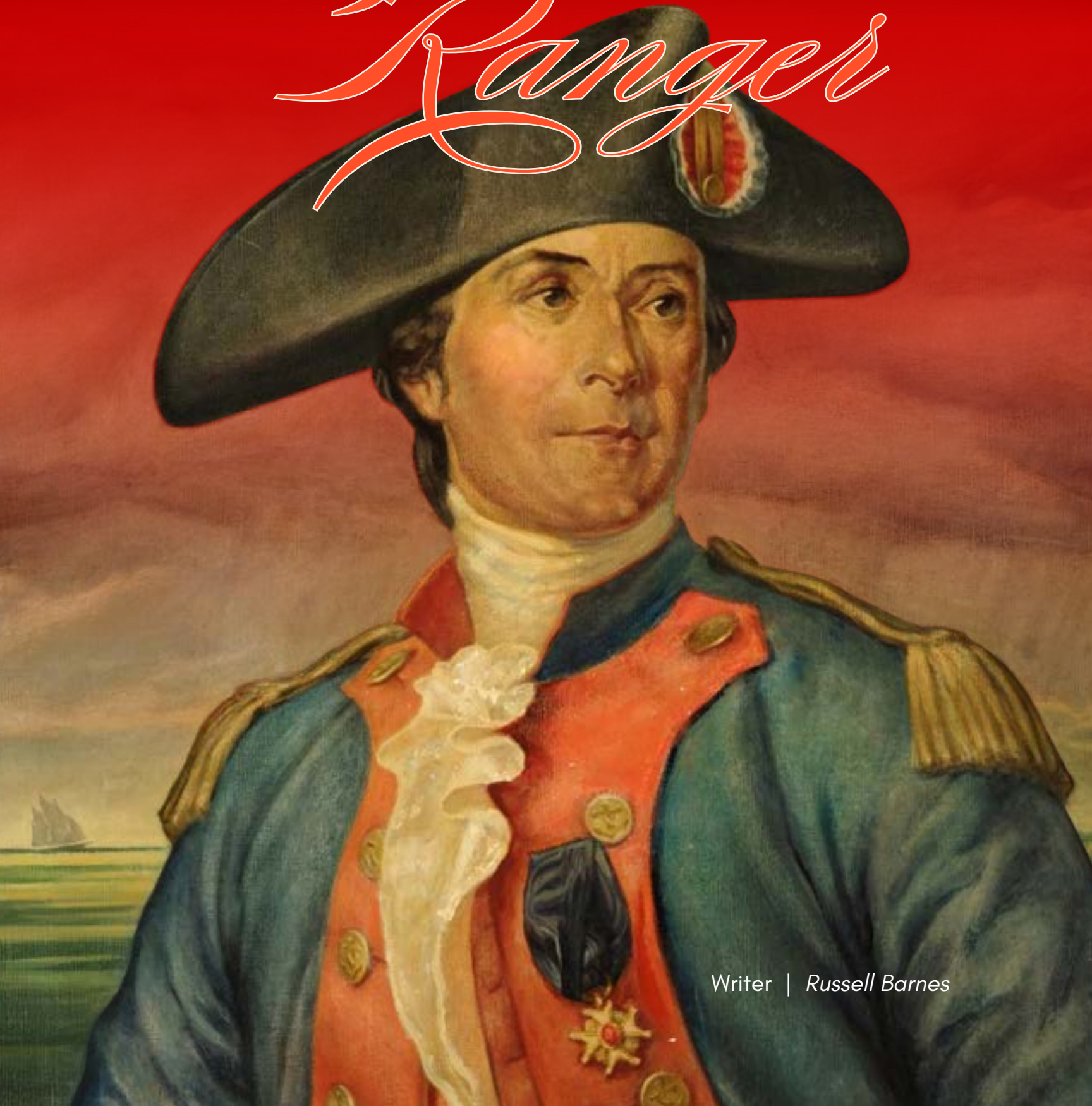
Uniforms for the Batallon de Morenos, drawn by Jose Nicolas Escaler in 1763. Image courtesy General Archive of the Indies of Seville

The Battalion of Free Blacks of Havana (Fusileros del Batallón de Morenos Libres de La Habana) played an important role in Bernardo de Gálvez's army during the 1781 Siege of Pensacola. These free Afro-Cuban militia helped Spain defeat the British and strengthen control of the Gulf Coast.



INNOVATIVE

John Paul Jones and the *Ranger*



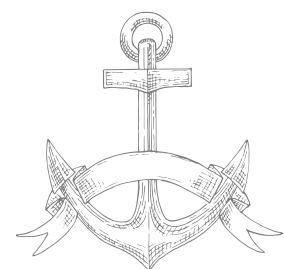
Writer | Russell Barnes

Early in 1777, Portsmouth's John Langdon built the sloop of war, known as the "Ranger," for the Continental Navy. On July 1, 1777, command was given to Captain John Paul Jones, an adventurous Scot and future American naval hero. The Ranger was a three-masted sloop of war, mounting 18 cannons.

Once he had obtained a crew and provisions, Jones sailed Ranger for France on November 1, 1777, carrying dispatches telling of General Burgoyne's surrender at the Battle of Saratoga to the American commissioners to the court of Louis XVI in Paris. During the voyage, Ranger captured two British prizes. Ranger arrived at Nantes, France, on December 2, where Jones sold the prizes and delivered the news of the victory at Saratoga to Benjamin Franklin. On February 14, 1778, Ranger received the first official salute to the new American flag, given by the French fleet at Quiberon Bay.

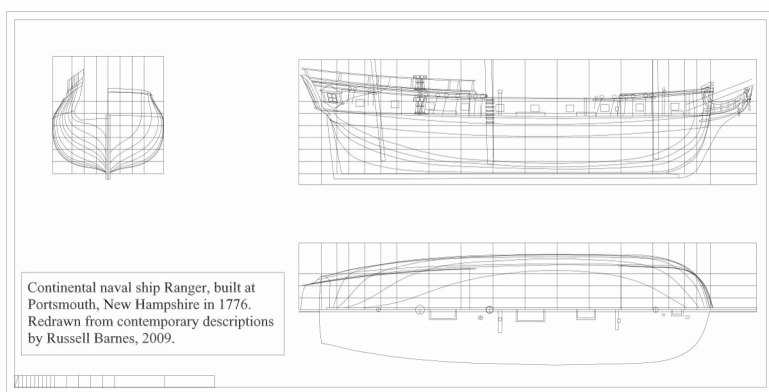
Jones petitioned Benjamin Franklin to help him refit Ranger while at Nantes. Jones knew that Ranger's sails and rigging were in very poor condition and that her bottom needed cleaning. She also needed more ballast to improve her sailing qualities. Funds were obtained for this purpose. Ranger sailed from Brest on April 10, 1778, for the Irish Sea and four days later captured a prize near the Scilly Isles. On April 17, she took another prize and sent her back to France.

"Great Encouragement for Seamen," broadside advertisement, 1777. Issued during the American Revolutionary War, this recruitment notice calls for volunteers to serve aboard the ship Ranger under the command of John Paul Jones. The document also references a Congressional resolution signed by John Hancock, offering financial incentives to encourage enlistment in the Continental naval service. Courtesy of Russell Barnes.

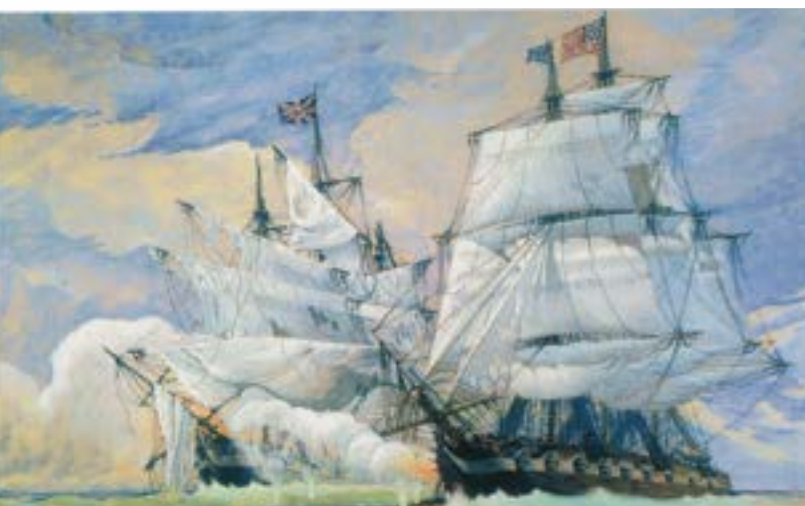





The Ranger in Battle.



Line drawings of the Ranger designed by Russell Barnes, 2009.



The Ranger versus the HMS Drake.

