

Bridges in the Upper Tombigbee River Valley  
(Tishomingo, Itawamba, Monroe, Clay,  
Lowndes, (and Noxubee Counties)  
Mississippi

HAER MS-11

COLUMBIA VICINITY

HAER  
MISS,  
44-COLUM.V,  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

MS-11

BRIDGES IN THE UPPER TOMBIGBEE  
RIVER VALLEY

HAER  
MISS  
44-COLUM.  
3-

Location: Along the upper Tombigbee River Valley in the areas to be flooded out, or directly impacted by the Army Corps of Engineers Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project. This area is largely within northeastern Mississippi but it also includes a part of west central Alabama.

Dates of Construction: 19th/20th Centuries.

Present Owners: Various, including Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi State Highway Department, Alabama State Highway Department and private railroads.

Historian: Sean Fitzpatrick

Transmitted by: Dan Clement, 1983. Please see HAER AL-7 for photographs on the Alabama bridges in the Tombigbee River Valley.

## I - Introduction

This study of bridges in the Upper Tombigbee Valley by the Historic American Engineering Record is one of many projects recording the historical and other cultural resources in the Tennessee-Tombigbee Multi-Resource District (MRD). The MRD is about 131 miles long and about five miles wide. It is roughly centered on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway from Paden, Mississippi, south to Gainsville, Alabama. The HAER survey covers a larger region. The Mississippi River and the fifteen road and six railroad bridges that cross it are part of a regional transportation net that developed between 1800 and World War II.<sup>1</sup> The story of bridges in the Upper Tombigbee river valley is part of the story of the changing relationships between the river, the railroads, and the highways in NE Mississippi. The first settlers of European stock reached the area when Robert Fulton and others were perfecting the steamboat. During the 19th century, the river was variously and simultaneously the principal avenue of transportation and its chief obstacle. The ante-bellum riverboats carried the bulk of commerce; landings spotted the riverbank, and some became villages only because bad roads and river crossings made the towns inconvenient. The railroads were first conceived of as feeders to the river; in the end they entirely supplanted it. The highway bridges linked the towns with their hinterlands and made the railheads as convenient as the riverbanks. By the time Henry Ford had sent the automobile swarming across the continent, the Tombigbee was irrelevant as thoroughfare or obstacle.

The focus of this report is the inventory of the individual bridge sites and the discussion of the five major highway bridges built by individual counties between 1870 and 1907. This research is based largely on primary sources. For the convenience of the reader, the sections are preceded by a summary of

the Tombigbee's history, condensed from secondary material, and in some cases inferred from it. Since the Tombigbee is not a tributary to the Mississippi, it is not included in government reports and scholarly studies of "the Western Rivers." Some of the material, nonetheless, bears upon the Tombigbee, e.g., steamboat design.

KEY TO BRIDGE LOCATIONS

- 1-Bay Springs, Tishomingo Co., Ms.
- 2-Fulton, Itawamba Co., Ms.
- 3-Ironwood Bluffs, Itawamba Co., Ms.
- 4-Barr's Ferry, Itawamba Co., Ms.
- 5-Bull Mountain creek, Monroe and Itawamba Counties, Ms.
- 6-Amory-Bigbee, Monroe Co., Ms.
- 7-Amory Railroad (Frisco RR), Monroe Co., Ms.
- 8-Amory bridge, U.S. route 278, Monroe Co., Ms.
- 9-Cotton Gin Port, Monroe Co., Ms.
- 10-Aberdeen (Frisco RR), Monroe Co., Ms.
- 11-Martin's Bluff (East Aberdeen), Monroe Co., Ms.
- 12-Buttahatchie bridge, Ms. route 373, Monroe and Lowndes Counties, Ms.
- 13-U.S. route 45, Monroe and Lowndes Co., Ms.
- 14-Lawrerence Ferry bridge, Caledonia, Lowndes Co., Ms.
- 15-Waverly Railroad (Columbus and Greenville RR), Clay,  
Lowndes Counties, Ms.
- 16-Waverly, Clay, Lowndes Counties, Ms.
- 17-Tibbee, Clay Co., Ms.
- 18-Catalpa creek, Clay and Lowndes Counties, Ms.
- 19-U.S. 45/82 Bypass, Columbus, Lowndes Co., Ms.
- 20-Columbus, Lowndes Co., Ms.
- 21-Blewett's bridge, Lowndes Co., Ms.
- 22-Columbus Railroad (Illinois Central Gulf), Lowndes  
Co., Ms.
- 23-Jemison's Mill bridge, Lowndes Co., Ms.

24-Steen's, Lowndes Co., Ms.

South of Columbus:

25-Milner bridge, Pickins and Sumter Counties, Ala.

26-Cochrane Railroad (Frisco RR), Sumter and Pickins  
Counties, Ala.

27-Tutwiler bridge, Sumter Co., Ala.

28-Epes Railroad (Southern RR), Sumter Co., Ala.

29-Epes, Sumter Co., Ala.

30-Mahorner's bridge, Noxubee Co., Ms.

## II - The Upper Tombigbee Valley - Natural Features

The Tombigbee river rises in the last outcroppings of the Appalachian mountain chain on the southern slope of the Tennessee valley divide. It flows south about eighty miles to Columbus, Mississippi, then southeast 55 miles to Epes, Alabama. From Epes, the Tombigbee flows another twenty miles to Demopolis at the confluence with the Warrior river. On the east side of the watershed are the Tennessee hills, in Tishomingo, Itawamba, eastern Monroe, and Lowndes counties, Mississippi, and Pickins and Greene counties, Alabama. The soil to the east is yellow loam, and because of the natural forestation, geologists further identify the region the "shortleaf pine uplands with oak and hickory." It is mostly uncultivated, and was never as dependent upon cotton as the black belt prairie lands to the west of the river. These include Lee county, western Monroe and Lowndes counties, and the eastern parts of Chickasaw, Clay, Oktibbeha, and Noxubee counties, Mississippi, and Sumter county, Alabama. The Selma chalk formation underlies the rolling, almost treeless prairie. The black, sticky soil of rotten limestone and clay is exceedingly fertile, and from the first settlement was so intensively devoted to cotton growing that corn, hay, flour, and meat had to be imported. More than 50% of the tilled land in these counties was sown in cotton, and while yields were high during the ante-bellum period the region was resplendently prosperous. The Civil War and Emancipation brought physical and economic havoc; cotton remained the cash crop, but low yields due to soil depletion held the area back. Finally, in the first decade of the 20th century, the boll weevil forced the farmers to diversify, and now cotton shares the land with soy beans, corn, hay, dairy herds, and other livestock.<sup>1</sup>

The river section that flows through this fertile valley begins in extreme northern Itawamba county at the confluence of Big Brown creek and Mackey's creek. The latter drains lower Tishomingo county. In its upper reaches, the river here and there presses its course through narrow, rocky gorges, as at Bay Springs, but farther down it meanders through a wider valley floor in the manner of the river section through Itawamba. In Itawamba and in upper Monroe the narrow stream flows through a timbered valley about two to three miles wide, which floods during high water. West of Amory, Old Town creek, also known as the West Fork and fully as large as the East Fork, joins the Tombigbee.

The river channel loops and twists back and forth across the valley floor, so that the channel is two miles long for every mile advanced. In these serpentine migrations, it sheds bends, which are visible from the air as long pools or lighter, wetter patches in the darker foliage. Below Amory, the bends bring the channel against the enclosing highlands to form bluffs, especially on the west side, where the river encounters the Selma chalk formation. At these places, high white limestone bluffs characteristically face a wide, terraced flood plain on the east bank. From Columbus to Demopolis the river borders or cuts through the black belt prairie land and the underlying chalk formation.<sup>2</sup>

Below Mackey's creek, these are the tributaries important in this study.

1 -- Bull Mountain creek drains eastern Itawamba county; enters just north of the Monroe county line, near Ironwoods Bluff bridge.

2 -- Old Town creek or the West Fork, just west of Amory. Steamboats from Mobile came up to Camargo and City Point (both long vanished) in the late 1840s and '50s.

3 -- James creek flows southeast on the outskirts of Aberdeen and enters about 2.5 miles downstream from that town.

4 -- Buttahatchie river is the boundary between Monroe and Lowndes counties.

5 -- Town creek enters from the West about three miles down from the Buttahatchie.

6 -- Tibbee creek, the border between Clay and Lowndes, was once the border between the Chickasaw and Choctaw indian nations. Declared navigable in 1839. During the 1840s keelboats brought cotton down the Tibbee and its tributaries to the steamers on the Tombigbee.

7 -- Luxapalila creek flows southwest from Lamar county, Ala., into the river 1.5 miles south of Columbus.

There are about a dozen creeks entering the river between the Luxapalila and the Sipsey river, whose mouth is about a mile below the extinct town of Vienna, Ala.

8 -- Noxubee river enters two miles above Gainesville, Ala. In the 1880s the government improved the channel for navigation as far as Macon, Ms. Maintenance work ceased in 1899.

At Demopolis, the upper or "Little Tombigbee" joins the Warrior river, which drains the Alabama coal fields. Navigation improvements began on the Tombigbee in 1871 and on the Warrior in 1874. The Black Warrior (above Tuscaloosa)-Warrior-Tombigbee-Mobile river system has been improved with canals to provide a year round channel from the Warrior coal fields to Mobile.<sup>3</sup>

The present construction of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway will provide a similar link with the Ohio and Tennessee river systems.

### Settlement

By 1805 the United States had received title to the southwestern and southern parts of Mississippi from the Spanish and the Indians. When Mississippi became a state in 1817, with one small exception the rest of the state was still Indian territory. The exception comprised those parts of Monroe and Lowndes counties east of the river, which the Chickasaw nation had yielded in 1816. Treaties of 1830 (Treaty of Dancing Rabbit with the Choctaw) and 1832 (Treaty of Pontotoc with the Chickasaw) opened the valley to white settlement. In 1820 the Choctaws had ceded the SW portion of their territory (Treaty of Doak's Stand). The lines of the Indian cessions and the Indian trails determined the location of settlements and of major roads.<sup>4</sup>

The first European exploration of the Tombigbee valley was by the Spaniard Hernando de Soto, whose army crossed the river in December 1540, near Aberdeen. The Chickasaw Indian Nation had established prior residence, which they defended with thumping success against armed threats first by de Soto, and after 1682, by the French, whose Mississippi empire the Chickasaw's hostile independence cut in two. The French, unable to induce the Chickasaw to join the tribes to the North and South in clientship, sought with these client tribes to reduce them by constant pressure and by several expeditions bent on extermination. Thus, the Chickasaw, in their opposition to the French, made expedient alliance with the British, to whom the French yielded their claims east of the Mississippi river in 1763. The Chickasaw continued this amicable relationship with the new American nation, before whose

expansion the Chickasaw and Choctaw gradually and peacefully retreated to the "Indian Territory" beyond the Mississippi river.<sup>5</sup>

During the period of indian occupation five trunk or post roads traversed the Tenn-Tom MRD: the Natchez trace (1800); the Gaines' trace (1810); Jackson's Military road (1816); the Robinson road (1824); and the "Choctaw-Chickasaw trail," also known as "Gaines' Old trace." The Natchez trace was designated as the post road between Natchez on the Mississippi river and Nashville, Tenn., in 1800, and the government improved the roadway during the next two years. However, it is probable that at no time during the next twenty years could a traveler depend upon finding accommodations over the entire length of the trail. This was especially true on the part of the trace through the Chickasaw nation, and in 1821 the post road was shifted southward. The trace connected the Natchez district with the NE through the intervening indian territory. It was much used by keelboat and flatboat crews returning from New Orleans to the Ohio basin. The trace crosses the MRD about two miles south of Paden, Ms.<sup>6</sup>

In 1801, the U.S. government established a cotton gin for the Chickasaw on the west bank of the Tombigbee river, opposite the end of an indian trail from Muscle Shoals, Ala. The trail was surveyed and marked during the winter of 1807-08 by Edmund P. Gaines; when Gaines' brother opened it as a pack trail in 1810, it became known as Gaines' trace. About this time, the bluff at which the trace terminated was known as Cotton Gin Port. In 1816, the Chickasaw ceded their land east of the river and south of Gaines' trace, and indian traders settled at Cotton Gin Port.<sup>7</sup>

Columbus was founded the next year and in 1820 was incorporated as a town, by which time Cotton Gin was populous enough to be considered an unorganized

town.<sup>8</sup> While Columbus gained substance, the government built the Jackson Military road, from Louisiana to Columbia, Tenn. In early 1821 the post road from Nashville was shifted to the Military road as far as Columbus.<sup>9</sup> From there the post route went north through Cotton Gin to Fulsom's Pigeon Roost, a "stand" or overnight stop, on the Natchez trace and thence to Jackson and Natchez. This was a roundabout path, so in 1821 Congress approved the construction of the Robinson road through the Choctaw nation to meet the trace about twenty miles NE of Jackson, the new state capital, thereby cutting the distance in half. It opened in 1824; two years later, Congress appropriated \$15,000 for repairs and improvements, including four miles of embankment across the Noxubee river floodplain. In the late 1820s there was a stagecoach line operating through Columbus between Jackson and Tuscaloosa, Ala.<sup>10</sup> The name and route of the Robinson road are yet preserved in Lowndes county, although not together. The old Robinson road went west from Columbus' Main St. bridge on U.S. 45/82 (Ms. 12) to Motley road; thereby to the vicinity of the Golden Triangle airport, where it swung southwest to pass near Artesia, and took the route of Schlater road out of the county. The road now marked "Robinson road" may be a later alternative route.<sup>11</sup>

This shorter route had been much desired by the settlers of the 1816 session. Until the Robinson road was completed, residents of Monroe county (then including Lowndes) had to travel 260 miles to the state capital by going through Cotton Gin Port and then up the Natchez trace at Pontotoc (shortened to Fulsom's Pigeon Roost in 1821). They probably picked up the "Choctaw-Chickasaw trail" about ten miles west of Cotton Gin. This indian trail appears in history as early as 1736, when Choctaw raiders used it on their way to attack the villages at the "Chickasaw Old Fields" near Old Town creek. The

trail crossed Tibbee creek at Plymouth (an extinct town two miles west of Columbus), went through Waverly, and swung NW toward the Indian Long Towns near Pontotoc. In the 1830s, the Columbus-Pontotoc road crossed the river at Waverly and probably followed this trail north.<sup>12</sup>

Settlement was rapid after the Indian cessions. By 1825 there were 4,563 people living in the 1816 cession. In 1830 the Choctaw ceded the last of their land west of the river and south of Tibbee creek. In 1832 the Chickasaw, too, gave up and moved west, opening the upper part of the region to settlement. In 1821, the 1816 cession was designated Monroe county. In 1830 the part south of the Buttahatchie river, plus new lands in the Choctaw cession, was organized as Lowndes county. Itawamba (including part of Lee, formed in 1866) and Tishomingo (including part of Prentiss, formed in 1870) were formed in 1836. By 1840 there were villages or towns at Bay Springs, Fulton, Aberdeen, Colbert, and Waverly.<sup>13</sup>

### III -- Roads and Ferries

Establishment and maintenance of roads, ferries, and bridges were the responsibility of the county boards of supervisors (known until 1870 as police boards). Private individuals usually operated ferries under the regulation of the police board, which granted the concession and set rates for tolls. Some important ferries were declared "free," at least for county residents, and the ferryman's wages were paid by the county.

