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NEWSLETTER

March 2009

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Museum Status Report

In February I visited with the Tennessee River Museum in Savannah, Tennessee, and the River Heritage Museum in Paducah, Kentucky. I do not think you could find more hospitable and helpful people than I found at those two museums. Their exhibits gave me a lot of insight and ideas about what would be attractive but cost effective and workable in the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Transportation Museum. The staff at the River Heritage Museum also helped me make contact with RiverWorks Discovery. That is an organization which produces excellent river related educational materials. I am hopeful that we will soon be able to partner with RiverWorks Discovery on educational programs and materials for our museum.

Also in February, museum director Agnes Zaiontz participated in the Mississippi Department of Transportation workshop in Tupelo, Mississippi to review the new guidelines included in the Revised Project Development Manual.

Rollodores, Deadheads, and Side-wheelers a history of steamboats on the Upper Tombigbee River is now in final editing. The book will soon be published and sold by the museum as a fund raiser. I have been working on the book for several years and it provides an account of the steamboats on the Tombigbee between 1820 and 1920.

The museum is now raising funds for individual exhibits and displays that will be contained within our new facility. It is our hope to begin installing exhibits as soon as construction is completed in late 2009.

Rufus Ward
Project Coordinator



This replica of the stern-wheel steamboat, *Vienna*, was typical of vessels that transported supplies, farm products, and passengers to and from inland ports along the Tombigbee River as far north as Amory, Mississippi to the Port of Mobile, until the early 1900's. Randy Skinner of Fairhope, Alabama built the 7-foot model as a display for the June 1985 ceremonies held in Columbus to celebrate the completion of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

The boat also served as the time capsule for contents donated by several cities and town throughout the waterway corridor as far away as Paducah, Kentucky, Guntersville, and Mobile, Alabama to commemorate the grand opening of the waterway. The contents of the time capsule will be revealed on June 1, 2010.

This replica is now displayed in the Museum area of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway building in Columbus, Mississippi.



Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Transportation Museum



Donations and Memorials January – March 2009

Platinum (\$2,001 - \$5,000)

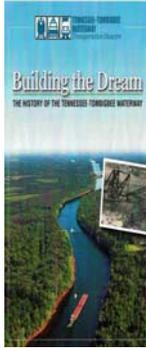
Parker Towing Company
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Gold (\$1,001 - \$2,000)

Mrs. Martha Segars
In honor of Donald G. Waldon
Former Administrator
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
Development Authority

Silver (\$501 - \$1,000)

Mr. Don Waldon
Columbus, Mississippi
In memory of Mr. Jack Paxton
Former Board Members
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
Development Authority



**Building the Dream:
The History of the
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway**

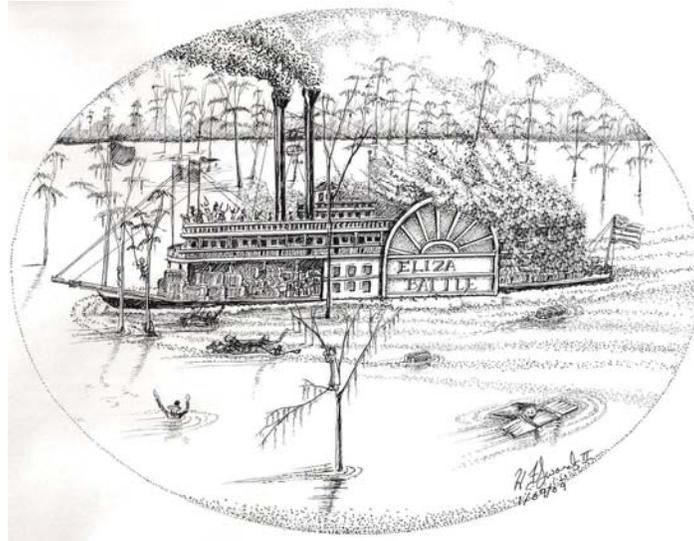
DVD

Send check or money order in the amount of
\$20.83

(includes tax, shipping & handling)

payable to:

Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
Transportation Museum
P. O. Drawer 671
Columbus, MS 39703



Although physical renovation of the museum facilities has not yet begun, we are already acquiring some graphic materials that will be used in several displays. Above is a drawing by West Point, Mississippi, artist Frank Swords of the burning of the steamboat *Eliza Battle*. The steamer burned, with a great loss of life, on the Tombigbee River below Demopolis during the early morning hours of March 1, 1858. Prints of this and other Tennessee-Tombigbee related graphic art works will be offered for sale by the museum.