Taking prizes was profitable, but Jones had some other plans. The British had raided American towns during the war and Jones wanted to do the same thing to British coastal towns. One of his plans was to raid the port city of Whitehaven on the Irish Sea. With a boatload of sailors, he personally led the raid, creating a panic among the citizens. Jones and his crew put two sets of artillery out of commission and burned several small boats in the harbor. It was not a great victory, but it showed the British citizens that they were not immune to the effects of war.

Back on the Ranger, Jones made an attempt to kidnap the Earl of Selkirk in Scotland. Jones planned to trade the wealthy landowner for American prisoners held in England, but the Earl was out of town. Jones led a landing party on St. Mary's Isle and allowed a small group of sailors to approach the Selkirk home and demand the family silver. They were met by Lady Selkirk, who handled the situation brilliantly. The robbery was accomplished with civility, with the Rangers' men sharing a glass of wine with Lady Selkirk. Jones later purchased the Selkirk family silver and returned it to Lady Selkirk with an apology.

With several British ships searching for Ranger, Captain Jones sailed to Carrickfergus, Ireland, to tempt the 20-gun HMS Drake to give battle. Drake's captain accepted the challenge, taking his ship out against the winds and tides. After a battle that lasted an hour, the heavily damaged Drake struck her colors, giving Jones another valuable prize. There were 40 British sailors killed in the action, while Ranger lost only two men. Jones now had 200 prisoners that he was later able to trade for American prisoners. After making temporary repairs, Jones cruised further in Irish waters before returning to Brest on May 8, 1778.

The adventures of John Paul Jones and the Ranger are not as famous as his battle the following year in the Bon Homme Richard against the HMS Serapis, but the small victories in the Ranger are now part of the legend that forms the basis of the United States Navy's history.

FROM ARCHIVES TO ACCESS

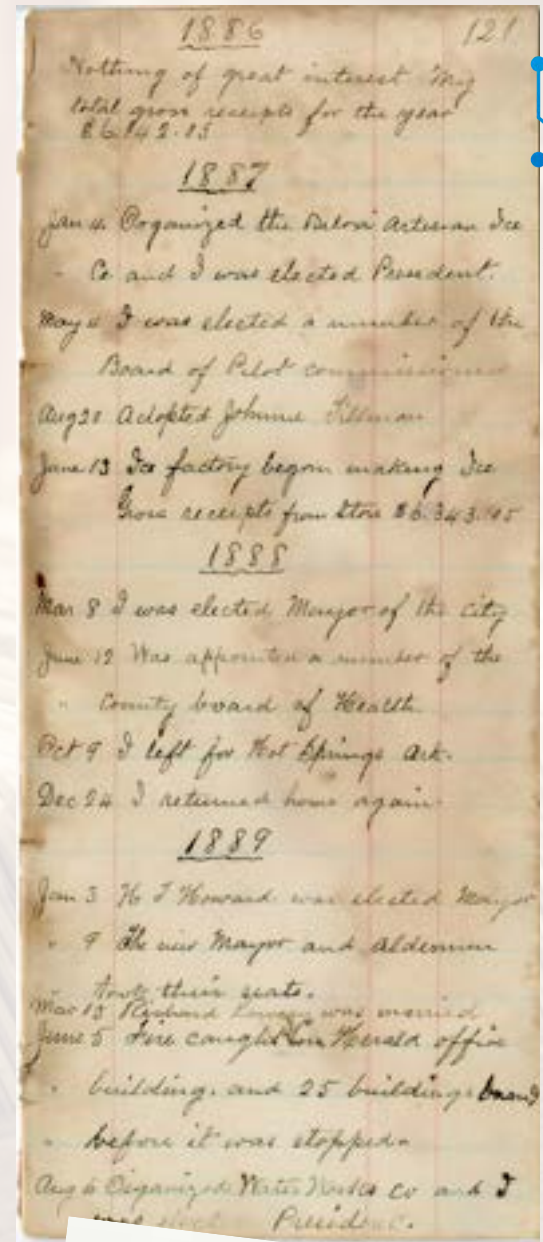
Writer | Sarah Chrisler-Ruskey

The Local History & Genealogy Department of the Harrison County Library System houses collections in numerous formats that allow researchers and patrons to learn about the past of our Gulf Coast. The items vary greatly in type and scope and present challenges in storage and accessibility. In the past, in order to study or view items in these collections, many of which are fragile or in a format, such as microfilm, that requires special machinery to view, researchers and patrons had to physically visit our Biloxi location to search with the assistance of library staff. Journalists and genealogists alike spent lengthy stretches of time in front of microfilm machines hunting for the next big breakthrough.

In order to both help preserve fragile materials and make accessing them easier for library users, the library system has prioritized securing funding, equipment and staff capacity for digitizing collections. Grants from the American Library Association, the Mississippi Humanities Council and the Mississippi Digital Humanities Hub have all advanced the work of preserving and sharing materials in the last five years.

In celebration of the 250th Anniversary of American Independence, the America250 Mississippi Grant Program, administered by the Mississippi Humanities Council, invited communities and institutions to join the commemoration initiative through Legacy Grants, designed for “large-scale projects that enhance a community’s capacity to explore and promote local history, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations” (from america250.ms/grants).

The Local History Department of the Harrison County Library System was awarded one such grant for “The Power of Place: Preserving and Sharing Gilded Age History of the Gulf Coast.” This award will fund a digitization project and programming with local scholars on the historical period the late 19th century when the foundation of the coast’s civic and



Top: Barq's pic- The original Barq's Bottling plant on Keller Avenue. This location continued operation until 1937, when the plant on Lameuse St. Center: Diary- This image is a page from the Diary of Captain John Walker, vol. 1. Captain John Walker was a steamboat captain turned businessman. His diaries document the various events of daily coast life. In the image, he notes the major events, such as becoming Mayor and establishing the Biloxi Artesian Ice Co. Photo credit: LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System

commercial infrastructure was laid. For staff and researchers investigating historical events, local newspaper archives are invaluable. To vastly improve such searching, the library made digitizing newspaper microfilms a priority for this project. Scanning early copies of the Daily Herald from 1888-1905 will mean that instead of scrutinizing microfilm, library users will be able to access the collection from a keyword-searchable website anywhere they can get online. E.W. Suarez, Local History & Genealogy Librarian, said, “The Digital age has changed the accessibility to information. This includes the positive and negative aspects of human existence. This knowledge can provide much-needed context for the lives of those who came before us.” The archive’s microfilm collection consists of 1,823 reels, and this project provides for 35 reels to be processed. The collection will be digitized as funding allows.

Besides this advancement in providing access to collections, the America250 project will also allow library staff to digitize rare and often fragile individual items that can currently only be consulted in person at the library, such as the diary of John Walker, former steamboat captain and mayor of Biloxi. Items in this phase of the grant will be accessible from the library’s website via the online platform, Montage.

The third component of the grant digitization project will add items to the Urban Archive database. This tool displays historical images of geographical locations in a map format, allowing users to take a walk through history and learn about an area, either in person or remotely. This can be used to create engaging walking tours and give patrons a new perspective on the evolution of the built environment of the coast.

All of these digitization efforts help users better connect with our archive and additionally secure precious local history collections against natural disasters or other damage. Library Director, Sarah Crisler-Ruskey, stated, “We are extremely pleased to be able to participate in the America250 celebrations by furthering our mission of providing access to information to our patrons. There are so many hidden treasures that we will now be able to share with patrons with these tools. We are also looking forward to bringing people together to learn about and discuss local history with local experts.”

Top: Cataloging a collection of local photographs. Photo credit: Chelsea Prince.

Center: Labeling a collection of local memories. Photo credit: Chelsea Prince.

Bottom: The Daily Herald, July 2, 1902. A scanned newspaper project. Photo credit: LH&G Department/Harrison County Library System



INNOVATION

Rising from the Gulf

HOW MISSISSIPPI'S BLUE ECONOMY IS DRIVING JOBS, RESILIENCE AND A GLOBAL FUTURE

Writer | Joseph Graben

J imagine waking up one morning to find the Gulf of America gone. Along with it would disappear fisheries, shipbuilding, port operations, shipping and the inland industries dependent upon them. Tourism, defense, offshore energy and refinery jobs would vanish as well. Entire communities built around the water would lose the industries, culture and livelihoods that define them. This is the blue economy, the economic engine powered by life along the coast. It is reflected in the names of our towns like Ocean Springs, Gulfport, Waveland and Long Beach. It is found in the seafood traditions that shape the coast's identity: gumbo simmering on the stove, blackened redfish on a plate and shrimp po'boys shared across family tables.

Today, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is proving that the blue economy is not only a reflection of its heritage but also the foundation of its future.

Led by the University of Southern Mississippi, the Gulf Blue Initiative brings together research scientists, federal agencies, industry partners and entrepreneurs to further develop the region's competitive advantages while sustainably growing the blue economy. By leveraging the coast's geography, maritime resources and deep-rooted maritime culture, Mississippi is positioning itself as a global leader in blue technology and coastal innovation.

Built by the Gulf. Engineered for the World.