The state legislature sometimes granted charters to individuals or companies to build and operate toll bridges. Others just went ahead on their own.

Thomas Blewett gave Lowndes county residents free passage across his covered

bridge southeast of Columbus for twenty-five years before the War. A contemporary of Blewett's, Robert Jemison, established a grist mill near Steens, east of Columbus, in 1837. He supposedly built seven covered bridges on roads leading to his mill.<sup>1</sup>

The procedures for selecting and repairing public roads changed little from the pioneer days to 1916. Upon a petition to have a route declared a public thoroughfare, the supervisors appointed a jury to lay out the road and mark it. Maintenance was delegated to the road overseers, each responsible for a section of roadway, who could form work parties from their neighbors. State law in Mississippi put an annual levy of ten eight-hour days on each able-bodied man, 18 to 60 years old. Under this system, general throughout the nation, road construction and repair were left to unskilled overseers and a reluctant work force. Grading, draining, and surfacing were unknown. Road repairs consisted of some pick and shovel work to fill in the holes and perhaps dragging a couple of logs over the road to break down clods and ruts. Furthermore, each county operated as an independent "barony"; the roads were not thought of as a part of a statewide or national system.<sup>2</sup> Although roads, ferries, and especially bridges made up a fourth to a half of the business recorded in the supervisor's minutes of Lowndes, Monroe, and Noxubee counties, Mississippi's counties disposed neither the money, skill, nor the energy to overcome the natural obstacles of woods, swamps, flooded river bottoms, and one of the stickiest combinations of weather and soil known to man. Most of the references in the minutes are to road overseers' appointments; to consideration of petitions to open, close, or change a route; to ad hoc commissions to supervise the contracting for a bridge; and to occasional exhortations or disciplinary actions aimed at the overseers.<sup>3</sup>

The unmatched impassibility of Mississippi's roads probably spared the state the scathing observations of that 19th century type, the gimlet-eyed, razor-tongued visitor from back East or Europe, whose journals vigorously recorded and delightedly published the crudities of other states of the New South.<sup>4</sup> It did not, however, escape denunciation from resident journalists, who decried the impediment that the roads posed to local commerce.<sup>5</sup>

Not only did the roads vary from rock-hard to goeey mud, according to the weather, but the route shifted, as the police courts responded to petitions to change a few yards or a few miles of public road. County maps show the meandering roads produced by these piecemeal course changes. There is seldom more than a half-mile straight-away between bends.<sup>6</sup> After WWI, and particularly during the New Deal, with federal assistance, the state took over the trunk roads. U.S. route 78 in Itawamba, and U.S. 45 in Monroe and Lowndes run undeviatingly over the countryside. The straight road is the mark of both high speed vehicles and a strong imperium: a Caesar, a Napoleon, a Roosevelt. It is no coincidence that the modernization of Mississippi's highway administration was galvanized by the demands of transporting men and materials in wartime.<sup>7</sup>

The best early road maps of the Mississippi River delta are in the Atlas of the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion (called the O.R. Atlas). Using it, earlier less accurate maps, and documentary sources, we can gain an idea of the trunk roads along the Tombigbee during the 19th century.<sup>8</sup> One very important thoroughfare was the Aberdeen-Columbus road. There were two routes between these towns. Ferries and bridges changed their relative importance, changes reflected by the growth and decline of wayside

villages. After the 1816 cession, the road went north from Columbus across the Buttahatchie river to the original Hamilton (seat of Monroe Countes 1821-30), then to Cotton Gin Port. This was the post route to Natchez before the Robinson road opened in 1824. The present Ms. 373 follows this route from south of Columbus Air Force Base to the junction with U.S. 45. Soon after the Chickasaw lands west of the river opened in 1832, a ferry was established to the western bank in the Colbert-Barton-Vinton area, about 2.5 miles south of the Buttahatchie.<sup>9</sup> By the early 1840s, the main road to Aberdeen crossed here and went north along the west bank. Some indications of its predominance are: 1 - in 1844 Monroe county built a covered bridge where the road crossed James creek;<sup>10</sup> 2 - in 1851 Lowndes county made the Vinton ferry free-of-charge, and it was advertised as being on the "main throroughfare between Columbus and Aberdeen";<sup>11</sup> 3 - maps of the 1840s show only the east side route, those of the 1850s show only the west side route, and the O.R. shows both; and 5 - by the 1850s there were two stage lines operating through Barton between Columbus and Aberdeen. Competition was fierce enough to inspire not only several fatal brawls between rival drivers, but also a merger of the two companies.<sup>12</sup>

The advantage of the western route was that it avoided crossing the Buttahatchie, which is fairly fast flowing and deep, even during the summer. Until the Buttahatchie was bridged, the eastern route to Aberdeen had two ferries, versus one at Colbert for the western road. By the Civil War, there was a bridge across the Buttahatchie, and after the Aberdeen bridge replaced the ferry at Martin's Bluff in 1873, the advantage was clearly with the eastern road. In fact, the Vinton area declined in the 1870s, as the railroad drew off its cotton shipping and the road traffic was diverted.<sup>13</sup> Forty years

earlier, Hamilton had suffered a similar decline. It started when the county seat was moved to Athens in 1830. Five years later Aberdeen was founded on the west bank. Its rising importance eclipsed Martin's Bluff and Cotton Gin, and the traffic shifted to the more convenient road through Colbert. Hamilton remained a post office and the maps show a road from Barton to Hamilton, but by 1843 the village had reverted to field.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth looking briefly at the history of the road through Colbert, Barton, and Vinton for it shows the importance of the route and the sensitivity of settlements to economic competition.<sup>15</sup> The Aberdeen-Columbus road crossed the Tombigbee west of Columbus AFB where the river bends sharply east around some highlands and then turns sharply south again, producing bluffs on the west and south side. In 1836 Colbert was founded at the ferry about 0.9 mile south of the second bend. Its promoters (i.e. "developers") advertised it as being on the direct line between Columbus and Pontotoc, so "of course the great thoroughfare from Memphis...via Pontotoc, to Columbus, Tuscaloosa, &c must necessarily cross the river at this point," so it did, via Aberdeen. Though a bridge chartered in 1838 was never built, Colbert flourished during the next ten years as a social center, ferry, and steamer landing. Road traffic was lucrative enough to attract competition: i.e., the Keaton ferry at Millstone creek above the upper bend (1843), and the Barton ferry just below the lower end (1846). Both ferries had roads connecting them with the Columbus-Colbert-Aberdeen road. In December, 1847 Colbert was almost completely wiped out by the great flood of that year, and by the next summer the highlands west of the Barton ferry were being settled. Barton's promoters tried to build a road from their ferry through their town to the road leading down to the Keaton ferry, a move that the Keaton brothers successfully blocked

before the Lowndes Police Board Court. In 1851 the police board abolished the Colbert and Barton ferries at the request of several citizens. Two of these petitioners then opened the Jackson Springs ferry midway between the two discontinued ferries. Two years later they successfully quashed a petition to re-open the Barton ferry.

Barton's population in 1850 was 151 including 41 slaves and in 1860 the Barton-Vinton population was 191 including 67 slaves. Barton declined as a town after the simultaneous arrival in December 1857 of the railroad and a flood. The Vinton ferry continued to operate into the late 19th century. The Jackson Springs ferry, known as the Barton ferry, was discontinued in the mid-20th century and ended a revival in the early 1960s. All three town sites as well as Barton's ferry were steamboat stops into the later part of the 19th century.<sup>16</sup>

The ferry technology seems to have changed little from the 1830s to the 1960s. The ferries were flat-bottomed, square-ended boats. They had to be large and strong enough to carry the largest farm wagons and stagecoaches but light enough to be operated by hand. They also had to be secured against the current without obstructing river traffic.

In 1879 Itawamba county paid \$70 for a new ferry boat for the crossing at Fulton.<sup>17</sup> It was 45 feet long, 12 feet wide, and about 20 inches deep. The sides were 7 inches thick and made of heart pine; the rest of the boat was white oak heart wood. The deck was four inches above the bottom, which was coated with tar. The Fulton ferry was fastened by ropes at both ends to pulleys on a thick cable that spanned the river about waist high. The

ferryman hauled the boat across the river by pulling on the cable. Some ferries are described as "current operated," with no further explanation. Perhaps slacking off the rear line so the boat was angled to the current would produce enough lateral force to propel the boat. Zereda Greene may have been describing something like this when she recalled that in the early 20th century "In times of high water the force of the river was so great against the side of the [Fulton] ferry that the ferryman would release one pulley and carry the boat across the river with the end upstream." Greene's interpretation may not be accurate, as she adds that she never crossed this way; hence, the ferryman may have been using the current, not avoiding it. North of Columbus, the roads converged to ferries at Cotton Gin Port and Martin's Bluff. There were other crossings, which seem to have existed as remnants of earlier through routes; because the roads were so bad that shorter ways were preferable, even after bridges were built; and as roads converging to a steamboat landing. This third point, especially, may explain the course of the Cotton Gin-Smithville-Fulton road at the time of the Civil War. It turned north from Gaines' trace SW of Smithville, then crossed the county line where Bull Mountain creek flows around the south side of a bluff. One-and-a-half miles north at Ironwood Bluffs, the road veered NW to cross the river at the Ironwood Bluffs ferry, then crossed again near Bean's ferry. Beyond Fulton it ran north and entered Prentiss county near Saucer Creek Church, crossed Mackey's creek east-to-west near Moore's Mills, and then crossed it back again at Bay Springs. County roads still follow the route closely from Bay Springs to Ironwood Bluffs, the site of which is just north of New Chapel Church off Ms. 25.

Early travel -- The Uses of the Roads

From the time of earliest settlement until the river was no longer a thoroughfare, the river was dominant, the roads subservient or at best complimentary. They provided access to the river, were used where there were no water routes, and were resorted to when the river was low. In 1810, the United States had a "factory" at Fort St. Stephens, far down the Tombigbee in Alabama. From there they competed for the indian trade with the Spanish outposts on the Gulf. In order to avoid the severe harrassment of the Spanish customs bureaucrats at Mobile, the federal government decided to ship supplies from Pittsburg down the Ohio and up the Tennessee river to Colbert's ferry, which was near Muscle Shoals, Ala. At the War Department's direction, the factor at St. Stephens, George S. Gaines, obtained permission from the Chickasaw to open a horse trail from Muscle Shoals to Cotton Gin Port. Gaines continued overland to John Pitchlynn's place where the Choctaw-Chickasaw trail crossed Tibbee creek. There, Pitchlynn helped Gaines transfer the goods to boats. Gaines' supplies came this way until the Spanish moved out of Mobile in April 1813.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1840s and 1850s there were twice and thrice weekly stagecoach connections from Columbus and Aberdeen to Pontotoc (government land office), Houston, and Oxford (federal court and "Ole Miss" university). Planters from these regions shipped their cotton on the Tombigbee and would themselves take the steamers at Aberdeen to go to Mobile for shopping trips or for Mardi Gras. When the water was low, the stage journey would continue to Barton, and in summer all the way to Gainesville, Ala. In June 1855, there were advertised daily coaches from Aberdeen to Montgomery, Ala., via Pickensville and the towns on Ala. route 14, to Selma, thence by riverboat to Montgomery.

There was also regular stagecoach and mail service from Columbus through Aberdeen, Cotton Gin Port, Smithville, Fulton, Bay Springs, and Highlands to East Port on the Tennessee river.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV -- Bridging

Unlike the road maintenance, bridge building required some expenditure of county funds. Bridges required specialized skills, and although contemporary and modern writers usually say that these skills were not beyond any skillful, experienced carpenter, in fact the same names keep appearing in the supervisor's minutes. Some men made quite a business of building bridges, and some gained a local reputation as bridge builders.

Robert Jemison started grist and lumber mills on the Luxapalila near Steens, in Lowndes county, around 1837. He is supposed to have built as many as seven bridges on roads leading to his mills. The same man, or his namesake and heir, was one of the two men who took up the capital stock of the company that built a bridge across the Tombigbee at Columbus in 1842. The other stockholder was Seth King, a bridge builder and proprietor from Tuscaloosa. Jemison was from Tuscaloosa, and in the 1820s had been part owner of a stage line from that city to Jackson, Ms.<sup>1</sup> Two other ante-bellum bridge builders in Lowndes were Hardy Stevens and Green T. Hill. The latter died in 1870, with such a reputation that Blewett's bridge over the Luxapalila became known as the Green Hill bridge.

Lewis Dent Booth lived in SE Monroe county after the Civil War. He built many wooden bridges on the creeks in the area as well as the approaches to some of the iron and steel bridges, including the 1899 bridge on the Tombigbee north of Amory.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the bridges were simple trestle bridges. When the board approved a petition for a bridge, they appointed a commission of local citizens to handle the contracting. Usually, the only subsequent notices in the Minutes are the accepted contracted price, the report of the commissioners that the work had been completed and inspected, and the payment authorized. These bridges cost only a few hundred dollars. For instance, at the August meeting in 1879, the Lowndes county supervisors let contracts for a 114-foot bridge for \$220; four bridges totaling 242 feet for \$373; and one other bridge for \$160. All these bridges were in the southern part of the county west of the river, where the creeks are slow and shallow. Where fast currents and deeper beds made trestling impracticable, longer spans had to be used. Before the War these had to be wooden truss spans, usually covered. They can be identified by specific mention in the supervisor's minutes, or by the price. The bridge on the Columbus-Aberdeen road over James creek cost \$500 in 1844; the covering cost an additional \$345 in 1849. The bridge over the Buttahatchie on the Columbus-Aberdeen road, one of Green T. Hill's efforts, cost "not less than \$2,500," complete with lattice truss, weather boarding, and a shingled roof.<sup>3</sup> Hill finished it in March 1861 and it lasted sixty years. Or rather, there was a covered wooden bridge on the site until the early 1920s. The last covered bridge there had concrete piers, which would have been impossible in 1861.<sup>4</sup> This is a minor but important point, since popular accounts, especially in newspapers, often assume that an "old style" structure is the original one on the site. The author has found similar misattributions of antiquity for the James Creek covered bridge and the Jemison's Mills bridge over the Luxapalila near Steens.

One puzzling entry in the Monroe county supervisor's minutes concerns L.D. Booth. In 1900 he was paid \$153.50 to build a bridge over Weaver creek on the Aberdeen-Amory road. The price included covering except for the swing span. Booth subsequently received another \$48 for "covering" and \$48.70 more for extra work. Besides the inexplicable swing span over an unnavigated stream, this bridge is notable for being one of last covered bridges built in the area.<sup>5</sup> The covered bridges were durable, but they could be damaged and were more subject to decay than steel. After the production cost of steel dropped in the 1880s and small bridge companies began competing for the business that had previously gone to local carpenters, iron and steel bridges began to replace the wooden trusses. In Mississippi the wrought iron bridge first spanned wide crossings where wood could not be used; then steel and wrought iron supplanted wood for the shorter spans.