Hidden Treasures 🌊

St Stephens Historical Park is located in Washington County on the Tombigbee. It was the first territorial capitol of the State of Alabama. The town died when the capitol was moved to Cahaba. Some say it was a result of a curse put on it by the itinerant Methodist preacher Lorenzo Dow who was distressed when the town had no church but 67 saloons and taverns. The people tarred and feathered him and rode him out into the river on a log. He was quoted as saying "Curses to you St Stephens! You will come to be inhabited by only bats and owls!" This turned out to be true. Now St Stephens is a historical park. It offers camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, picnicking, and diver recertification. The cost is \$2.00 per person per day admission to the park. There is a self guided walking tour of the town ruins. Also, there is a museum in the Old Courthouse. There are scheduled archeological digs with the University of South Alabama and summer archeological camps for students. There is an annual Old St Stephens Day in October. School children reenact a turn of the 20th century play "St. Stephens Through the Eyes of a Child". An on site store provides light refreshments and sundries. The park is open daily throughout the year. There is a boat ramp, so that boats can launch within 1/2 mile of the park.

Ms. Linda Vice, Director
Southwest Alabama Tourism and Film Office

Mississippi Museum Association News

Submitted by: Kristy White, Director, Corinth Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Once upon a time, a young woman, fresh out of college and the newly hired director of the Northeast Mississippi Museum Association in Corinth, attended a Mississippi Museums Association meeting in Oxford. She knew nothing about the museum world and carried with her only the love of local history. She was scared to death! But there was no need to be frightened, her colleagues from museums all over Mississippi embraced her and she quickly became comfortable with her role as a museum professional with their support. She stayed active and served as the Secretary/Treasurer, Vice-President, and President of the organization.

That story is about me! Although I have left the museum profession to pursue a career in tourism, I will always be an advocate for our area museums. A great partner for museums is the Mississippi Museums Association (MMA). This all-volunteer organization was founded in 1976 by museum professionals, who wanted to promote communication between all types of museums – public and private – within the State of Mississippi and wanted to promote a statewide public awareness of the value of museums as educational and research institutions at the local, county, regional and state levels. The volunteers of MMA strive to meet the goals by offering workshops throughout the year at a nominal fee at different sites throughout the State. Some topics that have been covered include: fundraising, grant writing, developing a gift shop, implementing educational programming on a budget, collections management, and understanding legal issues.

Member museums within the Tenn-Tom area are the Tishomingo County Museum in Iuka; the Oren Dunn City Museum in Tupelo; the Sam Wilhite Transportation Museum in West Point; the Crossroads Museum in Corinth; the Amory Regional Museum in Amory; and the Plymouth Bluff Center in Columbus.



The Tenn-Tom Tourism Association is again partnering with the Tishomingo County, Mississippi Tourism Council promoting the Trash and Treasures along the Tenn-Tom Waterway – 234 miles of yard sales. Tishomingo County and Martha Segars won the Mississippi State Achievement Award at the 2009 Governor's Conference on Tourism in February in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for this event. This event drew thousands of sellers and buyers at the 2007 and 2008 events.

There is considerable interest in marketing to the participants of the Underground Railroad Bicycle Trail which winds along the Tenn-Tom Waterway in east Mississippi and west Alabama. The bike route extends some 2,100 miles from Mobile to Owen Sound, Ontario, passing historic sites, museums and parks. Several of these cyclists visited communities along the Tenn-Tom last year. Please notify the tourism office if you need more information to market your local community to these bikers.

Shrimp Boat Bella Mia



An event that will be of interest to museum and tourism supporters is being planned for late April or early May.

Tim Harrison owner/Captain of the Shrimp Boat *Bella Mia* is going to bring his Pass Christian based 62 foot shrimp boat up the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway to promote the waterway and Gulf seafood. The plan is for the boat to dock at several cities along the Tenn-Tom Waterway. At each he will sell fresh Gulf shrimp, off of the boat, and possibly have a shrimp cooking demonstration with recipes and spices provided by noted New Orleans chef Paul Perdone. Harrison attended a regional tourism meeting at the Tennessee-Tombigbee

Waterway Development Authority offices on February 25th and presented his planned promotion. This promotion has stirred much interest from Demopolis to Yellow Creek.

Niagara Prince



The Niagara Prince, a 175" passenger vessel with 40 cabins will be on the Tenn-Tom Waterway June 5 – 20. Passengers will be touring attractions in Pickwick, Tennessee; Fulton and Columbus, Mississippi; Pickensville, Demopolis and Mobile, Alabama.