Leidos, a major defense contractor for the Navy, has its uncrewed surface vessel division headquartered in Long Beach.



Ocean Aero, the developer and manufacturer of the world's only surface and subsurface autonomous vessel, is located in the Port of Gulfport.



HII Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula builds many of the US Navy's most advanced ships.

REVIVING A LEGACY. BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Innovation along the coast extends beyond shipbuilding and defense. Once recognized as the oyster capital of the world, the Mississippi Gulf Coast's oyster industry has suffered devastating setbacks from hurricanes and freshwater inundation caused by openings of the Bonnet Carré Spillway.

At USM's Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center (TCMAC), researchers and industry partners are working to revive one of Mississippi's most historic industries: oysters.



USM is working with Oak Island Oyster in Ocean Springs on their development of an innovative new off-bottom oyster production system.



USM is building a new oyster hatchery to help the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources support stock enhancement of oysters in the Mississippi Sound for harvesting.



These oysters are also being used in the development of living shorelines that strengthen coastal resilience and improve the water quality along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



**CLEAN WATER. STRONGER COAST.
FRESH OYSTERS. THRIVING COMMUNITIES.
SUPPORTING OUR COAST'S TOURISM INDUSTRY.**

GROWING THE FUTURE: THE MARINE AQUACULTURE DEMONSTRATION HUB

Through support from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA), TCMAC is also developing a Marine Aquaculture Demonstration Hub focused on growing small to medium-sized aquaculture enterprises across the region. The initiative is designed to accelerate business development, create and sustain jobs and provide a stable supply of safe, healthy, locally produced seafood.



Provide access to infrastructure and expertise to test production technologies on a medium-to-large scale.



Provide marketing and business mentoring, including evaluating investment and regulatory risks for commercial scale production.



Support technology transfer and commercialization.



Provide workforce training.

OCEAN SPRINGS | GULFPORT | WAVELAND | LONG BEACH

25 | Summer 2026

Stronger Together by Nature



Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

INVESTING IN PEOPLE. BUILDING TOMORROW.

The Hub will equip the next generation through certificate-based training and hands-on learning in:

- Hatchery techniques & larval rearing
- Biosecurity & disease management
- Engineering design & life-support systems
- Data analysis & regulatory compliance
- Aquaculture entrepreneurship

Internships, graduate programs and high school externships will open doors for students and strengthen our workforce for decades to come.

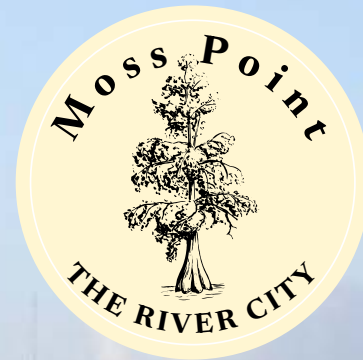
“The future of the blue economy is not somewhere on the horizon. It is already emerging from the waters of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.”



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

in Moss Point:

A Feasibility Study For Flood Resilience



Writer | *Julia Mudd and Steve Parker*

Moss Point, known as the River City, sits between the Pascagoula River, the Grand Bay Estuary, the Gulf and the Escatawpa River. This humid subtropical landscape faces a range of hydrological and coastal hazards intensified by a changing climate. Impermeable surfaces and the loss of forested land have contributed to persistent nuisance flooding. Even modest storms can send water into yards, block roads and access to essential services and isolate entire neighborhoods. In this small, underserved city—already hit hard by Hurricane Katrina and subsequent storms—resources to address chronic flooding have remained limited.

To explore new solutions, the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) partnered with the Mississippi State Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS), Moffatt & Nichol and Waggonner & Ball to evaluate a nature-based strategy gaining traction across the Gulf Coast: community stormwater parks. These parks provide green space and recreation while also capturing stormwater, improving water quality and reducing neighborhood flooding. Referencing residents' reports of drainage issues, GBNERR identified two promising sites in Moss Point: a vacant four-acre lot north of Khayat Memorial Park and a three-acre vacant lot south of St. Joseph's Church.

River Walk Park, Moss Point



“Nature-based solutions are not simply environmental projects. They are investments in the future resilience of coastal communities.”



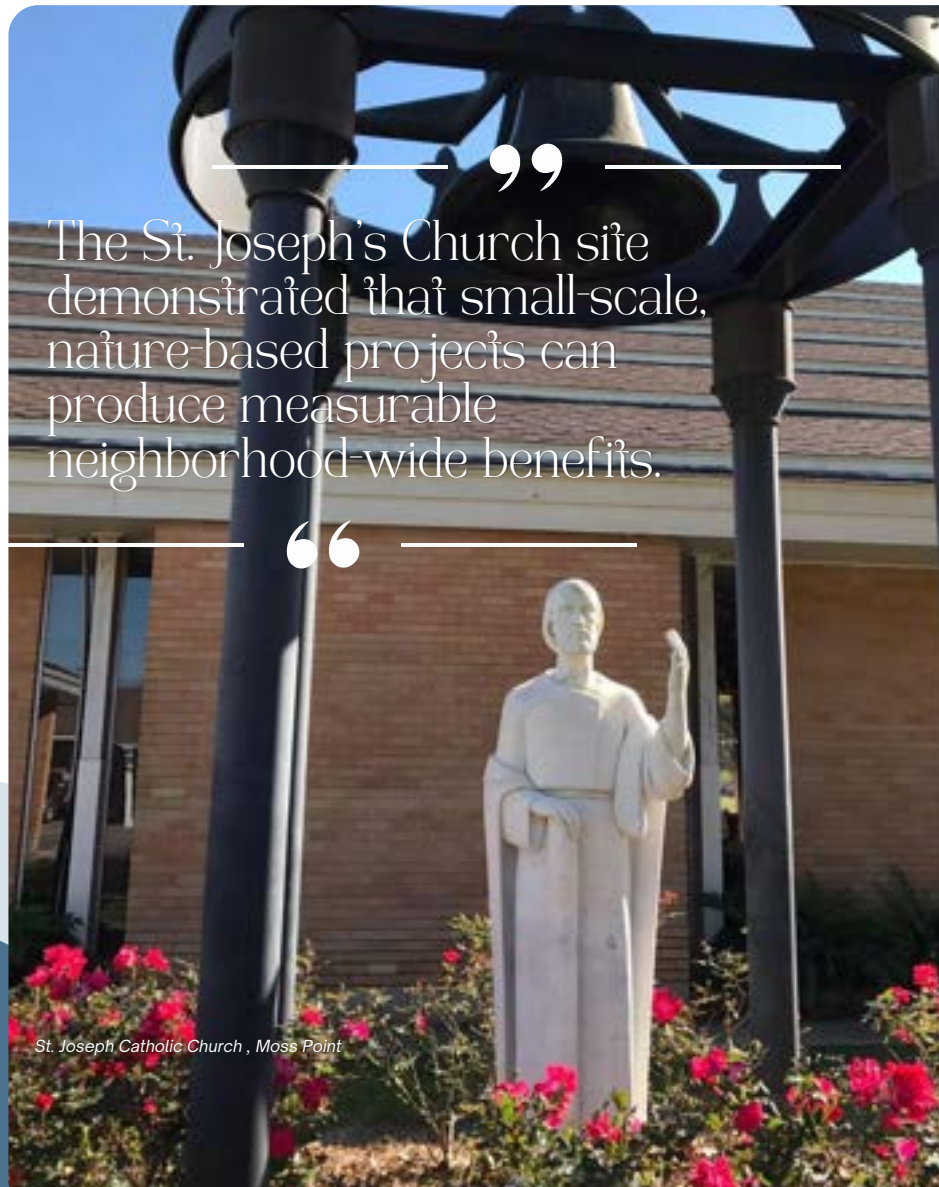
Moffatt & Nichol and Waggonner & Ball conducted a hydraulic analysis of the watershed to identify conveyance issues and assess whether stormwater could be effectively routed to either site. For this early-stage planning, HEC-RAS 2D—a free hydrodynamic modeling program developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—offered a practical way to test ideas without requiring detailed survey data or large budgets. Using publicly available inputs, the team simulated how water would move through Moss Point’s neighborhoods during a typical 1-year, 24-hour storm.



Each site offered different opportunities for water storage, habitat restoration and community access. For the larger Khayat Park lot, the model showed that flood-reduction benefits were mostly contained within the park itself. In contrast, the smaller St. Joseph’s Church lot produced measurable neighborhood-scale benefits: the model predicted a 1-to-2-inch reduction in nearby residential areas during frequent storms. While that may sound modest, in neighborhoods where water routinely pools at doorsteps, even an inch or two can determine whether a street remains passable. In the neighborhood directly adjacent to the church lot, the benefits were even more pronounced with a 2- to 3-inch reduction during the same storm event.