This survey did not try to find every bridge contract let by the counties, but the informal impression confirms the expectation that the introduction of metal bridges was gradual, and it accelerated as the last generation of wooden bridges needed replacing. One of the region's earliest small metal trusses was the bridge at Tibbee on the Columbus-West Point road, built by the Southern Bridge Company of Birmingham, Ala. in 1896<sup>6</sup> (HAER photos MS 11-66.67). The Lawrence bridge, which, until it collapsed in 1951, spanned the Buttahatchie north of Caledonia, may have been even older.<sup>7</sup> By 1930, Lowndes county had some twenty steel bridges, 20 to 400 feet in length.<sup>8</sup>

## V -- Riverboats

If cotton was the heart of the region's economy, then the Mississippi river was the principal artery. Cotton went down the river to Mobile to be shipped to England and New England; up the river came the luxuries, and the necessities that the cotton growers could not spare time or land to produce. Aberdeen was the nominal head of navigation, but Cotton Gin Port was open long enough each season to be included in the direct service from Mobile. Until the railroad arrived in 1860, boats from Mobile also went up Old Town creek to Camargo and to City Point, the port of Verona. Before and after the War, smaller boats went as far as Fulton, with stops at Barr's Ferry (Smithville's landing), Ironwood Bluffs, and Van Buren. The towns were river towns, and most of the interior villages had a road to at least a small river landing. Keelboats and flatboats were used, especially on the navigable tributaries, but it is probably an accurate reflection of their importance that they have almost no place in local history and reminiscences of river commerce. In contrast to the Mississippi system, the Tombigbee had a very limited economy. Most of the Mississippi flat boat traffic originated in the Ohio valley, which shipped farm products, raw materials, manufactured goods, and processed food stuffs. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, large and small timber cutting operations began clearing the wide river bottoms and floating the logs down the Tombigbee to mills or railroads.<sup>1</sup>

### Steamboats

According to local tradition, the first steamboat reached Columbus in 1822. There was only occasional service until the early 1830s, when several boats were making regular trips to Columbus and beyond. By 1835, they went as high

as Martin's Bluff and Cotton Gin Port. The heyday for the steamboats was the two decades before the Civil War. During the 1851 season five packets made weekly round trips between Mobile and Columbus, some continuing to Aberdeen. According to an advertised schedule, one boat left Mobile at 5 pm on Wednesday and arrived at Columbus at 8 am on Saturday. During that season, 13 boats made 113 trips between 9 December 1850 and 13 May 1851.<sup>2</sup>

The steamboats were the principal means of transportation through the region, especially for freight. They brought food, cloth, furniture, and mail upriver, and took the cotton, and the planters and their families to Mobile. So superior were they to road travel that on some stretches, especially below Columbus where the river cut right along the edge of the cotton-growing prairie, there was a landing every mile. These were "whistle stops," but they show the desire of the inhabitants to avoid the troubles and expense of traveling to and from the towns. At many of these landings, small settlements served the river trade: Cotton Gin Port, Waverly, Barton, Moore's Bluff, Nashville, Memphis, Fairfield, Vienna, and Warsaw all grew and declined with the steamboat.<sup>3</sup> Martin's Bluff and Westport were across the river from major towns. They survived in their shadows because of the difficulty of ferrying cotton and goods across the river. The stores at Martin's Bluff lost their trade when the Aberdeen bridge was built. Westport was never much more than a commercial center. It survived the building of a toll bridge into Columbus in 1844, but lost its advantage as a shipping post after the Mobile and Ohio RR branch reached Columbus in 1861.<sup>4</sup>

Almost all the steamboats on the Tombigbee were sternwheelers, which were better suited to the conditions there: shoals, narrow channels, sand bars,

ands snags.<sup>5</sup> But even with the amazingly light drafts achieved by some boats, the river was too shallow much of the year. Cotton Gin's season lasted two months; at Columbus it was six months. When the river was down, goods and travelers had to go by coaches. You will recall that the coach service from Aberdeen to Montgomery began on 5 June. This seasonal nature was one of the steamboat's chief disadvantages in competing with the railroad.

In general, the railroads competed technologically with the riverboats, if not economically, before the Civil War. The Southern railroads suffered debilitation from military action and deterioration of equipment. The river traffic experienced a brief boom while the railroads struggled with the financial and physical problems of rebuilding and expanding. By 1880, most of the cotton from the Mississippi part of the Tombigbee valley was shipped on the Mobile and Ohio RR. The three Alabama counties continued to ship by river, as there were few railroad connections.<sup>6</sup>

TABLE 1: Ferries and Selected Steamboat Landings Above Epes, Ala., c. 1879 <sup>j</sup>

Landing <sup>j</sup>	Ferries <sup>j</sup>	Dist. above next landing <sup>j,k</sup> (miles)	Landings omitted/ number of miles <sup>k</sup>	Modern name <sup>l</sup> (ext.= extant)	References for ferries
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Alabama

Jones' Bluff <sup>m</sup>	F	1842-	3 miles	Epes	a
			20th C.		
Miller's Bluff			3	N. of Miller	
-----1/2					
Hay's Ferry	F	1850-	1		b,f
-----4/10					
Trussel's Ferry	F	1845-	2	Gladys' Landing	b,f,o
-----8/9					
Gainsville	F	1842-	1	Gainsville	a,b,c,e,f
			20th C.		
-----1/2					
Mouth of Noxubee River			1	Noxubee R.	
-----1/3					
Smith's Ferry	F		2	?Turkey Paw Cr.	
-----8/5					
Craig's Ferry	F		0.5		
-----1/1					

TABLE 1 (cont.):

Landing <sup>j</sup>	Ferries <sup>j</sup>	Dist. above next landing <sup>j,k</sup> (miles)	Landings omitted/ number of miles <sup>k</sup>	Modern name <sup>l</sup> (ext.= extant)	References for ferries
China Bluff		0.5			
-----2/1.5					
Warsaw	F 1850-	0.5		Warsaw (ext.)	a,b,f
-----1/2.5					
Hutton's Old F'ry	F ?1842-	0.5			a,b
-----7/10					
Mouth of Sipsey		3		Sipsey R.	
Vienna	F 1842-	3		Vienna (ext.)	a,b,c,f
-----8/11					
Stone's Ferry	F			May be the ferry at Fairfield	
Fairfield	F	1		Cochrane	c,f
-----6/8					
Memphis	?F	3		Memphis (ext.)	
-----2/6					
Ringgold's Bluff	F 1838-	3		Ringo's Bluff	n

TABLE 1 (cont.):

Landing <sup>j</sup>	Ferries <sup>j</sup>	Dist. above next landing <sup>j,k</sup> (miles)	Landings omitted/ number of miles <sup>k</sup>	Modern name <sup>l</sup> (ext.= extant)	Reference for ferries
Jackon's Ferry	F	5			
-----2/2					
Nance's Ferry	F 1853-	1		Pickin's Ferry	c, f
Pickinsville		1		Pickinsville	
-----2/3					
Mouth of Coal Fire Cr. <u>Mississippi</u>		1		Coal Fire Creek, Ala.	
Pinkin Creek		0.5		?Broken Pumpkin Creek, Ms.	
-----4/7.3					
Nashville	F 1860-	2		Nashville Ferry	f
-----3/7					
Moore's Bluff		2		Camp Pratt	i
Hairston's		1		Hairston Bend	
Lindsey's Ferry	F	8			
-----6/10.5					

TABLE 1 (cont.):

Landing <sup>j</sup>	Ferries <sup>j</sup>	Dist.	Landing omitted/ above number of miles <sup>k</sup> next landing <sup>j,k</sup> (miles)	Modern name <sup>1</sup> (ext.= extant)	References for ferries
Law's		1		?Columbus RR br.	
Columbus	F	1816- 1878	1	Columbus	
Westport	F	1834- 1840s	1		g
-----1/5					
Plymouth	F	1830s-	3		g
-----1/7					
Burt's Gin	F	1878	3		g
Waverly	F	1834- 1963	1	Waverly RR bridge	g
-----2/8					
Colbert's	F	1833- 1851	3		g
Barton's F'ry	F	1846- 1960s	0.5		g
-----1/0.5					
Barton's			0.5		
Vinton's F'ry	F	1843- late 19th c.	1		g

TABLE 1 (cont.):

Landing <sup>j</sup>	Ferries <sup>j</sup>	Dist. above next landing <sup>j,k</sup> (miles)	Landings omitted/ number of miles <sup>k</sup>	Modern name <sup>l</sup> (ext.= extant)	References for ferries
Hamilton's Old		8			At east end of hairpin bend below Mckinly Cr.
-----7/15					
Lackey's F'ry	F	1830s- 1880s	1		Just above h (abandoned) bend above James Creek
Martin's	F	1830- 1873	1		East g Aberdeen
Aberdeen	F	1855-	1		Aberdeen g,e,h RR bridge
-----5/10					
Cotton Gin Port	F	1810?- 1914	1		
Barr's F'ry	F	21850-21915			
Ironwood Bluff					
Bean's Ferry	F				
Fulton	F	c.		94 river miles above Aberdeen	
		1840-			
		1907			

TABLE 1 (cont.):

NOTES

<sup>a</sup>Morse & Breese, Alabama, 1842

<sup>b</sup>Mitchell, Alabama, 1853

<sup>c</sup>Colton, Alabama, 1853

<sup>d</sup>Mitchell, Mississippi, circa 1840-45

<sup>e</sup>Hilgard, Mississippi, [circa 1855]

<sup>f</sup>O.R., Atlas, 1865

<sup>g</sup>Elliott, Survey, ch. 2, 4-7

<sup>h</sup>Amory Advertiser, Monroe County

<sup>i</sup>"Riverboat file," Lowndes Co. Public Library

<sup>j</sup>These landings are from Berny, Alabama, (1879). Distances are not accurate, especially below Columbus, being there approximately 17% too great. A road crossing a river on a map is taken to imply a ferry.

<sup>k</sup>Miles between selected landings inclusive of "Dist. above next landing."

<sup>l</sup>On USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps

<sup>m</sup>292 miles above Mobile

<sup>n</sup>LCFBC, Apr 1839, in Prout, Historical Documents, 13

<sup>o</sup>Toumey, Map of Alabama, ca. 1845

## VI -- Railroads

The first railroad promoters in the Upper Tombigbee valley, and throughout Mississippi, thought to extend the influence of the river traffic. Their vision was intra-regional, very much like that of the eastern financiers of the early urban-rural railroads, who wanted to advance their cities' commercial interests and who positively discouraged through-connections.<sup>1</sup> In the 1850s, the railroads broke away from the river, and the first completed line was inter-regional. The Mobile & Ohio reached West Point in 1857, and the Ohio river in 1861. At the same time, the branch from Artesia to Columbus opened, crossing the first railroad bridge over the river. After the War, ambition expanded. The railroads were thought of in national terms, and even local lines made their plans with an eye to inter-regional and national connections.

The first railroads planned for the region were feeders to the river. Robert Gordon and his associates established Aberdeen at the head of navigation on the Tombigbee in 1836. In February of that year they had chartered the Aberdeen & Pontotoc Railroad and Banking Co. to tap the newly opened indian lands to the NW. On the same day, the state legislature incorporated the Tombigbee Railroad Co., to build a line from Columbus to connect with the Mississippi river at Vicksburg. Two years later the charter was amended to allow the company to limit construction to a line from Columbus southwestward to the country beyond the Noxubee river. Neither company laid any track. They foundered in the Panic of 1837 and the governor of Mississippi declared their charters forfeited in 1840.<sup>2</sup>

Two other unsuccessful schemes proposed rights of way that later companies used. They were the New Orleans, Jackson, & Great Northern before the War, and General Nathan Bedford Forrest's proposed line after the War. In the early 1850s citizens from Aberdeen arranged a merger of a proposed road from Canton, Ms. to Nashville, Tenn. with the N.O., J., & G.N. In 1853 the section of the line through Aberdeen was graded, but the railroad stopped building in 1858 after it reached Canton (where it met the Mississippi Central R.R. from Jackson, Tenn.). Aberdeen began building a branch along this grade to the M. & O. R.R. The War interrupted, and the branch was not finally completed and put into service until 1869. The M & O bought it in 1879. Train service stopped in the 1930s, and the right of way is now Ms. highway 25.<sup>3</sup>

The other route was surveyed down the east side of the river from Aberdeen in 1868, by one of the dozen corporations antecedent to the St. Louis & San Francisco R.R., which finally laid track on it in 1927-28. If Forrest's plans had matured before his death in 1877, there might have been a railroad bridge at Gainesville, Ala., for in 1872 the M & O was planning to extend its Gainesville branch across the river to Eutaw, to join Forrest's Selma, Marion, & Memphis R.R.<sup>4</sup>

Besides the M & O bridge at Columbus, there are three other railroad bridges across the Tombigbee in Mississippi, all first built in the late 1880s. The first two were built in 1886-87 by the Kansas City, Memphis, & Birmingham R.R. The plans for this road were made before the War, but progress was desultory until 1886. The main line opened between Memphis and Birmingham on 17 October 1887, and the next month residents of the moribund Cotton Gin Port

moved lock, stock, and barrel to Amory, the K.C., M., & B.'s new town 3.5 miles away: some rolled their buildings on logs and others carried them dismantled. The K.C., M. & B. completed the Aberdeen branch by the first of the year, making Aberdeen a three-railroad town. The Illinois Central had arrived there in 1882.<sup>5</sup>

A fourth line, the Georgia Pacific, contemplated reaching Aberdeen, but never built the branch. About 1870 General John B. Gordon began to assemble a trunk line to give Atlanta direct connections with the West Coast, by completing several unrealized lines in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Richmond Terminal Co. took up the plan, bought out Gordon, and purchased two franchises intended to link the Tombigbee with the Alabama coal fields. Neither had built anything, but one owned the partially-completed Greenville, Columbus, & Birmingham R.R. By 1876 these and other roads were consolidated as the Georgia Pacific. The Birmingham-Columbus branch opened in 1887, and the Greenville-Columbus section in April 1889. The branch to Aberdeen from Columbus had been surveyed in 1881, to cross the river at Lackey's Ferry. The branch was never built, perhaps because the G.P.'s management decided to connect with the M & O and the I.C. at West Point. Clay county induced the Richmond Terminal Co. to alter their route by giving the railroad \$40,000 in April of 1888. This eleventh hour diversion is apparent in the shape of the line west of Waverly, where it bulges north to pass through West Point.<sup>6</sup>

The donation of Clay county was in accord with the usual practice. The railroads received support from all levels of government, federal, state, county, and municipal. This was justified on the ground that the railroads were internal improvements and therefore a proper object of government's concern for the public good. The Mobile & Ohio and the New Orleans, Jackson,

& Great Northern, along with the other roads built during the 1850s, received state loans and federal land grants in return for special rates.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast with the higher levels of government, the individual county voter lacked both the philosophical and the concrete reasons for aiding the railroads. He was concerned about the money in his pocket. Advocates of subsidies had to convince him of the reality of the indirect benefits of the railroad, and persuade him that these "unrecoverable benefits" would pay him back in some tangible way for his tax money.<sup>8</sup> Their arguments provide a one-sided but probably accurate picture of the economic effects of transportation in the region.

In the early 1850s, the Mobile & Ohio R.R. began building north from Mobile. The Mississippi legislature had authorized the M & O to sell stock to the counties and towns along the right-of-way, and most jurisdictions made some investment. In 1854, Lowndes county subscribed for \$115,000, and Columbus for another \$50,000. Of the total, \$75,000 was to be spent on the Columbus branch, for which the local landowners donated the right-of-way and did the grading.<sup>9</sup> In April of 1851, during the public debate, the editor of the Primitive Republican recommended to his readers the pro-railroad views of a correspondent "O.K."<sup>10</sup> "O.K." predicted that the dividends on \$100,000 stock subscription (then the amount being proposed) would pay "into the county treasury from \$8,000 to \$12,000 yearly; a sum more than sufficient to pay all the expenses of the county government, and to relieve the citizens forever after from any county tax." He emphasized how much the railroad would reduce freight cost for goods imported into the county by showing what had been lost on account of the road not having been built years ago.

