

PEARL RIVER BOATWAY

MORGANTOWN TO SANDY HOOK COLUMBIA AREA, MISSISSIPPI

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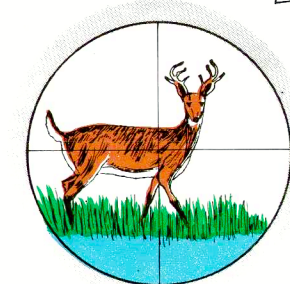
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCES M. HESTER



COLUMBIA, ONETIME CAPITAL OF MISSISSIPPI

Columbia may have been destined to become a state capital when in 1811 a group of people from South Carolina settled along the banks of the Pearl River. They named their community "Marion" in honor of the legendary Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion. In 1813 the county government was created, and the town was renamed "Lott's Bluff" after John Lott, who owned the court house site. On January 29, 1819, a local commission renamed the newly incorporated town "Columbia", in remembrance of the capital of their home State of South Carolina.

The question of locating the Mississippi State Capital was a troublesome problem to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1847. With the problem still unsettled, the legislature of January 1821 took up the question and voted on four towns: Natchez, Columbia, Monticello, and Holmerville. The vote was very close, and it took the vote of the legislature to make the selection of Columbia as the state capital (Act of February 7, 1821). This distinction was short-lived for in the latter part of 1822 the capital was moved to its present location of Jackson.



The reach of the Pearl River presented in this atlas extends from Morgantown, Miss., 40.3 miles downstream to Sandy Hook.

Channel width varies from 250 to 300 feet, depending upon the stage of the river, and depth varies from 2 feet at low water in shoal areas to over 30 feet at medium stage in deep areas. The banks are relatively steep along the reach of the river, but at Morgantown, Columbia, and Sandy Hook there are several sites where boats can be launched. Below Columbia there are many large sand bars that could be used for campsites or rest points (see photographs below).

In general, the part of the reach from Morgantown to Columbia is deep and slow moving. Little difficulty should be encountered in boating except at extreme low water. From Columbia to Sandy Hook the river is shallower with higher velocities. At a stage of less than 5 feet on the Columbia gage, boating can be hazardous because of the shallow depths. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, has cleared logs and debris from the channel from the mouth of the river to 7 miles from Columbia. Submerged logs still present a hazard at low water in some places.

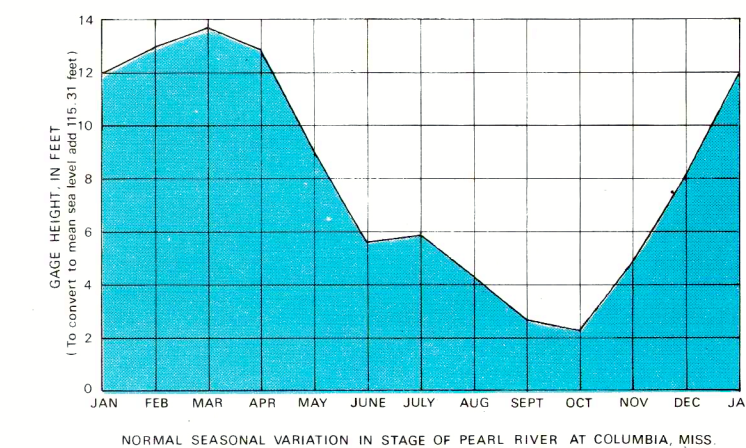
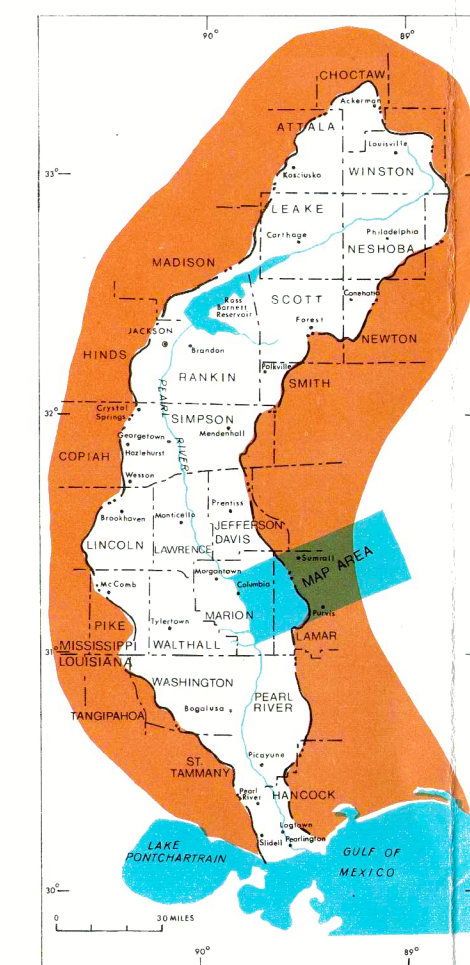
Several large creeks enter the Pearl River in the study reach. These are Holiday, Silver, Upper Little, Yemelle, Lower Little, and Sandy Hook. All these creeks provide fishing opportunities and camping sites near their mouths.

The quality of water in the Pearl River above Columbia is good, but as the river passes through Columbia its quality is degraded by domestic and industrial wastes. Nowhere along this reach of the river should the water be used for drinking. The water is suitable for boating and fishing, but it may not be safe for swimming, especially in the Columbia vicinity.

Several species of fish inhabit the river, including largemouth bass, black and white crappie, bluegill, redear, chain pickerel, warmouth, and channel blue. Bathed, and spoon-bill catfish. Game that may be encountered include deer, squirrel, rabbit, beaver, raccoon, opossum, mink, otter, and muskrat. Wild turkey and various species of duck also frequent the area. Wooded areas lining the river contain cypress, magnolia, hickory, oak, cottonwood, willow, gum, elm, bay, wild fruits, and flowering vegetation.

Free float times shown on this atlas are based on floating trips made by personnel of the U.S. Geological Survey. Paddles were used only to keep the boat in the main thread of the stream. The float trips were made at near-steady river stages and when winds were calm. The variation from these conditions will cause divergence from the float times presented in the tables. The table may be used to estimate the time required to float with the current between points on the river. For example, if one wishes to compute the time required to float from Morgantown to the Highway 98 bridge at Columbia when the river stage was about 12 feet on the gage, one would simply add the three free float times for the three subreaches between the two locations and obtain 5-1/2 hours (1-1/4 + 2-1/2 + 1-3/4). Float times can be estimated for gage heights other than those shown on the table by interpolation.

The stage of the Pearl River at Columbia is published daily in Jackson papers and presented on radio and TV weather summaries.



JOHN FORD HOME

The old John Ford Home is about a mile from the Pearl River near Sandy Hook, Miss. It is a crude but strong building of ash-gray timbers and yellowed brick 2-1/2 stories high. Its architecture shows the influence of the Spaniards. John Ford, the builder, was a Methodist minister who came from South Carolina in 1805. Between 1805 and 1809 he built his first house in the region and subsequently filled it with five sons and two daughters. Four of the five sons became Methodist circuit riders and the two daughters became wives of circuit riders. One of the sons, Thomas, organized the Mississippi Methodist Society and built the first church of that denomination in Jackson. So pronouncedly religious was the Ford family that when General Andrew Jackson stopped there on his way to fight the British at New Orleans, not grant him shelter until he promised he would use no profanity and would attend family prayer.

The Pearl River Convention met in the home in 1816 and drew up a petition asking for admission of the State to the Union. The enabling act was passed soon after by Congress; the Constitutional Convention assembled the next year, and Mississippi Territory became a State in 1817.