Building on these results, GCCDS is now designing a stormwater park at the St. Joseph’s Church site to match the shortage capacity identified in the modeled concept. Preliminary modeling was also conducted for additional vacant lots across the city, exploring how optimal flood reduction could be achieved by combining improved stormwater conveyance with expanded storage areas. These early simulations showed that several alternative sites could deliver even greater flood-reduction benefits when combined with the St. Joseph’s Church lot, highlighting the broader potential of nature-based projects across Moss Point.



“The St. Joseph’s Church site demonstrated that small-scale, nature-based projects can produce measurable neighborhood-wide benefits.”



**CLEANER WATER.
STRONGER
NEIGHBORHOODS.
HEALTHIER COAST.**



Stormwater parks offer more than flood storage. They help remove non-point source pollution, improve water quality, create new public spaces,

restore habitat and reconnect communities with the natural history of their landscape. In Moss Point, these projects would enhance ecosystem services that matter deeply to coastal residents: flood protection, erosion reduction, cleaner water and healthier wetlands. For a community that has long carried the burden of disproportionate flooding impacts, these benefits represent meaningful steps toward coastal resilience.



The Moss Point project also illustrates a broader lesson for coastal communities: perfect data is not a prerequisite for planning nature-based solutions. Tools like HEC-RAS 2D allow teams to

explore ideas early, test assumptions and identify which projects are worth pursuing. For communities with limited resources—especially underserved or rural areas—that flexibility is invaluable.

KREOLE ELEMENTARY STORMWATER PROJECT

The Kreole Elementary Rain Garden Project is an existing, leading example of how nature-based infrastructure can address chronic flooding while strengthening community resilience and environmental stewardship. Installed in partnership with GBNERR as part of the River City Flood Ready Initiative, the project features rain gardens and bioswales designed to capture, slow and filter stormwater runoff on-site. Layers of engineered soils, gravel and native vegetation reduce strain on aging drainage infrastructure, prevent water from entering school buildings and nearby streets and improve downstream water quality.

Early results show measurable reductions in local flooding. For students, the project creates a safer school environment and provides hands-on learning opportunities in science and sustainability. For the surrounding community, it helps protect homes and roadways, enhances neighborhood aesthetics and demonstrates practical, scalable solutions that can be replicated across coastal Mississippi.



NUISANCE FLOODING IN MOSS POINT



WATERSHED GOALS FOR MOSS POINT



**Reduce
Flooding**



**Improve
Water
Quality**



**Restore
Habitats**



**Strengthen
Communities**



**Built a More
Resilient
Future**



*Left: Vacant lot to the north of Khayat Memorial Park.
Right: Vacant lot to the south of St. Joseph's Catholic Church.*



NATURAL



featuring

Captain Kendall Smith



Writer | *RoxAnn Rankin Wicker*

Along the quiet bends of the Pascagoula River, there is a feeling that settles in—something unhurried, something whole. Flowing freely for 80 miles from its inland confluence to the Gulf of America, this river remains the longest unimpeded in the lower 48 states, carrying with it a sense of continuity that is becoming increasingly rare. Here, the landscape speaks softly. Alligators move just beneath the surface, barely disturbing the water, while pelicans, ospreys, herons, egrets and bald eagles drift overhead. Along the banks, native plants, wild lilies and swamp iris, among them, bring a quiet elegance to the swamp, shifting gently with the seasons.

It is within this setting that Eco-Tours of South Mississippi offers an invitation inward. As an official Outpost partner of the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, the experience becomes more than a simple excursion; it becomes a connection to a place, a story and to the natural character of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Each guided tour, whether two hours or a full day, moves with intention through cypress-lined waters and open marsh, allowing guests to witness the river as it reveals itself, slowly and without pretense.

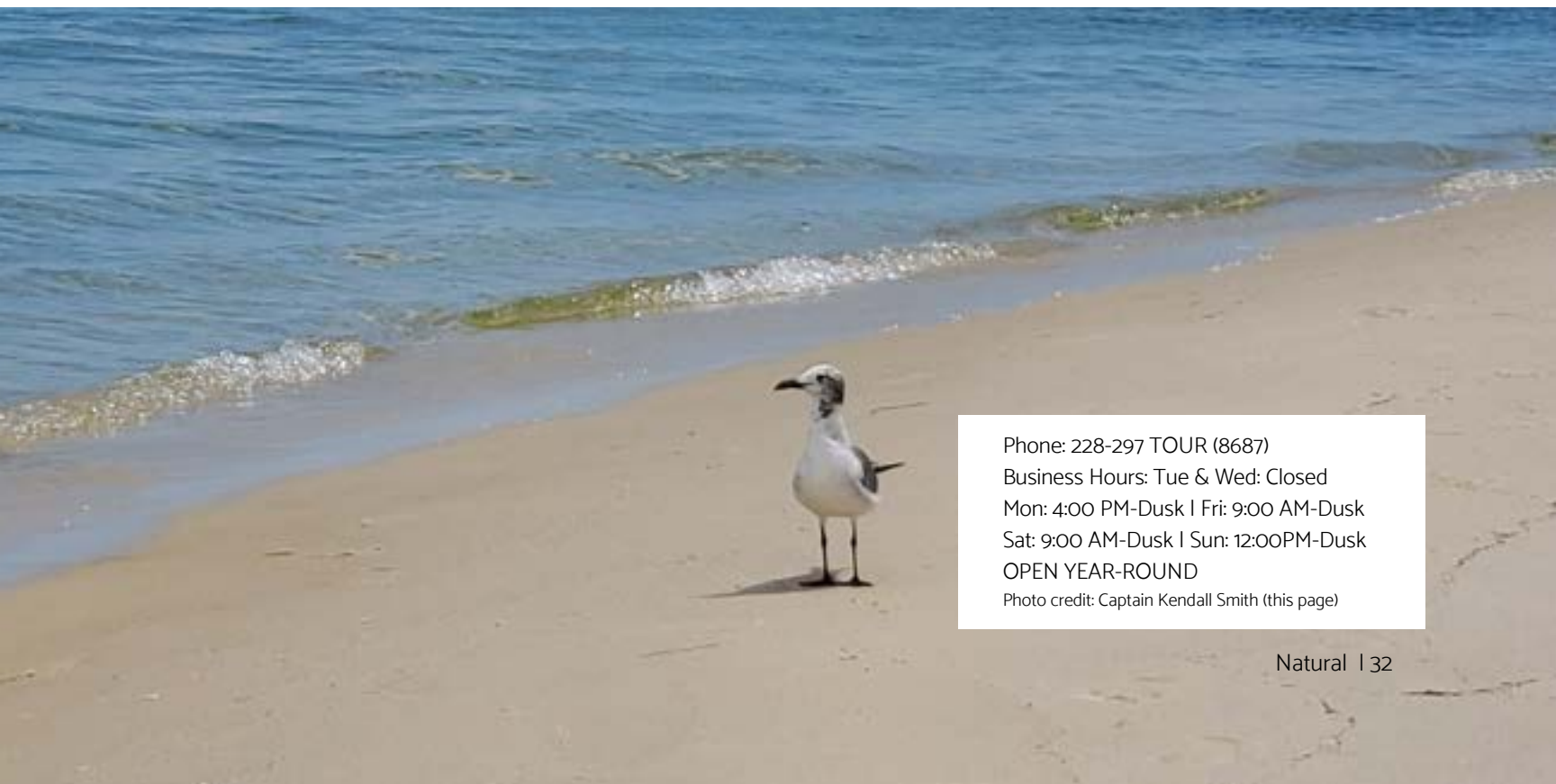
From a home base in Gautier, Captain Kendall Smith brings a steady, familiar presence to the journey. Raised in Jackson County, she understands the quiet importance of these