Is there are farmer in the county who does not recollect having had to pay for the single article of salt, five times its value? If the road were in operation, this would never occur, as it could be brought from Mobile in five hours. Take the article of flour -- its regular price is from \$5.50 to \$6, and yet during the last season [11] it sold here from \$10 to \$12. Bagging and rope which usually sells at 8 and 16 cents, at one time last fall brought 12 and 22 cents. There is another item which everyone uses -- Pork. It is driven here from Tennessee [i.e., in a livestock drive], and last fall brought  $5\frac{1}{2}$  cents. Now if the road was built, pork could be put up in Tennessee, and delivered here at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cents per pound and afford a larger return to the raiser than under the present mode; besides which, the purchaser, in addition to getting his meat at half price, is relieved from all care and trouble, relative to killing and having the meat spoil.

These comparisons were not with the steamboat rates, but with the land transportation costs when the river was down. However, "O.K." continued, the advantage of year-round service would compound the benefits of lower freight rates. The merchant would be spared the choice of either paying \$75 to \$100 per wagonload to have goods hauled from Memphis or Selma or tying up all his

capital by purchasing a year's supply all at once. In general, this would help the poorer man, for "the wealthy planter can obtain everything he needs for the year while the river is up; but the poor man who has not money to take a like advantage, must get it how and when he can, and pay whatever price is asked, or go without."<sup>12</sup>

Thirty-six years later, the state governor addressed a public meeting in Columbus on behalf of the directors of the Tombigbee Railroad Co., to urge the town to donate \$100,000 to that road. The speech was much like "O.K.'s" letter, except that its claims were based upon the actual experience of the region. The Tombigbee R.R., which would go either NNE to Sheffield or NE to Decatur, both on the Tennessee river in Alabama, was necessary, the governor said, lest Columbus be cut off from her eastern trade by roads then building, as the M & O and the Illinois Central cut off her western trade. Columbus also needed the line, so that competition would produce cheap freight rates. The town could expect the newly opened access to the iron and coal of Birmingham via the Georgia Pacific to create manufacturing opportunities, but could not profit therefrom unless it had cheap freight for distribution. In 1886, competition between the M & O and the I.C. had given Aberdeen and West Point lower rates than Columbus: sixty cents less per bale of cotton (\$21,000 on the 35,000 that Columbus shipped) and twenty-five cents less per barrel of flour (\$4,500 on 19,000 barrels). Finally (the newspaper reported), "He said the C.P. Railway has nearly paid back to Columbus the \$100,000 given it, in what had been saved to its citizens in the price of coal consumed by them. That it was estimated that we had consumed 15,000 tons of coal since that road had reached the coal fields and on which we had saved \$6 per ton or \$90,000.

This was estimating coal in 1872 at \$10.50 per ton, and for the last 3 years at \$4.50, when in fact much coal has been sold here at \$3.50 and some as low as \$2.50 per ton."<sup>13</sup>

#### VII -- Major County Bridges

Between 1870 and 1907, Mississippi counties built four iron highway bridges across the upper Tombigbee. Two were in Monroe Co., at Aberdeen (built between 1870 and 1873, HAER photos MS 11-15), and Amory (1898-99, photos MS 11-6, 7, 8); one each at Columbus, Lowndes Co. (1872-78, photos MS 11-38 thru MS 1-4), and Fulton, Itawamba Co. (1905-07). In addition, Noxubee Co. erected an iron swing bridge across the Noxubee river 6.6 miles NW of Shuqualak (1882-84, photos MS 11-52 thru MS 11-61, and 11-74). The bridges were the largest physical undertakings by the counties at the time. In them, the local governments faced problems of unaccustomed detail and scale; the size of the expenditures - perhaps as high as \$80,000 - and the long time frames required monthly progress reports and accounting of disbursements; contracts for the superstructures involved unfamiliar technical matters and negotiations with out-of-state bridge companies; and additional difficulties came from the enlarged opportunities for dishonesty, profiteering, and political conflict inherent in any large public works project. The boards of supervisors bypassed the usual roads maintenance apparatus and dealt directly with each part of the projects. The one exception was Lowndes Co., which initially set up a semi-independent Columbus Iron Free Bridge Commission. The supervisors took more direct control of the project in 1875, when an audit revealed that the commission's secretary-treasurer had diverted \$2,000 of the bridge fund to his own use.

### Motivation

It was typical of the county governments' tendency to consider immediate and particular problems that they built the five bridges to replace previous bridges or to improve upon existing ferries, rather than to complete a master transportation plan. The immediate motivation, as with the smaller county bridges, was a petition from local residents, and the anticipated results were convenience of travel and improved "Commerce...the great lever by which towns and cities are built up and sustained."<sup>1</sup> Beneath the general faith and hope in progress, more particular motives are discernable for some Tombigbee towns. Aberdeen, Columbus, and Fulton were the county seats and principal towns. Easy access, unhindered by floods, by the dangers and delays of ferries, and by the annoyance of tolls, were important to the commercial and political life of the counties. Aberdeen and Columbus were rail and river shipping points and needed connections with the hinterland to make full use of these advantages.

Aberdeen opened its own spur to the Mobile and Ohio R.R. mainline in the western part of the county in 1869, which probably had a large part in the supervisors' decision to build a bridge across the river to the eastern half of the county. Construction of the bridge was a step in the shift from river to rail transportation. Steamboats could land on both east and west banks of the river. By contrast, farmers on the east bank had to cross the river if they wished to ship by rail rather than wait several months for high water and the shipping season. After the rail spur eliminated a muddy ten-mile wagon trek to the M & O mainline, the hand-operated ferry must have suddenly seemed even more an obstacle in the fall of 1869.<sup>2</sup>

Columbus got its M & O spur just before the Civil War. The example of Aberdeen may have prompted the Lowndes supervisors to take decisive action - after two decades and some half-dozen abortive private schemes - to replace a wooden bridge that had washed out in the mid-1850s.<sup>3</sup>

Fulton was too far upriver to have much steamer service. The bridge there replaced a hand-operated ferry that was its link with the railroad at Tupelo, Fulton's market town and mail transshipping point.

The importance of circumventing the obstacle that the river posed to local travel and commerce was expressed by two newspaper editors, commenting on Columbus' situation in 1851 and 1877. In 1851, the editor of the Primitive Republican saw Columbus doing good business, but only by default of the competition. The town, he declaimed, was

profoundly asleep to her best interest. She seems perfectly satisfied with the trade she draws not so much from choice as necessity, without putting forth one particle of her strength to increase it. The roads leading into Columbus are, during the business season of the year, almost impassable, and...at two entrances to our town [are] those pests of travellers, toll bridges. [Emphasis in original]<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, "the extensive region of the country lying east and west of it [is] almost exclusively supplied through the merchants of Mobile instead of the merchants of this place."<sup>5</sup> Could anyone fail, he asked,

to foresee the advantages that would result to our town, in a commercial point of view, and which would be felt in all the varied relations of society, by keeping in circulation within our own limits that portion of our labors which annually goes into the pockets of foreign merchants by way of commissions, profits upon goods, etc., etc.

Buy the bridges, he urged, and build roads, and Columbus would receive the business that farmers took instead to the nearest steamboat landing.<sup>6</sup>

In 1877, a Columbus paper anticipated a similar confluence of traffic, this time from the railroad whistle-stops: "This Bridge completed, the cotton receipts at Columbus will be swelled from various points along the main branch of the M & O Road, 5,000 bales - to say nothing of the immense advantages it will afford to travel."<sup>7</sup>

### Management - Advertising

The three chief concerns of the supervisors in managing the bridge projects were awarding contracts, supervising construction, and paying the bill. Bids for the contracts were invited in local papers and sometimes out-of-state papers to attract the notice of the regional representatives of the northern iron bridge manufacturers. In general, the announcements called for sealed proposals, to include cost estimates, and plans if these had not already been selected. Lowndes Co., in addition, followed the not uncommon practice of communicating directly with the bridge companies.<sup>8</sup> An announcement of a "bridge letting" would set a deadline for the receipt of bids, but it often had to be extended because there were no acceptable proposals. With the exception of Amory, the boards took sealed bids for the different parts of construction, and only the winner was recorded in the minutes. At Amory, the contract for the superstructure was auctioned off at a "public outcry," and the names of the attending firms were noted in the minutes.

### Bidding and Contracting

It is impossible to say what expertise the supervisors brought to judging the technical details of the proposals. They could have relied on personal experience in judging the merits of proposed earthworks and masonry piers, since these were done by local contractors and differed only in size from ordinary county ventures. They may have had the advice of engineers, although civil engineers were usually hired only after the contracts were let, to oversee construction. In judging the competing proposals of the bridge companies, the supervisors need not have been completely innocent. The circulars of the companies, though intended to assure prospective customers of

the excellence of their product, were also primers in the nature of the materials and design parameters of iron bridges.<sup>9</sup> Besides the catalogues of the bridge firms, there were journals articles on bridge building, of greater or lesser accessibility to county supervisors.<sup>10</sup> There were also engineering manuals intended, in whole or in part, for the advice of local governments and the engineers who might assist them. However, two engineer authors, J.A.L. Waddell and A.P. Boller both deplored the failure of county governments to employ "experts to prepare well-defined specifications, and see that they are carried out," so that we may take the absence from the record of such counsel as a reflection of the actual situation.<sup>11</sup>

After the winning bid had been selected, the county and the contractor, or their agents, signed a contract. The county agreed to pay according to schedule for certain work, and required the contractor to post bond, usually in twice the amount of the expected price. The construction firm agreed to complete the work by a certain date to the county's satisfaction. Only the Monroe Co. minute books record in any detail the specifications for the work, the others giving only the general requirements that they be "good," and "substantial," and executed "in a workmanlike manner." (See appendices for details) The contract for the Amory bridge was very specific in the standards for the substructure. Short-cuts in building foundations and piers were easy to hide and hard to correct should they be discovered before causing a disaster. This was particularly true of the tubular iron piers filled with concrete used by at Amory by the Southern Bridge Co. The Amory contract specified the ultimate and elastic limits of the iron and steel used in the superstructure. The Aberdeen contract had gone farther and set standards for

testing, workmanship, and allowable stress within members. This probably reflected the practice of McNairy, Claflin & Co. in making contracts, rather than any particular acuity on the part of the board. While it was not an ideal contract as conceived of by reforming engineers like J.A.L. Waddell and Alfred Boller, the Aberdeen agreement did give the county considerable legal protection should the bridge fail because the builder used faulty material.

#### Overseers

As noted above, the counties hired men as overseers during construction (with the exception of the Amory Bridge). At the same time that the contracts for superstructure and substructure were let for the Columbus bridge, A.M.

Williams was hired as "engineer and superintendent of construction." The only duty specifically mentioned in the minutes was his report of the acceptance of the superstructure. It is unlikely that he was in daily attendance at the construction site, since he was paid \$1,300 during the first fourteen months, a somewhat low wage for an engineer.<sup>12</sup> He may have been a consulting engineer, paid for specific tasks, such as drawing plans for the substructure, advising the contractors, dealing with the Wrought Iron Bridge Co., and periodically inspecting the work.

At Aberdeen, the position of superintendent of substructure fell to, or was plucked by, John H. Anderson in the fall of 1871. He was to "furnish plans, elevations, and sections" of the masonry work to the contractor for the substructure and to make semi-monthly estimates of his expenses, to be paid against the total. Anderson was not fully satisfactory, for at the end of the following May the board hired J.M. Rice to be the engineer for the bridge, but

dismissed him by the end of June and hired M.E. Beall "to locate the center pier and judge degree of work and materials completed and to hire an Engineer to engineer the building."<sup>13</sup> Beall hired himself as engineer and subsequently completed the assigned tasks, serving 7.4 months at \$125 per month. Anderson continued to be paid at the rate of \$6 or more per day. He probably held his job because of political connections with the board's majority, a matter to be discussed below. He may have earned his wages by overseeing Standa & Maselle, the contractors, to ensure their compliance with the plans and by handling the payments to S & M. Although he was not a competent civil engineer (see below), attempts to remove him were based on allegations of corruption rather than incompetence. Political influence seems to have been the governing factor in the appointment of the board's president, Washington Walton, as superintendent of superstructure. He received \$5 per diem plus a commission of 3% on the money he disbursed to McNairy, Claflin, & Co., which was his only duty.

The Itawamba Co. supervisors hired George Anthony, at \$3 per day, to supervise the construction of the Fulton bridge. It was well that they did, for he caught the Nashville Bridge Co. skimping on materials and workmanship several times, and in general so cramped their style that they threatened to kill him.<sup>14</sup>

#### Financing and Fraud

The volatility of honesty when exposed to politics and money is proverbial. One expects public undertakings as expensive and of such potential consequence to relations within the counties as these bridges to produce examples of

fraud, chicanery, and political conflict. So they did, and so it is convenient to consider finances and misfeasance together.

Itawamba and Noxubee counties had no difficulties paying for the bridges out of the general revenues. Lowndes Co. had to make some special efforts to finance its Columbus Bridge Fund, but did nothing exceptionable for a project involving \$70,000. The behavior of the majorities of the Monroe Co. board of supervisors in both 1872-73 and 1899-1900 can be most favorably described as irresponsible.

Noxubee county's experience with the Mahorner's bridge was the least troubled as all of the work was done on time and to specification. The only discord was a complaint from some of the laborers that they had not been paid by one of the contractors. The board ordered the county clerk to hold the disputed sum in escrow until the matter was settled.

Itawamba's troubles all came from the bridge companies. The Virginia Bridge and Iron Co. took the bid for the Fulton bridge, piers, and approaches for \$4,964. They soon realized the bid was too low and managed to break the contract on the grounds that the county did not have permission from the War Department to bridge a "navigable stream." The Nashville Bridge Co. got the job for \$6,927.89 in the second round of bidding (June 1905). The company found George Anthony, the superintendent employed by the board, so annoying that they threatened to throw him in the river or otherwise get rid of him, threats taken seriously enough that the sheriff gave Anthony a permit to carry a pistol.<sup>15</sup> The company was sensitive about his surveillance because they had

filled the iron cylinders of the piers with sand instead of concrete, let a pile rest on a submerged branch instead of driving to a firm bearing, mixed cement improperly, used sap lumber instead of seasoned timber, and reduced the diameter of the pier cylinders. The county insisted that each deficiency be put right, and in the late summer of 1906 work halted while lawyers for both parties negotiated a settlement. Finally, the Nashville Bridge Co. sent in a new crew and finished the project to the board's satisfaction in February 1907.<sup>16</sup>

The Lowndes Co. board established a bridge fund in 1872 by selling some of its Mobile & Ohio R.R. stock for \$13,600. After they had accepted the work of the Wrought Iron Bridge Co. of Canton, Ohio, they settled the remaining \$17,194.84 debt by giving the company one- and two-year tax-anticipation bonds at 8% per annum. Lowndes' only embarrassment was the embezzlement of \$2,000 by J.W. Mader, secretary-treasurer of the bridge commission. Mader paid himself for services in that position, although the commissioners had agreed to serve without compensation. The supervisors' attorney advised that Mader could be successfully prosecuted in either a civil or criminal suit, but he escaped with only "the unqualified condemnation of the board."

