

Snowfall Damages Weevil Greenhouse



The second weevil greenhouse commissioned by the Caddo Biocontrol Alliance just a year ago was heavily damaged when one side of the twin-arched structure completely collapsed under the weight of the February 2021 snowfall. The original Morley Hudson greenhouse is heated to keep the weevils alive during winter cold spells, so it was not damaged, but heating was not provided for the newer structure as it was to be repopulated each spring, and heating is quite expensive.

The directors of the Caddo Biocontrol Alliance are developing a plan for replacing the unusable half of the greenhouse. Donations may be sent to:

Caddo Biocontrol Alliance
P.O. Box 79
Karnack, TX 75661

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Caddo Lake Historical Place Names

Caddo Lake has been around in some form for over 200 years, so it isn't too surprising that the many people who have spent time out on its waters and along its shoreline came up with names for specific locations so that they could share their experiences

more precisely with other people. The use of these place names was particularly important during the steamboat era, because there were no numbered boat road markers as there are for some major routes today. Information about hazards meant a lot more when a steamboat captain could tell others exactly where to use caution. Mapmakers began adding these names as annotations as well, which had the side-effect of preserving their use.

The use of names for specific locations was carried into more modern times by fishing and hunting guides, who needed to discuss places to go with one another and with customers. Those of us who are on the lake regularly are familiar with a lot of these named places. Some of the stories behind the names are known, but the reasons for other names has been long forgotten. Some were based on the names of steamboat captains or settlers, but some may have just been for fun.

GCLA has purchased signs with some of the more well-known place names and will be mounting them this spring so that visitors can get a better sense of where they are as they enjoy their outings. Who knows, they may even be useful to people who are lost and need to call for directions to get back to shore.



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The Steamboat Era on Cypress Bayou and the Lakes

Part Three—Passengers and Cargo

By Donna McCann

This is the third in a series of articles about the days of steamboat operation between Shreveport and Jefferson in the 1800s. Much of the source material is from *A History of Navigation on Cypress Bayou and the Lakes* by Jacques Bagur.

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During the steamboat era from 1840 to 1900, at least 324 different vessels operated west of Shreveport, 288 of which traveled as far as Jefferson. Over 2600 trips were made to bring new settlers and supplies and ship out agricultural products, most of which went all the way to the major trading center of New Orleans.

The steamboat route on the Cypress Bayou into East Texas would never have developed without the need to transport cotton to market, but to ensure profitability, boats were loaded as fully as possible going both directions. Fortunately, new settlers were coming to Texas in droves, and it was not uncommon to have 200 people on board along with all sorts of cargo. Most of these passengers boarded with the cheapest tickets and rode on the main deck with the cargo without food or sleeping accommodations. The first class passenger cabins were mostly used by businessmen and the occasional wealthy traveler, since the fare from New Orleans to Jefferson was \$10–\$12.

Most people and cargo from the steamboats arrived in places like Port Caddo, which serviced Marshall and Harrison County, or Jefferson, which serviced counties to the north and west. After



Figure 2 Cotton bales and other goods awaiting loading.

arriving at a Texas port, most new settlers kept traveling west seeking free land. For freight, both import and export, the trading area extended north all the way to the Red River and west as far as Dallas. For the most part, counties to the south had other shipping options. Although steamboat captains attempted to navigate the upper Red River or the Sulphur River to reach deeper into East Texas locations, these routes were inaccessible for much of the year and always inferior to the flat water of Cypress Bayou and the Lakes.

Goods were hauled to and from the ports and landings mostly with ox wagons over primitive dirt roads. The routes were not straight like our modern roads; the trails meandered to stay on higher ground where possible and to avoid crossing any deep water, since that would require a ferry (and a toll). Wagon transport developed into a large business with both independent and company drivers (teamsters) who drove their teams about 10–15 miles per day in good weather, and 6–8 in bad weather. Since a 100 mile trip typically took 10 days, teamsters usually slept with their carts while their oxen grazed on the grass along the way. The standard freight rate for much of this time was one cent per mile per hundred pounds. Thus, to transport a bale of cotton 50 miles would cost \$2.50.

While many East Texas settlers were subsistence farmers,



Figure 1 A wagon loaded with cotton bales is pulled by a team of six oxen in three yokes.

(Continued on page 3)



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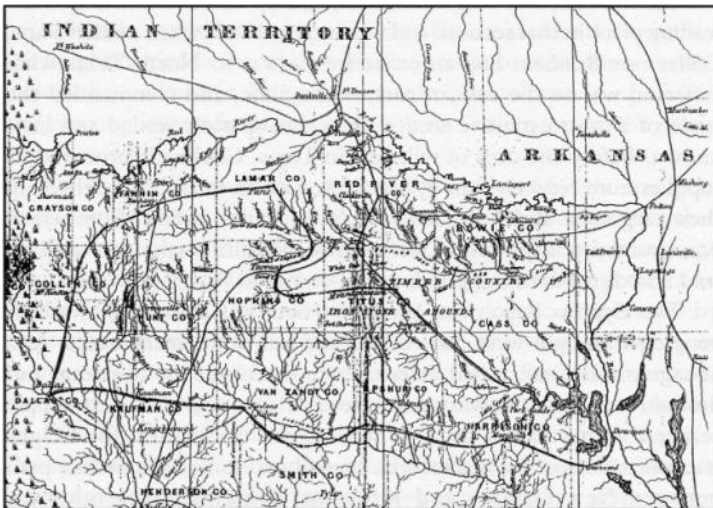