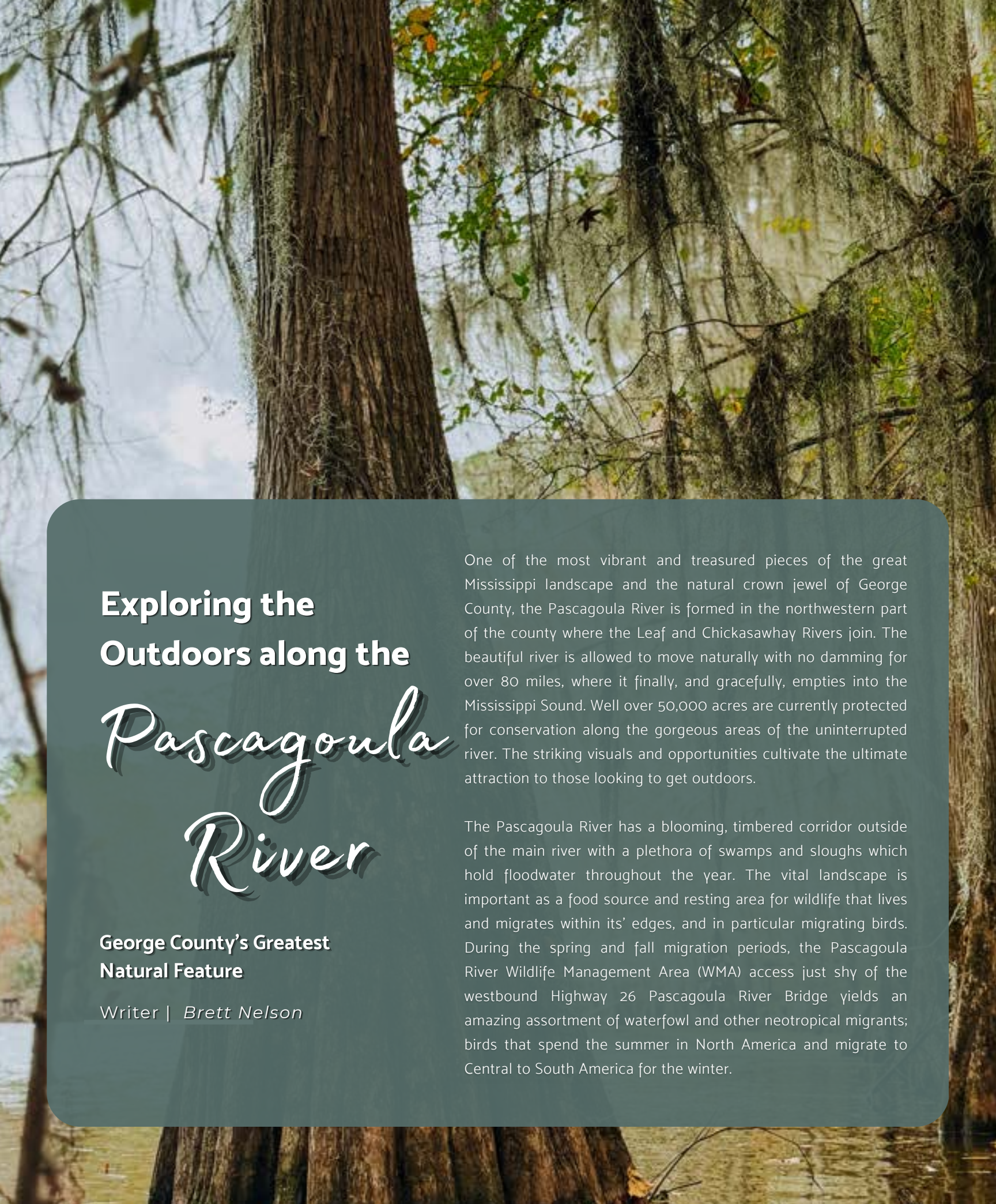
waterways—the way they hold a memory, shape a community and offer something restorative to those who enter them. Aboard a small pontoon vessel, designed for just a handful of guests, the experience remains personal. There is space to pause, to observe and to follow whatever draws the eye, whether it's the stillness of the water, the movement of wildlife or the changing light as the day begins to soften.

Recognized by publications such as Forbes and USA Today, Eco-Tours of South Mississippi continues to grow with care, holding true to the authenticity that defines it. With plans to expand into coastal island excursions and further wildlife experiences, the path forward remains in the same simple idea: to offer access to something real.

Along the Pascagoula, nothing asks to be rushed. The light lingers a little longer, the water carries its own quiet rhythm and the experience leaves behind something lasting, subtle, steady and deeply felt.



Phone: 228-297 TOUR (8687)
Business Hours: Tue & Wed: Closed
Mon: 4:00 PM-Dusk | Fri: 9:00 AM-Dusk
Sat: 9:00 AM-Dusk | Sun: 12:00PM-Dusk
OPEN YEAR-ROUND
Photo credit: Captain Kendall Smith (this page)



Exploring the Outdoors along the *Pascagoula River*

**George County's Greatest
Natural Feature**

Writer | *Brett Nelson*

One of the most vibrant and treasured pieces of the great Mississippi landscape and the natural crown jewel of George County, the Pascagoula River is formed in the northwestern part of the county where the Leaf and Chickasawhay Rivers join. The beautiful river is allowed to move naturally with no damming for over 80 miles, where it finally, and gracefully, empties into the Mississippi Sound. Well over 50,000 acres are currently protected for conservation along the gorgeous areas of the uninterrupted river. The striking visuals and opportunities cultivate the ultimate attraction to those looking to get outdoors.

The Pascagoula River has a blooming, timbered corridor outside of the main river with a plethora of swamps and sloughs which hold floodwater throughout the year. The vital landscape is important as a food source and resting area for wildlife that lives and migrates within its' edges, and in particular migrating birds. During the spring and fall migration periods, the Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) access just shy of the westbound Highway 26 Pascagoula River Bridge yields an amazing assortment of waterfowl and other neotropical migrants; birds that spend the summer in North America and migrate to Central to South America for the winter.

Included within the vigorous Pascagoula is the plentiful George County Blueway, which highlights some of the most sought-after outdoor expeditions in the entire six coastal county region of Jackson, Harrison, Hancock, George, Stone and Pearl River counties.

To make adventures in the area even more abundant, the Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) sits right in between the WMAs of Leaf River and Ward Bayou, giving hunters, anglers and kayakers more than enough to discover in a simple calendar year's time. Stretching almost 23 miles in length, beginning on the Pascagoula at the rural community of Merrill and ending at Josephine Sandbar in the Buzzard Roost community, the George County Blueway, in addition to fish and game-seekers, is also designated for experienced-to-master paddlers because of difficult conditions, which include the length between river access points and strong currents.

For those looking to simply enjoy wildlife and fishing in the slower backwaters, the "Points of Interest" postings, which are accessible by several roads just off the main river, stand to provide the preliminary information for locating each of the many oxbow lakes, basins and eddies within the blueway.

These beautiful bodies of water, from the northernmost point to the southernmost, read as follows:

From Merrill South

- Byrd Landing
- Round Eddy
- Big Eddy
- Pree Eddy
- Dead River (north side of river)
- Cochran Dead River
- Davis Eddy
- Davis Dead River (north side of river)
- Ramp Davis
- Dacy Lake
- Dacy Eddy
- Hutson Lake
- Pierce Lake
- McRae Dead River (north side of river)
- Ramp East
- Bilbo Basin
- Ramp West (north side of river)
- Upper Rhymes Lake
- Lower Rhymes Lake
- Josephine Sandbar

I have always considered myself a bit of a “late bloomer” in the outdoors, but the southern reaches of the George County Blueway quickly became familiar ground. Over time, those winding waterways and quiet WMA access points transformed into places of discovery, reflection, and appreciation for the wild beauty of South Mississippi. It seems only fitting, then, to take a closer look at the waters and access points that shape this stretch of the Blueway.

COCHRAN TOWN ROAD CHECK-IN AREA

Cochran Dead River- A relatively smaller oxbow lake, Cochran Dead River is found about a mile down and right off of Cochran Town Road, just off of Highway 26 West. One of the most easily accessible concrete boat ramps in the entire WMA can be found here. While the west side of the lake often tends to be too shallow to travel by boat, the drop-off from that same side is covered with cypress trees that provide optimal cover for crappie. This lake, too, can be an occasional hot spot for bullfrogs. That is, if you can beat the young guns to the punch on the earliest high-humidity nights of the season.

HIGHWAY 26 WEST CHECK-IN AREA

Big Lake- Big Lake is a long, narrow lake that was most likely a “drowned” stream dammed naturally over time. Largemouth Bass fishing, bream fishing and crappie fishing are all abundant here.

Dacy Lake- Dacy Lake, a former river channel often called a “dead river” or oxbow, is a scenic locale ideal for nature and wildlife photography. Bass and bream fishing here is as good as any in the entire area.

Dacy Eddy- Found directly behind the west end of Dacy Lake, this eddy is the result of long-term obstruction from the main river current. It provides adequate fishing and frog gigging opportunities for consideration of being such a small area.

Davis Eddy- Often called “Bird Lake,” Davis Eddy Lake is a must-see for nesting herons and egrets in the spring. Fishing here has become all but obsolete, but for additional scenic views, you can hike the two-mile nature trail all the way to Cochran Dead River.

Ramp Davis- Ramp Davis is an access point boat launch that leads directly into the main river and is sometimes listed as “Davis Eddy Ramp.”

Hutson Lake- Another former river channel now isolated from the main river, Hutson Lake is a bird sanctuary easily accessible by road or boat launch. Anglers here can catch decent-to-lunker-sized bass, as well as crappie, Redear Sunfish and, for a little aggressive excitement that doesn’t transition to the frying pan quite so easily, bowfin.



PEE WEE MILLER ROAD CHECK-IN AREA

Pierce Lake- Make the drive down Pee Wee Miller Road in the heart of the Buzzard Roost community, hit a left at the very end where the land becomes devoid of housing, watch out for the rabbits scurrying across the road during the fall, cross the small overlapping stream (an underrated and picturesque view), and you will arrive at one of the best crappie fishing lakes in the entire area at the sharp-winding Pierce Lake. Anglers can just as well try their luck in the open area at the north end as well as the opposite end of the lake. Be ready to spend a full day here, however, as these fish are heavily sought and have become wary and selective. You might also want to have an experienced boat-hauler handy to manage unloading and loading at this launch, as its ramp is quite narrow and steep.