The amount of the embezzlement seems insignificant relative to the total, but its loss worried the supervisors enough that they instructed the commission's president to seek leniency from the Wrought Iron Bridge Co. The letter was to "state all the facts in the matter of the indebtedness of this county to said Company, that this board had no disposition whatever to throw any impediment in the way [of] payment...but on the contrary will use every exertion possible

towards settling the claim at the earliest day practicable." The assurance - and the lure of a \$29,000 contract - persuaded the company, which had received only a first payment of \$5,140. The county paid only \$7,500 in the next two years and settled the remaining debt with the bonds.<sup>17</sup>

"Mader's defalcation" exercised the supervisors' indignation, but probably caused little real difficulty. The long construction time, from 1874 to late 1878, was due to "providential and other delays."<sup>18</sup> Local tradition cites high water and bad luck. Even after the iron work was completed in early 1877, it was a year-and-a-half before the final stretch of approach embankment was in place. There was considerable delay early on in the construction of the cofferdam for the mid-river piers. B.B. Eggleston, who did a good deal of bridge building for the county, took the contract for the cofferdam and foundations on 13 June 1874.<sup>19</sup> Eggleston, however, "lost his fortune and his thumbs" when a negro workman let the pile driver drop while Eggleston was adjusting the piling. The contract was purchased by A.H. Williams and C.A. Johnston, who completed the foundation in the fall of 1876.<sup>20</sup>

At Aberdeen, the picture is clouded by the smouldering resentments of Reconstruction politics and smoky charges of corruption. During the construction of the bridge, the Monroe Co. board of supervisors was controlled by the Republicans, represented by three negroes from the districts west of the river. The two Democrats were from the predominantly white districts on the eastern bank.<sup>21</sup> The superintendent of substructure, John H. Anderson, was a "scalawag" (white Southern Republican) who held his job with the support of the Republican majority, against repeated efforts by the Democrats to block

his pay or to have him removed for graft.<sup>22</sup> The first attempt came on 3 July 1872, after Anderson had failed to provide construction drawings. The minute book entry includes the struck-out explanation that the two protesting supervisors "as well as the people are of the candid opinion that he is a party to the building contract." This muted charge was amplified the following March, when supervisor Caldwell protested against paying Anderson \$300 for fifty days' services because Anderson had already received 3% of all the monies disbursed through him to Standa & Maselle.

The political patronage not only cost the county money, it also delayed the completion of the bridge. Standa & Maselle had agreed to finish the work by 1 September 1872. They missed their deadline and on 3 March 1873 were granted an extension to 15 April "because the board did not furnish a competent Civil Engineer at first." Beall had not been hired to locate the center pier until July 1872. The delay caused S & M to miss several months of the low water season for building the cofferdam, driving the foundations, and building the pier, and pushed the construction into the cold weather season and high water. If the piers had been finished when originally planned, the superstructure could have been erected as soon as it arrived in January 1873.<sup>23</sup>

The Democratic members of the board, T.R. Caldwell and W.C. Thomas, finally resigned in May 1873, citing their unwillingness to be liable for the "action of this board...so fraught with ignorance and corruption," nor to bear the "just opprobrium of all honest and upright citizens." Such honest and upright citizens must have been rare; Caldwell and Thomas also expressed disgust at the indifference of the county's citizens to the "great frauds of the majority."

Caldwell's and Thomas' protests had acted a little to check the majority. After their departure, the county paid Anderson another \$444 in wages and a 3% commission for disbursing \$12,075, bringing his total proceeds from the county to \$2,734.10 in the fourteen months since the first payment. If Caldwell's charge was true, he also received \$575 in kickbacks from Standa & Maselle. Anderson's and Walton' payments were relatively paltry, \$2,734.10 and \$881.88 respectively. Standa and Maselle received \$33,263.01, more than half the total expenditures on the bridge recorded in the minutes - \$62,316.46. This is \$7,438.11 more than the \$25,724.90 paid for the same kind of work at Columbus. A few quick calculations show that the masonry at Aberdeen would have cost about \$12,000, leaving enough to pay for a 15-foot causeway, 20 feet wide at the top, 60 feet at the base, and 0.8 miles long, about the right length to cross the flood plain to Aberdeen. Since the masonry required at Aberdeen was greater than at Columbus and the approaching embankments were much longer, the difference does not seem to support any charge of corruption.

After its completion, the bridge was turned to the disadvantage of the Republicans who had directed its construction. In the elections of 1875, the white Democrats regained control from the Reconstruction government. The day before the election, whites living east of the river were warned not to go to Aberdeen that night. Then the bridge was turned to the open position and guards stationed along the river to keep the negroes on the east side from reaching the polls.

The very idea of building a bridge at Bigbee, north of Amory, almost immediately caused a three-to-two split in the Monroe county board of supervisors in 1899. W.I. Ware and J.W. Maynard, the latter the board's president, protested every action the board took.<sup>24</sup> They challenged the need for the bridge, the prudence displayed by the other supervisors in their dealings with the Southern Bridge Co., and the honesty and wisdom of the financing plans.<sup>25</sup> In any event, the bridge company dealt fairly with the county (which cannot be said of the county's treatment of the company), but the warnings about the financial arrangements were fully borne out.

The Southern Bridge Co.'s representative - apparently a traveling bridge man - first promised a fixed span for \$8,800, not including approaches. The company was not able to obtain permission from the War Department for a fixed span, and on 4 October 1898 the board decided to build a draw bridge, using plans and specifications supplied by the S.B.C. Two days later, Ware and Maynard entered a protest against the board's intentions.

Nonetheless, on 8 November, there was a public bridge letting, and over a minority protest the board accepted the bid of the Southern Bridge Co. for \$15,775. The contract, however, was annulled by the Circuit Court of Monroe county and Southern won a second round of bidding in early May 1899.<sup>26</sup> Ware and Maynard moved unsuccessfully for payment by loan warrant or by bond issue, both of which would have required a referendum.<sup>27</sup>

The dispute was about the financing plans. Ware and Maynard did not believe the county had enough money to pay cash for the bridge and that therefore paying with ordinary county warrants would devalue the warrants. They also accused the other supervisors of deliberately avoiding public scrutiny and thereby violating democratic principles. The three other supervisors defended their actions as the wisest course under difficult circumstances. They said, somewhat irrelevantly, that they had originally favored the fixed span at half the price of the swing span, and had adopted the latter design only when the War Department required it; furthermore, they still had hope that a fixed span might yet be approved. With this possibility of the cheaper bridge, they did not think taking on the debt necessary, and in any event it was not good business practice for the county to commit itself to paying interest in time of peace. County warrants, which did not bear interest, were the cheapest course.

They were entirely too sanguine about the county's ability to pay its debts. When the company demanded payment the following December, the board demurred, "pending the action of the [Mississippi] Supreme Court on the question of the validity of the contract." Since the county was defaulting, S.B.C announced it would claim interest on the \$15,775. Fifteen months later, in the spring of 1901, the board (with new members) rejected two claims by the company - one

for the contract price plus 6% per annum interest and another of \$2,014.95 for a protection pier" - and also disallowed the claim of the contractor for the approaches, whereupon the company sued in federal court.<sup>28</sup> Finally, in a three-day long adjourned meeting in March 1904, the board settled with the Southern Bridge Company for \$11,204.19, including court costs. L.D. Booth also accepted a reduced payment for the approaches: \$795.81 on a contracted fee of \$960. J.W. Maynard was president of the board during the litigation, although he was often absent because of illness. He died in April, after the final settlement had been negotiated. In the supervisors' minutes, a memorial resolution in his respect immediately follows the entry recording the issue of \$17,500 worth of loan warrants to pay for the bridge.<sup>30</sup>

This discussion of the five county bridges began with the assumption that the county governments faced unusual problems in undertaking the bridge projects. It was based upon reviews of the supervisors' minutes and the comments of Boller and Waddell, bridge engineers and authors of manuals on the subject.<sup>31</sup> In fact, in facing the two greatest novelties - large financial transactions and out-of-state contractors - the counties proved more vulnerable to their own greed than to predation by unscrupulous bridge companies. They doubtless benefited from the experiences and honesty of the companies, whose business and technical practices were adapted to simplifying purchases by governments, but it is clear that the companies were more at the mercy of the counties than vice versa - it was a buyer's market. Columbus - and Aberdeen less so - prevailed upon the builders to accept extended payment schedules. Columbus, McNary, Claflin, and Co. allowed Lowndes county to stretch the second payment over two years, and then accepted bonds for the

remaining 58% of the total. Monroe county won a 29% reduction for the Amory bridge by refusing to pay, on the grounds that the contract was under legal challenge for being invalid. Itawamba county also negotiated a reduction from the Nashville Bridge Co. after the supervisors had caught the work crews cheating.<sup>32</sup> There is some irony in the fact that the least able and most venally corrupt board, the Monroe supervisors of 1871-73, paid its debts promptly and fully.

The bridges themselves stood up well. The Mahorner's Bridge across the Noxubee still carries light traffic on a county road, after almost a century of service, although warnings are posted that users cross at their own risk. The four bridges across the Tombigbee served for an average of 47 years. The Aberdeen, Columbus, and Fulton bridges were replaced in the 1920s and 30s because they were not up to standards for federal highways, nor to actual traffic in the cases of Aberdeen and Fulton. The Amory bridge, on a state road, was not replaced until 1958.

Comparing the bridges is possible only in a very general way, for want of detailed accounts and of consistency of design. Since the cost per linear foot increased with the length of the span, while the cost of masonry foundations increased with the number of spans, finding the best and cheapest combination of span lengths and truss types was one of the tricks of the bridge builder's trade. Aberdeen and Columbus, the two most comparable bridges, cost about the same per linear foot of iron-work (\$77.20 and \$75.37 respectively) but looked quite different. The Mahorner's Bridge was a lighter design and half the length of the two Tombigbee turn spans. The first

contract was changed to add twenty feet for an additional \$400, bringing the overall price to \$23.96 per linear foot for 120 feet (just a few dollars more than the estimated price in Penn Bridge Works' catalogue two year later).

The three older bridges had masonry piers. Columbus and Aberdeen were compared above; the Mahorner's brick work cost about 13% less per cubic foot than Aberdeen's. Both rates included mortar, labor, and foundations, and the Aberdeen contractors also had to build a cofferdam for the center pier, which, along with a general decrease in the cost of bricks, probably accounts for the difference in construction costs.<sup>33</sup>

The Amory bridge differs in many respects from the earlier bridges. In comparison with Columbus and Aberdeen, the price tag of the Amory bridge is strikingly small. It reflects a general deflation during the period between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century, and changes in the bridge industry. If the 237 foot-long swing span at Amory had cost \$90 per foot, as did the Aberdeen bridge three decades earlier, the superstructure alone would have cost \$21,330. As it was, the Southern Bridge Co. contracted for the bridge and piers at \$15,775, and a half-dozen other companies were able to start bidding under \$20,000.<sup>34</sup>

The Amory and Fulton bridges belong to a period different in bridge technology and business practices. The bridges used steel and, instead of brick masonry, had concrete piers encased in iron, a form of substructure much used for the smaller steel and wooden truss bridges. The piers were made by bending steel

sheets and riveting the edges together to form cylinders. The contract for the Amory-Bigbee bridge described how the 20-foot diameter center pier was to be made. The Southern Bridge Co. was to sink the cylinder "about eight feet below the bed of the river, all sand and gravel to be excavated from the interior, thirty-two piles - each not less than 12" in diameter at the large end to be driven in said cylinder to firm bearing, the same to be cut off two feet below extreme low water, from that point to be filled with concrete..."<sup>35</sup>

ABBREVIATIONS

used in the footnotes and bibliography  
for the locations of manuscripts and rare imprints

ADAH -- Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Archives and  
History Building, Montgomery, Ala. 36130

AHD -- Alabama Highway Department, 11 South Union Street, Montgomery,  
Ala. 36130

CCBSM -- Clay County (Miss.) Board of Supervisors Minutes, Court House,  
West Point, Ms.

EMHL -- Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Box 3630, Greenville -  
Wilmington, Del. 19807

EML -- Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen, Ms. 39730

LCBSM -- Lowndes County Board of Supervisors Minutes, Court House,  
Columbus, Ms.

LCPBC\* - Lowndes County Police Board Court

LCPL -- Local History Room, Lowndes County Public Library, Columbus,  
Ms. 39701

MCBSM -- Monroe County Board of Supervisors Minutes, Chancery Clerk's  
Building, Aberdeen, Ms.

MCPBC\* -- Monroe County Police Board Court

MDAH -- Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 100 South State  
Street, Jackson, Ms. 39201

MSHD -- Mississippi State Highway Department, Bridge Division, Woolfolk  
State Office Building, North West Street, Jackson, Ms. 39205

MSU -- Mississippi State University, Starkville, Ms. 39762

MUW -- Mississippi University for Women, Columbus, Ms. 39701

NCBSM -- Noxubee County Board of Supervisors Minutes, Court House,  
Macon, Ms.

O.R. -- Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. See U.S. Army in  
bibliography.

\*Before 1870, the Boards of Supervisors of Mississippi counties were called  
Police Boards, whose members were magistrates of the police board court.

Notes

Section I -- Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Mitigation and documentation within the Tennessee-Tombigbee Multi-Resource District is administered by the Interagency Archeological Services, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Section II -- The Upper Tombigbee Valley

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census 1880, vol. 5; Federal Writers Project (FWP), Mississippi, 100.

<sup>2</sup>Owens, Alabama, 40.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., 41.

<sup>4</sup>FWP, Mississippi, 66-71; map, 62.

<sup>5</sup>Elliott, Survey, 10, 80; Hubbert, Bay Springs, 99-101.

<sup>6</sup>Phelps, "Natchez Trace," 1 passim.

<sup>7</sup>Elliot, Survey, p. 12; Evans, "Cotton Gin Port."

<sup>8</sup>Evans, "Cotton Gin Port,"; Columbus was first called "Possum Town," as the indians thought an early whiskey purveyor resembled that animal. In 1821, blueblood Georgia cotton planters, less indifferent carriers of civilization, impeached the name as undignified for an incorporated town.

(FWP, Mississippi, p. 182.)

<sup>9</sup>Phelps, "Natchez Trace," 36.

<sup>10</sup>Phelps, "Robinson Road," 155-157; House Document #134, 9<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess.,

18 Mar 1826: "Documents to Accompany the Bill from the Senate (#4)

appropriating a sum of Money for the Repair of the Post Road between Jackson and Columbus..." Imprint at EMHL; Elliot, Survey, 20.

<sup>11</sup>Phelps, "Robinson Road," 160; Wood, map "Lowndes County," 1929; O.R. Atlas, pl. cxlviii, cliv, & clv. The present Robinson Road is east of this route, and may be a later alteration that met the 1824 post road south of Artesia.

See also a map of Lowndes county distributed by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, 1977.

<sup>12</sup>Phelps, "Robinson Road," 155; Leftwich, "Cotton Gin Port," 269; Elliot, Survey, 10-14.

<sup>13</sup>Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 37; FWP, Mississippi, map, 78.

### Section III -- Roads and Ferries

<sup>1</sup>Southern Argus, 7 Dec 1841; Columbus Democrat, 29 Nov 1841; Allen, "Covered Bridges," 38.

<sup>2</sup>Clarke, "Transportation," 274-280; Ringwalt, Transportation Systems, 26-27, Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 24.

<sup>3</sup>e.g., on 8 Mar 1878, the Lowndes county Board of Supervisors fined about thirty road overseers \$5.00 for neglect of their duties. Only two paid the fine, and eleven others paid hearing costs of \$.25. LCBSM Book 8, p. 344.