Figure 3 Northeast Texas in 1849. Source: Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

(Continued from page 2)

plantation owners and other businessmen established a robust export economy as catalogued by the detailed cargo manifests of the steamboats. A compilation of all the goods shipped from Jefferson for the entire year of 1870 is shown at right. In addition to cotton, live cattle, hides from slaughtered cattle, and other animal pelts were substantial businesses.

One of the more interesting exports from East Texas was seeds of the bois d'arc tree (also known as Osage orange, after their softball sized but inedible fruit). The common name, "bois d'arc," pronounced *bo-dark*, is French for "bow-wood," a reference by early explorers to its use by the Osage and Comanche natives to make bows and war clubs. In addition to the unusual looking fruit, the tree sprouts large thorns along its branches. Bois d'arc seeds, which sold for \$50/bushel in 1850, were shipped all over the country to be planted in hedgerows. Severe pruning caused the thorny branches to resprout and grow thick, forming a barrier impenetrable to both men and livestock. These early fences were used by settlers to keep free range livestock out of vegetable gardens or to make holding pens, which were said to be "horse-high, bull-strong, and pig-tight" prior to the invention of barbed wire in 1874.

Pig iron was smelted from rich iron ore deposits in East Texas beginning with the Nash Furnace in northwestern Marion County around 1855. The resulting ingots were shipped out by steamboat for refining in iron and steel mills further east until local facilities were built, beginning with gun barrel manufacturing in the Civil War at Tyler and other Texas towns. The iron industry was further developed in Marion and Harrison Counties in the 1870s

| Jefferson exports for 1870 |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Cotton (bales)             | 76,328      |
| Dry hides                  | 84,762      |
| Green hides                | 18,471      |
| Wool (pounds)              | 87,623      |
| Peltries (animal pelts)    | 48,210      |
| Bois d' Arc seed, bushels  | 9,721       |
| Cattle, head               | 5,381       |
| Lumber, feet               | 121,000     |
| Pig iron                   | amt not rec |

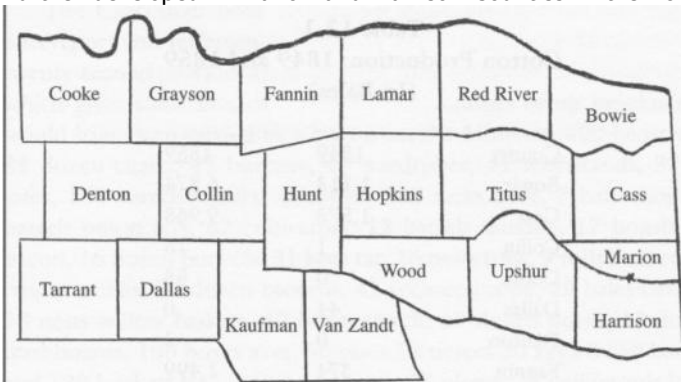


Figure 4 Texas counties using steamboat transport for trade goods on Cypress Bayou and the Lakes, particularly before the railroads were built.




Figure 5 Unloading cotton bales from a steamboat with a hand cart.

and 1880s. The old Marshall Wheel and Foundry (later Cobb Industries) and Smith Steel Casting facilities were still operating into the 1970s.

Not shown on the list is an accounting of packed meat, possibly because by 1870 the smaller packeries in Jefferson had been displaced by a large facility three miles downstream of the town. (Jefferson residents were probably glad to be rid of the smell.) During the Civil War and for several years after, the large slaughterhouse and packery shipped out huge amounts of pickled meats, mostly beef and pork. Since there was no refrigeration, butchered meat was preserved by packing it in wooden barrels filled with brine of table salt and saltpeter. (Saltpeter is the common name for potassium nitrate, a key ingredient of gunpowder.) Although pickled beef may sound a little odd to us now, barrels of cured Texas beef shipped from Jefferson were in demand as far away as New York for \$12.33 per barrel in 1859. It was common for a steamboat to haul a cargo with 400 tierces (large barrels) of beef (350 lb/barrel). Salt curing of meats is still used today, particularly for ham and fish.


The heyday of the steamboats on Cypress Bayou and the lakes took place during the thirty-three year span between 1840 and 1873. Two events in the mid 1870s would eventually doom the steamboat trade. The most important was the completion of new railroad lines which allowed trains to compete on both price and timeliness for freight hauling. In addition, the second clearing of the Great Raft above Shreveport and the blocking of the distributaries of the Red River caused the lake levels to drop, hindering navigation. Even so, steamboat activity continued at a declining pace on Cypress Bayou and the lakes until the last steamboat made the trip to Jefferson and back in 1905.



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