Youngblood Lake- Not listed on any map, Youngblood Lake is widely known by locals and stands out because of its unique status as an oxbow lake with no boat ramp. Bass fishing is very good here when the water is high enough, but accessing the lake is not for the faint of heart!



Left: Ashton Anders, senior at Greene County High School, holding an alligator gar.
Right: Mills Mixon, senior at Forrest County Agricultural High School, proudly displayed a successful night of frog gigging at Goff Basin. Minors pictured with permission. Photo Credit: Brett Nelson

EAST WILKERSON FERRY ROAD CHECK-IN AREA

Upper Rhymes Lake- Near the midway point of East Wilkerson Ferry Road in Buzzard Roost, a right turn will take you past three of the most well-known bodies of water in the area, where the George County Blueway comes to an end. Upper Rhymes Lake, the first of these and a smaller oxbow than most, is home to large cypress and tupelo gum trees. Watch for alligators and wading birds amid the cypress knees and buttressed (swollen) trunks.

Lower Rhymes Lake- A small drive past the first launch, Lower Rhymes Lake is another large oxbow that provides a great opportunity for intrepid paddlers to get close to giant cypress and tupelo gum trees. At the north end of the lake, heavy cover makes for some of the best fishing in the entire WMA. Many wading birds and waterfowl use these areas for feeding and nesting.

Josephine Sandbar- At the very end of the aforementioned midway point, a spacious camping area can be seen before trekking downhill to the infamous swimming area known as Josephine Sandbar- currently the largest accessible sandbar on the Pascagoula River. The site boasts an artesian well, a continuous source of freshwater, and has plenty of room for overnight campers to enjoy themselves for a lovely weekend. Campers must be mindful of the rules, and respect for the site here is strongly expected and well-enforced.

Bilbo Basin- Near the tail end of East Wilkerson Ferry Road, Bilbo Basin can be found just off the left side of the main road before an opening to the main river. A somewhat muddy boat launch opens up into a small, shallow and low area that yields very good late-season frog gigging.

Ramp East- Ramp East is another access point boat launch, which leads directly into the main river, and hosts a nearby camping area with adequate parking, also near the midway point of East Wilkerson Ferry Road.

PLUM BLUFF ROAD CHECK-IN AREA

Goff Basin- The only WMA body of water in the entire Plum Bluff area in the Basin community, Goff Basin sits just on the other side of the main river, and provides excellent parking, a wide, accessible boat ramp, great fishing and, on the right night, some of the best frog gigging of any lake around. At least one elevated sandbar allows boaters to make their way over a small hill and into the main river.

Cochran Dead River



Davis Eddy



Big Lake

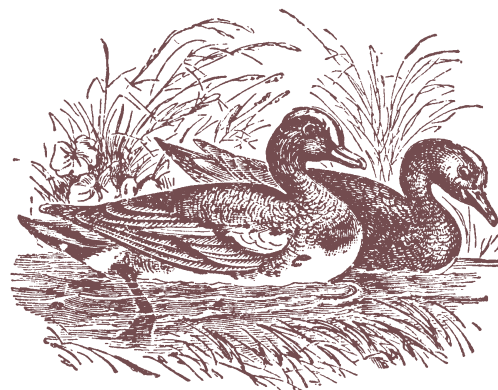


TOM HEMPSTEAD ROAD CHECK-IN AREA

Boneyard Lake- Boneyard Lake is a semi-forested oxbow lake known for its fishing opportunities, particularly for Largemouth Bass. The lake is also a significant birding area, hosting a variety of species such as the Tricolored Heron, Swallow-tailed Kite and Mississippi Kite. The lake's semi-forested environment provides a habitat for numerous nesting species, including Great Egret and Snowy Egret. The lake is also recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society. Visitors to the lake can enjoy various outdoor activities, including fishing and birdwatching, and should be aware of the local regulations and water access rights.

Horseshoe Lake- Home to quite possibly the best crappie fishing in the entire WMA, Horseshoe Lake is an easily-navigable, Alligator-ridden oxbow which is so-named for its' obvious shape. At most times during the year, each end of the lake sits too shallow for effective fishing from about 40 to 50 yards from the shorelines, but the water level makes for great frogging opportunities during the hottest of evenings, especially during the late season.

Indian Creek Green Tree Waterfowl Area- "Tantroff," an old Native American name for the area, is a large, heavily wooded and open body of water well known for its role as a Wood Duck roost. Many bird houses are built into the tall cypress trees, which define the area, and waterfowl hunters are expected to frequent here each season. Just as much, early morning shotgun blasts can be heard just behind the trees into the main river, as other woodie roosts are not so far away. On the coldest of late seasons, a variety of waterfowl have been known to fly through Tantroff, including at least one unlucky Wigeon allegedly downed by a local hunter years ago.





SAFETY INFORMATION

- Check local weather and river stages before your trip! If the river level is under three feet or over nine feet, wait for better conditions before attempting to paddle. To report safety concerns, call the George County Sheriff's Department (601-947-9156) or 911. For WMA violations, call 1-800-BE-SMART (Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks hotline). For local weather and river stages, visit www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/wmas/southeast-region/pascagoula-river.aspx.
- The Pascagoula River Blueway is for experienced and intermediate paddlers. Be aware of eddies and strong river currents, especially at boat ramps.
- File a float plan with a friend or relative. Cell phone coverage is not always reliable.
- Wear a life jacket with a whistle attached and take a waterproof first aid kit.
- The Pascagoula River WMA is open for hunting season from October 1 through May 1. Walking trails are important passageways for hunters; please use caution during these months. Hunter orange hats or clothing are appropriate.
- The Pascagoula River WMA is a wildlife haven. Please be aware of your surroundings and always respect the wildlife.

TRAIL RULES

- Alcohol is not permitted within the Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area.
- Purchase and carry an annual WMA User Permit. Daily Visitor Use Permits must be filled out, carried on the person and turned in daily. These permit cards are available at permit stations located at major entrances to the WMA (electronic check-in through the MDWFP app is now available). For questions about the Pascagoula River WMA, visit www.mdwfp.com/wma or call 601-947-6376.
- Pack out your trash.
- Avoid trespassing on private lands.

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are lands that have been set aside to conserve Mississippi's wildlife resources. With a wildlife management permit, visitors may fish, hunt, camp, hike and more. It is likely to see wildlife such as deer, beaver, alligators and even black bears.

First published in "Experience George County," Fall 2025, this story is shared here with sincere thanks and special permission from author Brett Nelson and Editor Russell Turner.

MAP LEGEND

Mile Marker			Parking
Canoe/Kayak Launch			Facilities
Blueway Trail			Piers
Point of Interest			Picnicking
			Food & Drink

LEVEL	Intermediate to Experienced
START/END	DuPont Avenue/Bennett Bayou
TRAIL MILES	10 miles (12 miles if east loop is included)
PADDLING TIME	6 hours one way for a complete trip including east loop at Moss Point
DESCRIPTION	River currents and deep water
SCENERY	Salt/brackish marshes
ACCESS	Several Public Boat Launches



Swamp Medicine

Foraging: The Many Uses of Cattails

Writer | *RoxAnn Rankin Wicker*

If you cut open the lower stalk of a cattail near the root, you will discover one of the marsh's quiet little survival secrets, a cool, clear gel almost identical to aloe vera. That slippery liquid has long been used as a natural antiseptic for cuts, burns, bug bites and irritated skin, offering relief straight from the wetlands themselves.

For generations, those who lived close to the land understood that cattails were far more than scenery growing along the water's edge. They were medicine, food, shelter and survival woven into a single plant.

The young shoots could be gathered for supper, peeled and eaten fresh or cooked. Later in the season, the golden pollen could be collected and mixed into flour for breads and cakes, while the starchy roots hidden beneath dark water provided nourishment during difficult times.

Even the soft brown tops served a purpose.

Once dried, they became excellent tinder beside a campfire or stuffing for bedding and insulation. The long green leaves were carefully woven into baskets, mats and chair bottoms by weathered hands that understood survival often depended on resourcefulness and the gifts nature quietly provided.

Perhaps that is what makes cattails feel so timeless along the southern marsh. Standing tall in the shallows, they remind us that the swamp was once a living pantry, medicine cabinet and hardware store all at once, offering whatever was needed to those willing to slow down long enough to learn its secrets.



1. When you strip the leaves from the plant, an aloe-like gel forms, serving as an antiseptic or healing salve.
2. The dried stalks can be made into a hand drill for primitive fire.
3. The tops of the stalks are useful for basket making.
4. The seed fluff can be used as flash tinder to start a fire. The seed fluff can also be used for warm insulation, pillows or bedding.
5. Cattails are rich in iron, phosphorus, dietary fiber, vitamins K and B6, calcium, magnesium, potassium and manganese.