<sup>4</sup>Clarke, "Transportation," 275, but see Box, "Ante-Bellum Travelers."

<sup>5</sup>e.g., see quotation in section VII, below. The editors were for everything progressive and up-to-date, and were open-minded where they could not be judicious. An ante-bellum editor in Columbus reported a proposal to make paving blocks by putting stones in molds and then filling the gaps with molten iron. The editor wanted to see the proposal given a "fair trial" (Primitive Republican, 13 Feb 1851). A road so paved, 12 feet wide and 4 inches thick, would have cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 per mile in 1851 dollars, just for the paving blocks. (At that rate, you could have hired Irishmen to lie down under the carriage wheels.) Regular bricks would have cost less than \$3,000 per mile.

<sup>6</sup>Compare Ms. 373 from Columbus to Aberdeen in the 1920s (Crawford and Wood) with the modern course of Ms. 373 and with U.S. 45.

<sup>7</sup>Clarke, "Transportation," 291.

<sup>8</sup>See the O.R. Atlas, p. cxlviii, cxlix, & cliv; and maps by Bradford (1842), Mitchell (n.d.), and Hilgard (1855).

<sup>9</sup>Elliott, Survey, 47.

<sup>10</sup>MCBSM, 29 April 1844.

<sup>11</sup>Columbus Democrat, 4 Oct 1851.

<sup>12</sup>Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 62, reports that the brawls were between the drivers for "Jemison, Ficklin & Co. of Aberdeen and Powell Co. of Columbus." Elliott, Survey, 58, reports all three names in one company, which bought land in Barton in 1857. A "Powell and Taylor's line of Four Horse Coaches" in 1855 advertised thrice-weekly service from Aberdeen to Eastport on the Tennessee river (Evans, "Stagecoach Lines," 163).

<sup>13</sup>Elliott, Survey, 67.

<sup>14</sup>Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 37.

<sup>15</sup>Elliott, Survey, ch. 4, is the source for the history of Colbert, Barton, and Vinton.

<sup>16</sup>Elliott, ibid., 67, reports cotton shipping from Vinton in the 1880s. All four landings are included in Berney, Alabama, 82-83.

<sup>17</sup>The information about the Fulton ferry is from Greene, "This I Remember..." 2 July 1965, based on the Itawamba county Board of Supervisors minutes, her own recollections, and those of a man who built the last ferry used at Fulton.

<sup>18</sup>The historiography is yet unsettled as to how Gaines got his supplies to Pitchlynn's landing on the Tombigbee. For the old school, Leftwich would have him on Gaines' trace to Cotton Gin Port, then going ten miles farther west to meet the "Choctaw-Chickasaw trail" to Pitchlynn's. Elliott's revision puts Gaines on the Natchez trace to the "Choctaw-Chickasaw trail" near Pontotoc, thence to Pitchlynn's. Elliott's quarrel with the old school of

local historians is that they named the "Choctaw-Chickasaw trail" "Gaines' Old Trace," and considered it to be an extension of the "Gaines' Trace from Muscle Shoals. In fact, Edmund P. Gaines, George Gaines' brother, surveyed "Gaines' Trace" in January 1808, and probably surveyed "Gaines' Old Trace" two years later. It is interesting 1) that Pickett, who interviewed George S. Gaines, merely says that Gaines was ordered to get wagon road from Colbert's ferry to St. Stephen's, but had to settle for a horse trail; and 2) that Evans says that Gaines' instructions were to go via Cotton Gin Port and that George Gaines replied by reporting the trace surveyed by his brother. In any event, "Gaines' Trace" took its name from the brother who surveyed it or the brother who used it; "Gaines' Old Trace" suffered the same activities, but since there is no primary material substantiating the name, the usage here will be "Choctaw-Chickasaw Trail," as suggested by Elliott. (Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama, 1851; W.A. Evans in Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 12.)<sup>19</sup> Evans, "Stagecoach Lines." See also the discussion of the railroads, below.

#### Section IV -- Bridging

<sup>1</sup>Allen, Covered Bridges, 38; Robert Jemison, Jr. was the stockholder of the Columbus Bridge Co. He was described as having "a fine set of saw mills on the Luxapalila" -- Southern Argus, 10 May 1842; Elliott, Survey, 20, names Robert Jemison of Tuscaloosa as the partner with John Pitchlynn in the stage line.

<sup>2</sup>"Fay Willes Tape." Booth was a large landholder on the Buttahatchie near Rye bridge. He lived in Caledonia for twenty years after the War, and then in Monroe county until his death in 1907 at the age of 67. According to Willes' description, he was an engineer of energetic reach and precise grasp, who is probably worth a biographical monograph.

<sup>3</sup>LCBSM, 19 May 1859, 11 Mar 1861; Columbus Dispatch, 26 Mar 1926; Rube Irvin and Alf Booth, L.D. Booth's son, built the later bridge. The bridge is also mentioned in the O.R., Ser. I, vol. 17, ii, 818. Another covered bridge cost \$6,500 in 1873, for which it was to be covered so as to extend three feet beyond the solid brick piers and to be kept in repair for four years. A requirement that the builder keep the bridge in repair was a frequent part of county contracts, and the builder often had to post bond against his failure. (MCBSM, 22 October 1873.) This bridge was on the Buttahatchie, perhaps at Rye, Grubb Springs, or Gattman.

<sup>5</sup>MCBSM, 3 Sep 1900. The bridge was over Weaver's creek on the Aberdeen-Amory road.

<sup>6</sup>CCBS, Clay County Centennial Celebration, 18.

<sup>7</sup>LCBSM, 2 June 1879. Lowndes county appointed commissioners to confer with Monroe county about joint construction. See Appendix.

<sup>8</sup>LCBSM, 10 July 1930.

#### Section V -- Riverboats

<sup>1</sup>Elliott, Survey, 22; Hunter, Steamboats, 54-59; Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 35. In 1910, the sole commercial use above Columbus consisted of 7,365 tons of logs valued at \$21,779 (U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, Report-1911, 1711).

<sup>2</sup>Evans, "Steamboats," 216-218; Primitive Republican, 9 Jan & 26 May 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Elliott, Survey, 30-79; Table I, below; The Post News, March 1965 (clipping in "Riverboat" file, LCPL).

<sup>4</sup>Elliott, Survey, 5-9, 80-86.

<sup>5</sup>Evans, "Steamboats," 216; Hunter, Steamboats, found, for an area similar to the upper Tombigbee, that "Steamboats navigating the Upper Tennessee...were

from the beginning almost entirely of the sternwheel type." (note 206, p. 172). Before the War, sternwheelers were usually smaller than the sidewheelers, because the hulls were not stiff enough to take the stress of having the engines and the paddlewheel/machinery at widely separated points. (ibid., 96)

<sup>6</sup>10<sup>th</sup> U.S. Census, 1800, vol. 5, pt. I, 91, 93-96, pt. II, 314.

#### Section VI -- Railroads

<sup>1</sup>Clarke & Neu, Railroad Network, 47.

<sup>2</sup>Howell, "It Happened in Aberdeen," 1, 9-10, 118; Johnson, "Railroad Legislation," 200-201, 205; Federal Writers Project, Mississippi, 88-89. Of nearly a dozen railroads proposed during the 30s, the only one to meet with any great opposition was the only one to offer any competition to the river, the river, the New Orleans & Nashville.

<sup>3</sup>Elliott, Survey, 89; FWP, Mississippi, 89; Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 102.

<sup>4</sup>Evans, "Mother Monroe," 11 Feb 1937; Poor, Manual of Railroads -- 1872-73, 206; Owen, Alabama, 221, 223.

<sup>5</sup>Owen, Alabama, 221-223; Amory Advertiser, Monroe County, 7; Evans, "Mother Monroe," 11 Feb 1937.

<sup>6</sup>Owen, Alabama, 228-229; Aberdeen Weekly, 18 Aug 1881; Daily Times Leader, "West Point Centennial Edition," 11 July 1958.

<sup>7</sup>FWP, Mississippi, 90.

<sup>8</sup>The theory of "unrecoverable benefits" addresses the difficulty that many apparently desirable and useful public services have in meeting expenses out of revenues. On the one hand, direct users are willing to pay only what the service is worth to them. On the other hand, the service benefits many in the

community who do not use it directly. An operating deficit is the "price" of the "unrecoverable benefits" to the community in general, and is paid by a general tax. In the case of the railroads, the benefits offered (dividends) to individual stockholders were insufficient to attract enough capital. The counties and towns made grants and bought stock in order to receive lower freight rates, improved business opportunities, etc.

<sup>9</sup>LCBSM, 2 Nov 1857.

<sup>10</sup>Primitive Republican, 10 Apr 1851. It is my guess that "O.K." was Oscar T. Keeler, a local draughtsman, almanac publisher, and booster.

<sup>11</sup>This probably refers to the season when the river is down, but might be an indictment of the expense of shipping by river.

A few months later, DeBow's Review confirmed (or repeated, the article was unsigned) "O.K.'s" figures. The planters along the Tombigee, it reported, were held back two months from market by the necessity of waiting for the river to rise. The shipping charges on the river exceeded the expected railroad rates, for exporting a bale of cotton, \$3.50-\$7 against \$2.50-\$3.50; for importing corn, \$0.50-\$0.75 against \$0.25; and for importing bacon, by 100%.

The DeBow's article also described the Mississippi river traffic that the M & O would tap: 250 steamers annually carried 375,000 passengers and 2 million tons of freight. (DeBow's Review, XI, [1851], 161)

After the M & O had reached into the black belt, DeBow's reported that the railroad had carried 88,768 bales of cotton in 1857, and 152,528 bales in 1858. The railroad was "drawing cotton from the river. While cotton and other freight have largely increased by the road they have decreased by the river" during a year of crop failure. (DeBow's Review, XXVII [1859], 602).

<sup>12</sup>"O.K.'s" appeal was not immediately successful. On 1 May 1851, the

Primitive Republican editorialized in favor of the railroad, predicting a \$400,000 per year saving on imports alone, but the election on 5 May rejected the county bond issue. The next year, the Columbus City Board of Selectmen received a "Petition of numerous citizens to hold elections to submit a tax to the extent of \$10,000 per annum for 5 years amounting to \$50,000 to build a branch railroad to connect with the main line of the Mobile and Ohio." The city issue passed, 223-7, on 4 Sep, and a year later the M & O's board of directors sent assurances that the branch would be built. Meanwhile, the county, reproved by the town's action, approved a conjoint issue. The M & O received \$33,000 for five years beginning 1 May 1854. (Columbus Board of Selectment, 27 Aug, 4 Sep 1852, 20 Sep 1853; LCBSM, 2 Nov 1857.)

<sup>13</sup>"Speech of Gov. W.H. Smims, "Tri-Weekly Dispatch, 20 Apr, 1887. A footnote to "O.K.'s" prediction of dividends: the stockholders of the Tombigbee R.R. disvowed any expectation of profit, as no railroad in Mississippi had ever paid anything.

Section VIII- Major County Bridges

<sup>1</sup>Columbus Primitive Republican, 23 January 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Evans, "Mother Monroe", 11 February 1937.

<sup>3</sup>The first Columbus bridge was built in 1842 and '43 as a private toll bridge and lasted at least until 1851, when the county paid a toll to the Bridge Company. In August 1856, March 1857 and January 1858, petitions were filed with the LCPBC for charters to erect a toll bridge. In May 1857 the Columbus board of selectmen appropriated \$6,000 toward construction of a bridge, on the condition that city residents should have free passage. The county board of supervisors approved the 1858 petition with an offer of a \$9,000 contribution in exchange for twenty-years free passage for county citizens. All of the proposed schemes must have died aborning, for in January 1860, the county began action to build a "good and substantial Bridge" across the Tombigbee by requesting taxing authority from the state legislature. The War interrupted and in December 1867, the LCPBC minute book records yet another private charter for a toll bridge - described variously as being a "pontoon or other bridge" and a "draw bridge" from the foot of Washington street (now 2nd Ave. South). A month later the board appointed commissioners to lay out a road on the west bank. The road and the bridge were never built, and nothing else happened until 8 April 1872 when the board set up a commission to manage the Iron Free Bridge. City of Columbus, Early Minute Book 1 and 2 and Laws of Mississippi, pp. 182-188.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendices for Columbus bridge and Blewett's bridge.

<sup>5</sup>This was before the railroad.

<sup>6</sup>Columbus Primitive Republican, 23 January 1851.

<sup>7</sup>Sykes Collection, undated and unidentified clippings.

<sup>8</sup>LCBSM, 8 April 1872; Waddell, Bridges, p. 157.

<sup>9</sup>E.g. Blodgett and Curry, Boston; Keystone Bridge Co., Pittsburg; Penn Bridge Co., Beaver Falls, Pa.; Phoenix Bridge Co., Philadelphia; Wilson Bros. and Co., Philadelphia; Barnes Iron Bridge and Fence Co., Philadelphia; Delaware Bridge Co., New York. Imprints at EMHL.

<sup>10</sup>E.g. Cooper, "American Railroad Bridges"; Engineer, "American v. English Bridges"; Winkler, "On Pin Connections for Iron Bridges".

<sup>11</sup>Boller, Bridges, p. 10 and Waddell, Bridges, chap. XVII. Waddell felt that county commissioners were at the mercy of the bridge companies when judging the relative merits of the bridge designs. Cf. Diebler, Bridges in Virginia, 1: 24.

<sup>12</sup>Waddell, Bridges, p. 158, says that the salaries of engineers employed by bridge companies was \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year. Williams received about half of this.

<sup>13</sup>Rice may have been dismissed for incompetence, or he may not have been able to present the required credentials.

<sup>14</sup>Greene, "This I Remember", 26 August 1965.

<sup>15</sup>ibid. Cleburne Anthony later recalled his father's anxiety that he would be injured or have to shoot someone in self-defense.

<sup>16</sup>ibid.; also WPA Source Material, Itawamba Co..

<sup>17</sup>LCBSM, 12 July, 17 July, 2 August and 1 November 1875.

<sup>18</sup>Sykes Collection, undated clipping.

<sup>19</sup>Hopkins, "Memorandums and to Lipscomb's History of Columbus"; and LCBSM, 18 Nov. 76.

<sup>20</sup>General B.B. Eggleston probably received little sympathy from his neighbors for his misfortune. He was known as "Buzzard Eggleston, and was heartily disliked for his part in the military government of Columbus during Reconstruction as well as for his direction of the infamous "Black and Tan" Constitutional Convention of 1868. (Mrs. E. B. Hudson: Federal Writers Project, Mississippi, 213.)

<sup>21</sup>The U.S. Census for 1870 reported Monroe county's population as 8,631 whites and 14,000 negroes.

<sup>22</sup>Puckett, "Monroe Co.", Anderson ran for county treasurer on the Republican ticket in 1875. See anotation in bibliography.

<sup>23</sup>Standa and Maselle also cited "difficulties with the coffer dam and the extreme coldness of the winter." Curiously, Caldwell blamed the contractors and moved that they pay for the ferry service provided by the county. He may have been acting on his belief that they were in collusion with Anderson and therefore culpable of something, or he may have been driven by frustration to indiscriminating resistance.

<sup>24</sup>A knowledgeable resident of Monroe county, when told the story, pointed out that Ware and Maynard were from the southeast part of the county. The bridge is in the northwest part.

<sup>25</sup>Besides the objection to the financing, discussed in the text, Ware and Maynard maintained that there was no public necessity, since there were good rail and road connections with the county seat, Aberdeen, from both sides of the river, and since the river was fordable six to eight months of the year and the county operated a ferry during high water. They said that using county warrants increased the cost, since contractors preferred cash (which could be raised by issuing bonds or loan warrants). They objected strongly to the board's "cozy relationship with the company" and opposed its easy assent to the bridge salesman's importunings. He had insinuated himself as the board's self appointed advisor on bridges and had furnished plans and specifications without charge. The board had accepted these without inspecting any others, and had not consulted any "competent, disinterested authority" on the possibility of building stable piers, even though the company representative would not guarantee that the bridge would withstand high water. (MCBSM 6 Oct 1898)

<sup>26</sup>W.W. Watkins, et.al. vs. Board of Supervisors of Monroe Co., et. al., MCBSM, 1 May 1899.

<sup>27</sup>MCBSM, 3 May 1899. A warrant was an order to the county treasurer to pay the bearer. If the treasury did not have the cash, then the bearer would have to wait, as he would if the warrant were post-dated so as to fall due at some future time (when the county anticipated having the money). As this amounted to a loan without interest by the recipient, contractors preferred cash. (see note 25 above.)

<sup>28</sup>MCBSM, 10 Octobrr 1901. Southern Bridge Co. vs. Monroe county, suite #100,

the Federal Court of the East Division of the Northern District of Mississippi.

<sup>29</sup>MCBSM, 21-23 March 1904. The settlement was pursuant to "an act to authorize the ... Board of Supervisors of Monroe county to purchase a steel draw bridge across the Tombigbee River".

<sup>30</sup>MCBSM, 10 June 1904.

<sup>31</sup>It puts Boller's and Waddell's reservations in perspective to note that they were not only highly competent, professional engineers, but also professionalizing engineers, in a period when anxiety about institutional identity greatly agitated the proliferating branches of engineering. They conceded that there were few bridge disasters in the U.S. since only a very few companies were dishonest, and even bridges flawed in design, or in fabrication, or in erection were equal to the loads actually placed upon them. None the less, it offended their sense of propriety that "four or five honest farmers" could choose a bridge, however successfully, for the wrong reasons.

<sup>32</sup>It is said that in 1920 the Nashville Bridge Co. sent representatives to Fulton to bid on the Ironwood Bluffs bridge. They telephoned from Amory to say they were on their way, but never appeared. In Amory they found out that George Anthony was still building bridges and J.W. Powell was still president of the Board of Supervisors, so they went home.

<sup>33</sup>The base of the pier of the Noxubee bridge is dry during the summer. Between 1871 and 1883, the wholesale price of bricks changed from \$9.31 to \$8.14 per 1000. Historical Statistics, series E, pp. 123 - 134.

<sup>34</sup>From 1871 to 1899, the wholesale price index for all commodities dropped about 40%, as did the index for metals and metal products. The wholesale price of steel rails dropped from \$102 to \$28 per ton. Bureau of Census Historical Statistics.

<sup>35</sup>MCBSM, 8 Nov. 1898. The Penn Bridge Co. catalogue illustrates this sort of pier. The steel cylinder was built up in sections six to ten feet high. After the piles were driven through the first section, additional sections were added by riveting the overlapping edges.

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-It does not show Ironwood Bluffs, established in the early part of the decade, but does show the road north from Cotton Gin as far as Bull Mountain Cr.;

-It does not show Camargo or Bay Springs, which were well established by the end of the decade.

-It shows, more or less, the New Orleans & Nashville R.R., which company was born and died without issue in 1837;

-It shows Aberdeen (1836) in an early stage of development, with no road connections;

-It shares with Bradford's map of 1842 the "mistake" of putting Fulton in its original site on the west bank of the river.

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## INVENTORY OF BRIDGE SITES

This is an inventory of bridge sites. Some sites have had several structures, not necessarily on the exact same spot, but serving the same thoroughfare. The head of each entry contains the name of the site, the watercourse spanned, and the date(s) when the site was in use. Brackets about a date indicate an unreliable source; a prefixed question mark indicates a slender inference. The second line gives the location for users of a road map, as well as the Universal Transverse Mercator co-ord-inates. The structures at each site are described in chronological order. Source references are to the bibliography; photo references are to the list of photographs.

Decision in Mississippi; Interviews with Herman Johnson and Noel Caveness, of Moores Mills, Miss. Both men are former residents of Bay Springs.

Notes: The thread spinning and carding mills were fairly small operations. There were ultimately several hundred spindles, but the carding seems to have been mostly for local residents, who then hand spun their yarn. The mills burned in 1891. The remnants of the dam and building foundations were still visible in 1978. Both bridges will be flooded by the Bay Springs pool of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

BAY SPRINGS BRIDGE, MACKEY'S CREEK [?1840s], 1860s-

Ms. route 4, 5 miles W of Dennis, Tishomingo Co., Ms.

Two sites -- 1959 bridge at 16.378580.3821380; older site at 16.378560.3821290

The Bay Springs site was settled in the early 1840s by the Gresham family who built water-powered spinning and carding mills in the narrow, rocky gorge of Mackey's creek. There has probably been a bridge there since then; at least since the early 1850s, when the Aberdeen-Eastport stage line went through Bay Springs. There was an uncovered wooden bridge there during the Civil War. During the first decades of the 20th century the creek was spanned by a wooden trestle bridge with a wooden queen-rod pony truss as the center span. The slanted ends posts and the upper chord were 8x10 inch wooden beams; the hip verticals were iron tension rods, the truss was about 8' high and 16' to 24' long.

1920 - About this time, the wooden bridge was replaced by steel truss, built by the Champion Bridge Company, of Wilmington, Ohio. It is a pin-connected, half-hip Pratt pony truss, 85' long, 11' wide, and 10' 4" high. By 1954 it had two 32' steel I-beam approach spans. Piers are concrete-filled steel tubes, about 20' high. There are 5 panels: 2@ 17.5'; 3@ 16.8'. HAER architects made two sheets of drawings of this bridge in 1978.

1959 -- The state built the present route-4 bridge north of the original site: 4@ 60' prestressed concrete beam spans, 29' wide. Length overall: 242'4". Bearings: N54<sup>0</sup>24'E Miss. State Highway Department R.R. Madden, "Old Bay Springs, Mississippi"; H.L. Shook, Tishomingo Co. News; Edwin C. Bears,

FULTON BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1907-

U.S. route 78, 2 miles W of Fulton, Itawamba Co., Ms.

16.366970.3792290

Two structures -- 1907 and 1931.

1907 -- Two-span steel truss bridge built by Nashville Bridge Co. for Itawamba Co: 1@ 60' and 1@ 150', on concrete filled steel cylinders.

1931 -- State built, with Federal Aid,: 1@ 209' I-beam cantilever (1@ 59.5', 1@ 90', 1@59.5'); 6@ 30' I-beam girder spans. Length overall: 389'.

Width: 24'. Pavement: prestressed concrete. Bearing: N48<sup>0</sup>13'E.

Greene - Itawamba Co. Times; WPA Source Material for Miss. History, Itawamba Co.; Miss. State Highway Department.

IRONWOOD BLUFFS BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1920-

One mile W of Ms. route 25 on dirt road 2.5 miles N of Bull Mountain Cr.,  
Itawamba Co., Ms. 16.370080.3776850

County bridge built about 1920-21: 1@ 54', 4-panel, riveted Warren pony  
truss, ca. 7.5' deep; 1@ 101.5' 6-panel riveted Pratt through truss,  
20' 11" deep; 1@ 37.5' 3-panel Warren pony truss, ca. 6' deep. Length  
overall: 193'. Bearing: S45<sup>0</sup>E. Wood decking. Hor. clearance: 16'.  
Vert. clearance: ca. 15'

Photos MS 11-1 thru 1-5.

Sources: Greene in Itawamba Co. Times; inspection.

## BARR'S FERRY BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1921 -

On dirt road that leaves Ms. route 25 just south of corporate limits of Smithville, Monroe Co., Ms. Bridge is in Itawamba Co. 16.368140.3773460

This site was the principal steamer landing for Smithville from ante-bellum days, when a Major Barr established the ferry, until the 1880s. In 1921 or 1922, local residents built a wood-decked trestle bridge to replace the abandoned ferry. The bridge in 1978 was a military, pre-fabricated, portable, "Plate Tread Deck Long" bridge about 200' long and 13.5' wide. The river at this point is about 95' wide, between steep banks. The pilings from the trestle bridge are visible at low water.

Sources: Inspection; Morton, in Columbus Dispatch.

AMORY-BIGBEE BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1899 -

Ms. route 6, 1.7 miles NW of Amory, Monroe Co, Ms.

16.360190.3764285

Two structures: 1899 and 1958.

1899 -- Approximately 35 feet S of the present bridge, the Southern Bridge Co. of Birmingham, Ala., built an iron and steel turn bridge. The original earth and wood trestle approaches were built by L.D. Booth, a prominent bridge contractor in the county. The turn span was a 237' pin-connected Pratt truss, about 16' wide and a minimum vertical clearance of 14'7". To this, by 1954, had been added 5@ 20' I-beam spans, and three Warren pony trusses: 67', 100', and 65' long. The piers were steel cylinders filled with concrete. The pivot pier was 20' in diameter and about 22' high. The other piers were about 30" in diameter.

Specifications for superstructure: Compression members to be medium steel withan ultimate strength of 60,000 to 68,000 psi, and an elastic limit not less than 50% thereof (i.e. the steel would return to its original shape after being subjected to stress of about 30,000 psi.), limit of elongation - 22% in 8". Wrought iron tension members to be tough, fibrous, uniform; ultimate strength - 50,000 psi, elastic limit - 26,000 psi.

Rivet steel: ultimate strength - 50,000 to 58,000 psi, elongation - 26% in 8".

Costs: The contract price for the truss piers was \$15,775, but the Southern Bridge Co. settled for \$11,204.19, after litigation, in 1904. At the same time, L.D. Booth settled for \$795.81 on a contract of \$920.

Photos: MS11-6 thru 11-8

1958 -- The state built the present bridge between 1956 and 1958. It consists of 1@ 240' continuous concrete box girder span, and 32@ 20' reenforced concrete slab spans, 26' wide.

Length overall -- 880'. Bearing -- S27<sup>0</sup>3'E. Cost: \$334,055 for 0.491 miles of road and bridge.

Sources: Monroe Co. Board of Supervisors Minute Book #8;

Ms. State Highway Department; inspection.

Notes: Before the 1899 bridge was built, the river was crossed by fording, and by a county ferry during high water. The truss bridge was torn down about 1960. The pivot pier still stands, and some of the smaller piers are lying on the ground. The bridge was always county property, although the state assumed maintenance of the road in 1925.

Because the first contract was annulled by the court, a second contract had to be made, through another "public outcry." The Southern Bridge Co. won both times. The other companies present and bidding: 8 Nov 1898 -  
Youngstown Bridge Co., Youngstown, Ohio; George E. King Bridge Co, Des Moines, Iowa; Croton Bridge & Manufacturing Co., Groton, N.Y.  
CHAMPION BRIDGE CO., Wilmington, Ohio; NEW COLUMBUS BRIDGE CO., Columbus,

Ohio; VIRGINIA BRIDGE & IRON CO., Roanoke, Va.; INDIANA BRIDGE CO., Muncie,  
Indiana. 1 May 1899 - The GROTON, VIRGINIA, and SOUTHERN BRIDGE COMPANIES  
returned, and there also appeared M. S. HAISEY, Fort Worth, Tex.

AMORY RAILROAD BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1887 -

1 mile NW of Amory, Monroe Co., Ms. 16.360100.3763980.

Present bridge built in 1905; 196' riveted steel truss through turn span on brick pier, approximately 25' in diameter at top. In 1968 about 165' of approach trestles on either end of the turn span were replaced by deck plate girder spans.

Photos: MS11-9 thru 11-11.

Source: The St. Louis-San Francisco R.R.

Note: There is no information about the original bridge.

AMORY BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER, 1933 -

U.S. route 278, 3.5 mi. W of Amory, Monroe Co., Ms.

16.356740.3761430

The bridge was built by the state (Federal Aid Project E226A) March-  
December 1933. It consists of 25@' I-beam approach spans, and 1@ 236'  
cantilver main span. Length overall-861" width of pavement- 24'

SOURCE: Miss. Highway Department

## COTTON GIN PORT BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1914-1933

SW of Amory, Monroe, Co., Ms. 16.357575.3760400 Steel truss on concrete-filled steel-tube piers, about 160' long, one lane wide, and 33' above low water. The Southern Bridge Co. of Birmingham, Ala. built the 10-span, camelback bridge for Monroe Co. in 1914. Cost: about \$8,000.

It was abandoned when the route-278 bridge was built in 1933, and the metal was scrapped during World War II.

SOURCES: Cleve Morton, articles in Columbus Dispatch, 20 & 25 Aug. 1969 U.S. Army, Office of Chief Engineer, List of Bridges;

ABERDEEN RAILROAD BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER, 1887 -

SL & SF RR NW of Aberdeen Monroe Co., Ms. 16.357670.3743840

Two structures: 1887, 1969.

1887 -- Kansas City, Memphis, & Birmingham RR spur from Amory completed.

Superstructure: 198', 13-panel, pin-connected, Pratt through truss swing span with level top chord. Single track.

Truss hgt.: ca. 25'. On brick piers; center pier ca. 20' in diameter, ca. 45' high

Photos: MS11-12 thru 11-14

1969 -- Center pier removed. St. Louis & San Francisco RR installed fixed span on steel truss piers. New span is Baltimore truss, ca. 31' high, 153' long.

SOURCES: St. Louis & San Francisco RR; U.S. Army, Chief of Engineers, List of Bridges, 1927.

ABERDEEN BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER, 1873 -

U.S. route 45 one mile east of Aberdeen. The 19th C. bridge was 1000' feet west (upstream), from the 1930 bridge. 16.359440.3743100

Two structures: three-span iron truss turn bridge, 1873; concrete girder and steel truss, 1930.

1873-In 1870 the Board of Supervisors of Monroe Co., Ms., began the construction of an iron turn bridge across the Tombigbee river at Martin's Bluff, now known as East Aberdeen, to replace a ferry at that site.

Substructure- Contracted to Stands & Maselle, Aberdeen, Ms. Brick piers, capped with stone. Center pier, for turn span, ca. 22' in diameter, 44' above low water. End piers, ca. 6' thick, 20' wide and 45' high.

Abutements ca. 18' wide, 18' high, and 4' thick.

Superstructure: Contracted to McNainy, Claflin & Co. Cleveland Bridge Works. 1@ 230' Post Patented Diagonal Truss

(This is a double intersnter pier ca. 20' in diameter, ca. 45' high

Photos: MS11-12 thru 11-14

1969 -- Center pier removed. St. Louis & San Francisco RR installed fixed span on steel truss piers. New span is Baltimore truss, ca. 31' high, 153' long.

SOURCES: St. Louis & San Francisco RR; U.S. Army, Chief of Engineers, List of Bridges, 1927.

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Abutements ca. 18' wide, 18' high, and 4' thick.

Superstructure: Contracted to McNainy, Claflin & Co. Cleveland Bridge Works. 1@ 230' Post Patented Diagonal Truss

(This is a double intersection Pratt truss, with diagonal instead of vertical compression members. In the Aberdeen bridge, the truss is designed to act when the bridge is closed. Thus, it is really two Post trusses cantilvered from the center.) Polygonal top chord. Pin connected. Counter tied.