Disclaimer: The remedies and traditions discussed in this article are shared for historical and educational purposes only and are not intended as medical advice. Consult a licensed healthcare professional before using herbal or traditional remedies.



COMMUNITY

From Curiosity to

Obsession

My Journey with Orchids on the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Writer | Will Thompson

I have always loved where I live. Ocean Springs, Miss., is a place where community, nature and tradition are woven together in everyday life. My appreciation for the natural world led me to earn a degree in Marine Biology from the University of Southern Mississippi and to spend several years working as a research assistant at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. Later, I had the opportunity to leave the coast and work in Alaska as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) contractor, an incredible experience, but in 2021, I was fortunate to return home.

While marine biology has always been a central passion, plants have been a close second for as long as I can remember.

Some of my earliest memories are in the garden with my family, especially in the spring. I looked forward to Easter, not just for the holiday, but because I knew the following weekend would be spent planting. My grandmother always told me never to plant a garden before Easter; a piece of local wisdom I still follow and hope to pass on. That kind of knowledge, rooted in experience, reminds me that anyone can develop a green thumb with the right guidance. My introduction to orchids came unexpectedly.

In January 2022, while recovering from surgery, I saw an advertisement for a show and sale hosted by the Gulf Coast Orchid Society in Gautier. What I expected to be a quick outing turned into something much more. Walking into that show opened my eyes to a world I had never fully appreciated: the incredible diversity of orchids. Until then, I had only been familiar with the common varieties found in big box stores. What I discovered was a vast and fascinating plant family full of color, fragrance and complexity.

Orchids are one of the largest plant families in the world, with over 28,000 species and countless hybrids. Many are tropical epiphytes, meaning they grow on trees rather than in soil. Because of this, they require bright, indirect light, good air circulation and well-draining potting media that allows their roots to breathe.

Despite my experience with plants, orchids humbled me at first. I was, quite frankly, an orchid killer. Every plant I brought home either died or refused to bloom again. But at that first show, I was drawn in; especially to the Cattleya orchids, which remain my favorite today for their large, often fragrant blooms. I chose a non-blooming plant with two simple goals: keep it alive and get it to flower.

What made the difference wasn't luck, it was community. Members of the orchid society offered guidance, shared care sheets, and most importantly, encouragement. With their help, I learned that orchids aren't as difficult as their reputation suggests; they just require a different approach.

One of the biggest misconceptions about orchids is how to care for them. They thrive in bright, indirect light; an east-facing window is often perfect. If natural light is limited, affordable full-spectrum LED grow lights are a great alternative. As for watering, a good rule of thumb is once a week, using a half-strength orchid fertilizer. About once a month, it's helpful to thoroughly flush the pot with water to prevent salt buildup from fertilizers.

Equally important is what not to do. Orchids should never sit in standing water, and they need time to dry out between waterings. And despite popular advice, watering with ice cubes can damage these tropical plants; the cold can harm their tissues. For best results, using collected rainwater can make a noticeable difference.

Today, I've been a member of the Gulf Coast Orchid Society for nearly five years, and what started as curiosity has grown into a true passion; some might say a healthy obsession. The society brings together people of all experience levels who share an interest in these remarkable plants. Through meetings, shows and educational events, it provides an opportunity for anyone to learn, connect and grow.

For those interested in getting involved, attending a local orchid show or society meeting is the perfect place to start. Whether you're an experienced grower or someone who has never kept a plant alive, there is a place for you.

Orchids have taught me patience, curiosity and the value of community. And like so many things on the Gulf Coast, what begins as a simple interest can quickly grow into something much more meaningful.





Burns & Blooms

Orchids of the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Writers | Andrew Heaton & Dr. Ayesha Gray

IN THE PINE SAVANNAS OF COASTAL MISSISSIPPI, FIRE IS NOT DESTRUCTION-IT IS RENEWAL. PRESCRIBED BURNS SUSTAIN ONE OF THE SOUTHEAST'S MOST DIVERSE ECOSYSTEMS, CREATING THE CONDITIONS THAT ALLOW RARE NATIVE ORCHIDS TO FLOURISH.

Along the Gulf Coastal Plain, pine savannas are home to a remarkable diversity of plants and wildlife that depend on open, sunlit grassland habitats. The greatest richness of plant species is found in the low-lying herbaceous layer—among the graminoids (grasses, sedges and rushes) and forbs (herbaceous flowering plants that are not graminoids)—where many rare and uncommonly seen species are represented.

By definition, grasslands hold few overstory trees; a denser canopy would shade the ground and crowd out the very herbaceous plants that make these systems so distinctive. Open canopies can be maintained in a number of natural ways—in Africa, for instance, elephants topple and consume the woody shrubs and trees of the midstory and overstory, keeping savanna ecosystems in balance—but in our region, the driver of healthy savannas, and everything they hold, has always been fire.

Once the dominant landscape of the southeastern United States, pine savannas have been reduced to less than 3% of their historic range, largely through decades of fire suppression. In centuries past, lightning strikes ignited fires that swept across vast stretches of grassland, knocking back the encroaching woody vegetation of the midstory and overstory.

Today, in a wildland-urban interface threaded with homes, industry and roads, that role falls to land managers and biologists, who carry out careful, periodic prescribed burns to conserve these landscapes and the life they sustain.

“
*In our region,
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been fire.*



A prescribed fire moves through pine savanna at the Grand Bay NERR, reopening the canopy that the ground-layer plants, native orchids among them, depend on. Photo credit: Grand Bay NERR.





Grass-leaved Ladies' Tresses
(*Spiranthes praecox*)

Photo credit: Dr. Ayesha Gray,
Grand Bay NERR



Snowy Orchid
(*Platanthera nivea*)

Photo credit: Andrew Heaton,
Grand Bay NERR



Southern Twayblade
(*Neottia bifolia*)

Photo credit: Andrew Heaton,
Grand Bay NERR



Tuberous Grasspink
(*Colopogon tuberosus*)

Photo credit: Dr. Ayesha Gray,
Grand Bay NERR

At the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in Jackson County, Mississippi, biologists and land managers work to maintain the savanna habitat that remains and to restore degraded, thickly canopied woodlands to their open, fire-adapted state.

More than 800 plant species have been documented across the Grand Bay NERR and the adjoining U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge—and among them are members of one of the most eye-catching and highly specialized plant families on earth: the orchids (Orchidaceae).

While many people know orchids only as ornamental species grown at home, our region is home to many native species adapted to the pine savannas of the Gulf Coast. The grass pinks (*Colopogon* spp.) that bloom in the savannas of the Grand Bay NERR are not only beautiful; they are indicators of well-connected hydrologic systems that keep coastal soils saturated.



They also offer a fascinating window into the world of specialized pollination. Grass pinks practice what is known as deceit pollination—offering no nectar reward yet still drawing pollinators by mimicking the appearance of flowers that do.

Other spring ephemerals found here include the Grass-leaved Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes praecox*), with its delicate spiraling inflorescence, and the Southern Twayblade (*Neottia bifolia*), which, though less dependent on savanna habitat, appears in the mosaic of other ecosystems the reserve manages.

Thanks to the fire management and conservation efforts of staff at the Grand Bay NERR, even less commonly observed species persist here—among them the Snowy Orchid (*Platanthera nivea*), whose range is restricted to the savannas and bogs of the southeastern coastal plain. In Mississippi, this orchid is now found almost exclusively on managed natural areas such as our reserve, the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge and nearby wildlife management areas.



A NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT ON GRAND BAY

These blooms are more than a seasonal spectacle—they are living evidence that the science and stewardship practiced at the Grand Bay NERR are working.

That message drew national attention on May 5, 2026, when NOAA Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs and Deputy Under Secretary Laura Grimm visited the Grand Bay NERR.

Walking the pine savannas alongside Reserve staff and partners, they saw firsthand the habitats—and the rare orchids—that decades of prescribed fire and careful monitoring have sustained.

Staff briefed the visitors on the Reserve's applied research and long-term monitoring, the backbone of how Grand Bay NERR measures whether restoration is truly making a difference and discussed the value of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) to coastal science, resilience and communities.

Left: (left to right) Director of the Grand Bay NERR, Dr. Ayesha Gray, NOAA Administrator, Dr. Neil Jacobs, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Joe Spraggins, and Deputy Under Secretary, Laura Grimm tour the estuary at the Grand Bay NERR, May 5, 2026. Photo credit: Dr. Ayesha Gray, Grand Bay NERR.

Right: Dr. Neil Jacobs examines native orchids in the pine savanna during the May 5, 2026 visit. Photo credit: Dr. Ayesha Gray, Grand Bay NERR.

Grand Bay is one of 30 reserves in the NERRS, a partnership between NOAA and the coastal states and territories that protects more than 1.3 million acres of estuaries for long-term research, water-quality monitoring, education, training and stewardship. Each reserve pairs federal support with local knowledge to confront the challenges facing our coasts. At Grand Bay NERR, that partnership is written across the landscape—in healthy savannas, expansive emergent wetland landscapes, abundant fisheries, clean water and an exceptional diversity of orchids that return, fire after fire, season after season.

Rooting for Change

HOW JULIE MARSH RECLAIMED THE LANDSCAPE

Writer | *RoxAnn Rankin Wicker*



The first thing you notice when you step into Julia “Julie” Marsh’s yard in Gulfport is not just the color. It is the movement. Butterflies drift between blooms, bees hum with quiet urgency and, somewhere overhead, a chorus of birds carries on as if this small patch of earth were a sanctuary. In many ways, it is.

What Julie created here did not begin with abundance. It began with intention and, in one defining moment, subtraction.

She and her husband, Giancarlo Gaudioso, pronounced “John Carlo,” decided that most homeowners might hesitate to consider.

They removed the original fence. Not for aesthetics, but for expansion. For the possibility. For plants. Where boundaries once stood, life now stretches outward. Native plants and trees, bulbs and vegetables live in harmony together across the property, softening the edges of what a yard is supposed to be. It no longer feels confined.

It feels like it belongs to the land and to the wildlife it supports.

Julie’s path to this place is as layered as the ecosystem she has built. Raised in Virginia, she developed an early love for the outdoors, though the climate often made cultivating difficult. That tension quietly guided her future. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics from Virginia Tech, followed by a Master of Science from the University of Illinois, and later expanded her expertise with a Geographic Information Systems certificate from Penn State. Today, she works as a professional geographer with the U.S. Navy in Gulfport.

While stationed in Naples, Italy, during COVID, Julie met Giancarlo. Their story eventually brought them to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, where they began cultivating something far more rooted than they had imagined.

Walking through her garden feels less like a tour and more like a quiet unfolding. Near the back of the property, the ground softens and the air shifts from the shade of the live oaks. This is where one of her most innovative features takes shape, a living shoreline water bog created in partnership with the Mississippi Water Stewards Program through the Mississippi State University Extension Center.

Traditional bulkheads along waterways can be harsh, interrupting natural flow and degrading habitat over time. Julie's water bog offers a living alternative. It functions as a natural bulkhead, filtering water, stabilizing soil and creating habitat. Giant cane, North America's native bamboo, will eventually rise in clusters suited for wet environments.

Julie moves easily through her garden spaces, pointing out what is emerging. Asters are beginning to take shape. Goldenrod reaching toward the light. Big Bluestem swaying gently. Needle Palms tucked into the understory. Mount Airy Dwarf Fothergilla adding texture. Virginia Wild Rye is weaving through the landscape. Gulf Coast Penstemon quietly asserts itself among the others. None of it is accidental, yet nothing feels forced.

She smiles when she says she is not a native plant purist. She simply loves too many plants. Still, more than 150 native species now exist within her yard, each chosen for both beauty and ecological value.



Shoreline water bog created in partnership with the Mississippi Water Stewards Program through the Mississippi State University Extension Center



Needle Palms



Mount Airy Dwarf



Virginia Wild Rye

Her philosophy is grounded in something both practical and deeply personal. “A lot is going wrong in the world right now,” she explains, and there is only a limited number of things she can do to make measurable changes. Native gardening is one of them. It allows her to see the results directly in the return of birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife.

Her work extends beyond her own property. As the Education Officer for the Gulf Coast Chapter of the Native Plant Society, Julie hosts a monthly botany study group at her home. As a Master Gardener, she approaches education as a form of stewardship, helping others understand how to make informed decisions in their own landscapes.

She teaches people how to see the difference between native and invasive plants, a distinction that carries lasting consequences. Across the Gulf Coast, invasive species such as the Popcorn Tree, Silk Tree, Asian Wisteria, Heavenly Bamboo, Japanese Honeysuckle, Butterfly Bush and Bradford Pear continue to spread, often planted unknowingly. Julie emphasizes that the concern is not how these plants behave in one yard, but how they impact the environment beyond it.

Her advice is clear; “Remove invasive species, then begin again with native plant intention.”

Even the unseen systems in her garden reflect that care. Julie collects rainwater to nourish her plants and has created compost mounds throughout the property to return nutrients to the soil. Nothing is wasted. Everything has purpose.

This June, Julie and fellow members of the Native Plant Society will travel to Deer Island for conservation efforts, combining environmental cleanup with education. In the fall, their Botany Blitz will bring participants together to identify native and invasive species within a specific area, encouraging awareness and hands-on learning.

Standing in her garden, it becomes clear that what Julie has cultivated is more than a landscape. It is a perspective. A reminder that meaningful change does not always begin on a grand scale. Sometimes it begins by removing a fence, planting with purpose and paying attention to what belongs.

And in that quiet, deliberate work, something extraordinary begins to grow.



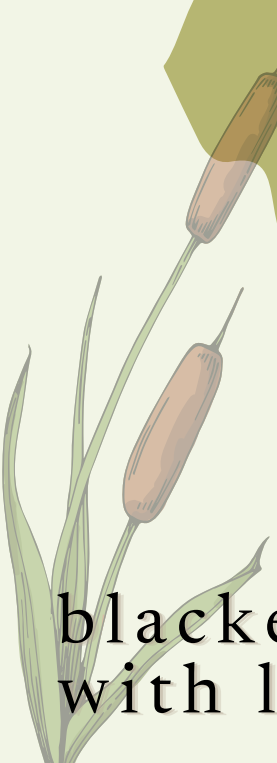
A close-up photograph of a dessert in a white ceramic bowl. The bowl is filled with a peach cobbler, featuring large, juicy peach slices in a pinkish-orange syrup, topped with a golden-brown, crumbly cobbler. A large, smooth scoop of white vanilla ice cream sits on top of the cobbler. The bowl is placed on a light blue plate with concentric circular ridges. A red napkin is visible in the background. The word "FLAVORFUL" is overlaid in the center in a blue, serif font.

FLAVORFUL



Bayou Garden Lunch

Writer | *RoxAnn Rankin Wicker*



Some days just feel like you ought to cook something good and let the world wait its turn. You've got fresh seafood, a little garden salad and something sweet cooling on the counter. Nothing fancy, but just good ole southern food that knows where it comes from. We eat slowly, talk easily and don't worry about much else.

That's what we call a Bayou Garden Lunch.

blackened redfish with lemon butter



Ingredients:

4 redfish fillets (or any firm white fish)
2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
1 tbsp olive oil

Blackening Seasoning:

1 tsp paprika
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp onion powder
½ tsp dried thyme
½ tsp dried oregano
½ tsp cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper

Lemon Butter:

4 tbsp butter
Juice of 1 lemon
1 clove garlic, minced
Pinch of salt

Instructions:

Pat fish dry and brush both sides lightly with melted butter. Mix the seasoning and coat each fillet generously. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high until very hot; add olive oil. Sear fish 3-4 minutes per side until a dark crust forms and fish flakes easily. In a small saucepan, melt butter, add garlic and lemon juice, and warm gently. Drizzle lemon butter over fish just before serving.

spring greens with strawberries & candied pecans

Ingredients:

6 cups mixed spring greens
1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced
½ cup goat cheese, crumbled
½ cup pecans

Candied Pecans:

½ cup pecans
2 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp butter
Pinch of salt

Dressing:

3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tsp honey
1 tsp Dijon mustard
Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

In a skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add pecans and sugar, stirring until coated and caramelized (about 3–5 minutes). Let cool. Whisk together dressing ingredients until smooth. Toss greens with strawberries, goat cheese and cooled pecans. Drizzle dressing just before serving.



southern peach cobbler



Ingredients:

4 cups fresh or frozen peaches (sliced)
1 cup sugar (divided)
1 tbsp lemon juice
½ tsp cinnamon
½ cup (1 stick) butter

Batter:

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup milk
1 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place butter in a baking dish and let it melt in the oven. In a saucepan, combine peaches, ½ cup sugar, lemon juice and cinnamon. Simmer for 5–7 minutes. In a bowl, mix flour, remaining sugar, baking powder, salt and milk until smooth. Pour batter over melted butter (do not stir). Spoon peaches and syrup over the top. Bake 40–45 minutes until golden and bubbly.

If it were me, I would dollop a huge scoop of vanilla ice cream on top, but that's completely optional! Enjoy!



Visit the Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Arts Center this summer, an official Passport To Your National Parks® site for the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2026!

Originally built in 1926 as the old Ocean Springs public school, the historic campus is now home to art, culture and this summer's FREE Summer of '56: Elvis on the Coast exhibit.



SUMMER OF '56 ELVIS

ON THE COAST



THE **MARY C O'KEEFE**
CULTURAL ARTS CENTER
JUNE 4- AUG 27
EXHIBIT, SPEAKERS AND MORE...



THE MUSIC. THE LEGACY. THE COAST.



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