1@ 50' (west) and 1@ 30' (east) Warren pony trusses, ca. 4' high.

Specifications: Wrought iron in stressed members rated at 60,000 psi. Bridge designed so that under a moving load of 1000 lbs. per linear foot no member bone tensile stress in excess of 15,000 psi or compressive stress in excess of 60,000 psi. All tension members to be tested at 150% of maximum design load (i.e., 22,500 psi.) The pedestals, street shoes, and lateral blocks were to be made of the best quality cast iron.

COSTS: Substructure - \$23.50 per 1000 bricks, masonry to have 18 bricks per cubic foot. Excavation at 22¢ per cubic yard.

Total to Standa & Masselle \$33,263.01

Superstructure - 230' at \$90 per foot and 80' at \$30 per foot.

Total to McNairy, Claflin & Co. including interest 23,913.16

Total cost of bridge recorded in minute book \$62,316.46

1930-Bridge built by Monroe Co. and State highway department with Federal aid (Federal Aid Project 196A), 1929-30.

Principal contractor: W.C. Howton Co. Birmingham, Ala. Steel truss supplied by Nashville Bridge Co.

DETAILS: 12@ 32'6" concrete girder approach spans on re-enforced concrete bents; 1@ 150', 7-panel riveted steel Parker thru truss, maximum depth-25', width, c-c of trusses-23'4". Max. clearances: 13'8" vert, 22'8" hor. Length overall- 542'4". Bearing: N41°07'E.

COSTS: Steel truss- \$16,465 lbs. extra structural steel \$1,268.80, Total for bridge and 1.464 mi. road-\$173,500.

SOURCES: Monroe Co. Board of Supervisors Minute Book #1;

Elliott, Survey; Ms. State Highway Dept.; Puckett, "Reconstruction."

NOTES: Diagrams of Post truss accompany T. Cooper's article in the Engineering News (see bibliography). An odor of corruption surrounded the construction of the 1873 bridge, and perhaps not all payments were recorded in the supervisor's minutes. In 1878, a Columbus, Ms., newspaper reported, by way of comparison with that town's new bridge, that the Aberdeen bridge had cost nearly \$80,000.

WAVERLY, BRIDGE, LOWNDES AND CLAY COS., MS. TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1961 -

Ms. route 50 W of Columbus, Ms. 16.361540.371025

Built 1959-61 by the Miss. State Highway Dept. From East to West: Spans 1-5, 9-33 are 40' prestressed concrete beams; spans 6 & 8 are 70' prestressed concrete beams; span 7 is a 168', 8-panel, steel, riveted Pratt thru truss. Panels 4 and 5 have diagonal and horizontal sub-structs, forming, in effect, a 2-panel Warren truss across those panels, half the height of the main truss. Min. vert. clearance: 15'; min. hor. clearance: 30'10. Pavement: concrete, 28' wide. Bearing: N63<sup>0</sup>37'E.

Replaced Waverly and Barton ferries.

Source: Miss. State Highway Dept.

WAVERLY RAILROAD BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1887-

Columbus & Greenville RR, between Columbus, Lowndes Co. and West Point, Clay Co., Ms. 16.361050.3714700

Two structures: 1887 and 1914.

1887 -- Georgia Pacific RR constructed 218' wrought-iron turn span, single-track, pin-connected Warren thru truss w/verticals.

Width: ca. 18'. Max. hgt. of truss: 31'. Min. vert clearance: 19' at portals. Substructure: Brick center pier, 32' high, 23' diameter; concrete abutments; 2200' wood trestling on E approach.

1914 -- Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Co., North Milwaukee bridge for Southern RR.

Two, 2-panel, riveted, steel, Warren trusses, with verticals, cantilevered from center post. Max. hgt: 30' at center post. Min. vert. clearance: 23'. Min. hor. clearance: 18'4". Pier and abutment copings remodeled and base of center pier widened. Bearing: N69<sup>0</sup>W

Photos: MS11-16, 11-17; of blueprints - (proposed bridges, 1915) MS11-20, 11-21, 11-24, 11-25, 11-26; and MS11-18, 11-19, 11-23, 11-27 thru 11-31.

SOURCE: Columbus Greenville RR, Columbus, Ms.

U. S. ROUTE 82/45 BYPASS BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1964 -

1.8 miles W of Columbus, Lowndes Co., Miss. 16.364145.3706850

Built by the state in 1964, to carry a dual-lane freeway around Columbus. 14@ 40' and 3@ 70' prestressed concrete beam girder spans; 1@ 210', 10-panel riveted, steel Parker through truss, 36' deep, 62'6" wide. LOA: 983'4". Two lanes, each 26 wide, plus 6' median strip.

Contractors: J.W. Snowden Construction Co., Hattiesburg, Ms.; F-S

Prestress, Hattiesburg (concrete beams); Nashville Bridge Co. (truss).

Cost: U.C Truss-\$276,000; total-\$820,612.

Source: Mississippi State Highway Department

COLUMBUS HIGHWAY BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE R. c.183-[ca.1854], 1878- 4th Ave. S  
(formerly Bridge St.) (1843); Main St., Columbus, Lowndes Co., Ms. (1878).  
16.366760.3706750.

Three structures: Wooden bridge, 1843; two-span, iron-truss draw bridge,  
1878; three-span, steel truss draw bridge, 1927.

1843-an 26 February 1842, the Mississippi legislature chartered a company  
to build a "substantial and durable bridge across the Tombigbee River at  
Columbus," to be capitalized at \$50,000. The charter made the Columbus  
Bridge Co. a corporation until 1 March 1882; authorized the county to  
condemn land should the Company not be able to come to terms with the  
owner; and required that the bridge be completed within 24 months. The  
bridge was to be thirty feet above the high water mark, e.e., one foot  
above the surface of the ground on the west side of the river,  
immediately below the ferry, known as Bryan's ferry." Authorized tolls  
were:

pedestrian, 6-1/4¢; man & horse, 12-1/2¢; large live stock, 5¢/head;  
small livestock, 3¢/head; 4-wheeled vehicle w/two horses, 50¢; same,  
w/four horses, 75¢; two-wheeled vehicles, 25¢; all other vehicles,  
50¢.

The bridge must have washed out in 1854-56, since in the latter year,  
petitions began for a replacement. Jack Donnell recalls that before WWI, one  
could stand on the pilings of this bridge at low water.

1878- In April 1872, the Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors began action to  
build a bridge across the Tombigbee river at Columbus. A bridge fund was  
established by selling part of the county's holdings of Mobile & Ohio RR stock  
for \$13,600. In Aug 1873, a commission laid out the location of the bridge -  
65 yards south of the ferry at the foot of Main St. bearing South 27<sup>0</sup>west

(Magnetic). In the same month, the board awarded contracts to: the Wrought Iron Bridge Co. of Canton, Ohio, for the Superstructure; M.L. Howard, for the Piers; and A. M. Williams, engineer, to be superintendant of construction.

The substructure consisted of brick abutments on either shore; a round brick pier (for the turn span) on the east shore, about 40 feet high above river bed and 20 feet in diameter; and in midstream, two round brick piers about 5 feet in diameter, and about 40 feet high.

The superstructure consisted of 1@ 198'5", 17-panel, double intersection, pin-connected Pratt through truss span with horizontal top chord and counter ties. Height: ca. 15'; and 1@ 197'5" 12-panel through bowstring arch fixed span with counter about 18 feet high. Width of both spans, of trusses, ca. 18 feet. Decking: wood.

COSTS: Substructure, incl. piers, abutments, foundations, coffer dam, and coping: \$25,263.01, plus approaches, \$3,482.44, subtotal-\$25,724.90.

Superstructure: \$29,834.84 plus interest on bond, \$1871.17, subtotal-31,706.01. Total cost to 1 Sep 1879, when the bridge bond fund was transferred to the county's pauper fund: \$70,587.44.

U.C. Photos: MS 11-36, 11-38 thru 41.

1927- In 1924 the state assumed maintenance responsibility for the bridge, and between June 1925 and June 1927, built the present bridge in Federal Aid Project 60A. The state turned the bridge over to the city of Columbus in June 1973.

The substructure consists of re-enforced concrete abutments, 4@ re-enforced concrete multi-column piers, 23 to 63 feet high, 1@ R.C. round pier, 62'2" high and 20 feet in diameter; and 6@ 4-column R.C. bents.

The superstructure consists of 2@ 90', 5-panel, riveted steel Warren pony spans, ca. 23' of trusses wide, 12' high; 1@ 202', 10-panel, riveted, steel, Camelback thru truss turn span, ca. 22' wide trusses, 25' high and 6@ 39'1" and 2@ 37' R.C. girder spans. Deck: R.C. 19'9" wide. Min. clearance: hor- 22'2.25"; vert -13'10". LOA: 686'2". Beaming: S46<sup>0</sup>W.

Prime contractor: Hartford Accident & Indemnity Co.

COSTS: Swing span- \$20,300; pony spans-\$15,000 turning machinery- \$12,500; overrun- \$7,226.79; Total cost-162,285.51.

Photos: MS11-32 thru 11-35, 11-37 (construction); MS11-36; MS11-51

NOTES: The base of the east abutment and the base of the round pier of the 1878 bridge were still visible at low water as of 1978. The Columbus bridge must have been one of the first large contracts of the Wrought Iron Bridge Co., which was organized from an older foundry in 1871. The arch span is much larger than any extant arch spans of the type patented by the Company. The county hired bridge keepers "to be on duty at all times to turn draw for boats, sweep bridge, keep [draw] oiled and prevent persons from passing over the bridge in a faster gait than a walk, and take general supervisory care of the bridge." In Oct 1879, John Pope was hired at \$15/mo., to commence with the 1st boat passing Columbus. In Sep 1880, this was reduced to "payment commensurate with work done." In Dec 1880, Lawson H. Willeford was hired at \$25/mo. and use of house. The Iron Free Bridge was removed in 1929. The bridge's present traffic greatly exceeds its design specifications (H-15) and it is being considered for replacement.

SOURCES: Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors Minute Book #8; Local History Room,  
Lowndes Co. Public Library; Mississippi State Highway Department; Jack  
Donnell, of Columbus, Ms.

COUMBUS RAILROAD BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER, 1861 -

Foot of 1st St. S. Columbus, /Ms. Lowndes, Co. 16.36750.3705845

Three structures: Wooden bridge and trestling, 1861; brick piers, 1867; three iron truss spans, 1878; western span removed, 1887; two steel truss spans, 1905.

1861-The Mobile & Ohio RR spur to Columbus was completed and service begun in the spring. The first bridge was a wooden truss, probably on wooden trestling. An 1875 map of Columbus (by C. Drie, photo MS 1-44) shows a continuous triple intersection (Warren) lattice truss as the two western spans, and an arch draw span on the east. An arch turn span would seem to be an odd choice, because of the tension stresses in the upper chord when the draw is opened. However, wooden bridges suffered from a general disadvantage with regard to tension; this weakness in the material doubtless accounts for the long, boat-shaped pier on which the turn span rests. When fully opened, the truss could be supported on the pier. The shape of the pier is fanciful. The pier in 1875 was the present round pier. However, during the Civil War, the Louisville & Nashville RR bridge across the Cumberland R. at Nashville, Tenn., had an arch draw span and continuous lattice spans similar to the one in Drie's map. It had clumps of piling to support the ends in the open position and to act as buffers. The 1875 map shows the brick piers built in 1867.

PHOTO: MS11-44,11-68.

1878 - Phoenixville Bridge Works remodeled the tops of the piers and erected three iron thru truss spans: A 206'2" Pratt draw span, a 178'6: double intersection Pratt fixed span with flat eye-bar bottom chord, and a 67-foot fixed span. LOA: 469'10" between faces of the abutments. The two eastern spans were 12' wide c-c of trusses; the 67' span was 8' wide. All spans pin-connected.

PHOTOS: MS 11-42; MS 11-43

1887- 67' span replaced with pile trestling.

1905-Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Works, Milwaukee, Wis., erected new bridge: 1@ 206'2" turn span (2 riveted Warren trusses cantilevered from center post); H 26'8" W 16', H of center post-35'10"; 1@ 178'6" Pratt through truss, pin connected at joints of diagonal tension members, otherwise riveted.

1924 & 1952- N. approaches rebuilt.

PHOTOS: MS 11-45; 49, 50. MS 11-46 & 47 show the wedging/latching mechanism at the E end of the turn span.

OWNERS: Mobile & Ohio RR; Gulf, Mobile and Ohio RR and the Illinois Central Gulf RR.

SOURCES: Letter, D. S. Bechley, ICG Engineer's Office 1978; Local History Room, Lowndes Co. Public Library; Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Ser. 1; Vol. 52; pt. 11; p. 462; Album of Designs, Phoenixville Bridge Works, 1884; and Francis T. Miller, ed. in chief, The Photographic History of the Civil War, 10 vols., (N.Y., The Review of Reviews Co., 1911), pictures on R155; vol. IV, & p. 249; vol. III.

NOTES: There was a bridge tender until 1910. Shims were put in the shoes of the turn span in 1952. Note the similarity of the 1905 draw span to the bridge built by the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Co. at Waverly, ten years later.

MILNER BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1929- 1979.

7 miles SW of Aliceville, Pickins Co., Ala., on Ala. route 17.

16.384490.366072 0.

Built in 1929 by Alabama Bridge Corporation (a state-owned corporation). 1@ 200' steel, 4-panel/camelback Warren through truss, 33' deep; 22'6" wide; 2@ 120' 3-panel, steel Warren deck trusses, 21'9" deep, 14'9" wide; 1627' of I-beam spans. Length overall: 2088'4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Bearing: N12<sup>0</sup>E.

Cost: \$183,803.02. Operated as toll bridge until 1936; when federal government reimbursed state 50% of \$16,144.91.

Photos: AL 7-1, 7-2.

Source: Alabama State Highway Department

Notes: The 120' trusses cost \$8,250 each; the 200' truss cost \$19,000.

Full name is John T. Milner Bridge. Trusses fabricated by Nashville Bridge Co.

COCHRANE RR. BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1907-1973

NE of Cochrane, Sumter Co., Ala. 16.384510.3660710.

In 1907 the Alabama, Tennessee & Northern RR. built a 222' riveted, steel, 4-panel Warren thru span, 17.5' wide, 31' high, flanked by two Pratt thru truss, fixed spans, probably about the same size as the spans that replaced them in 1930: 2@ 100' riveted steel 2-panel Warren thru trusses. Length overall: 427'8". Bearing: N12<sup>0</sup>E. Concrete center pier: 23' in diameter, 54' high, other piers made of concrete, 6' thick, 23.9' wide. The center pier turned over after the big flood in 1973 and the bridge was removed. The St. Louis - San Francisco RR sold the section to the Corps of Engineers in 1975.

Photos: AL 7-3 thru 7-6.

Source: St. Louis-San Francisco RR; Miss. Highway Department; photographs.

## TUTWILER BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1930-

Als. route 39, st Gainsville, Sumter Co., Ala. 16.391775.3632285

Built by Alabama Bridge Corporation (s state-owned corporation) in 1930. 1@ 200' 4-panel Warren thru riveted steel truss, 33' deep, 22'6" wide; 3@ 120' 3-panel, riveted steel, Warren deck trusses, 21'9" deep, 14'9" wide; 621' of I-beam spans. Length overall: 1182'2.75". Bearing: N19<sup>0</sup>E.

Cost: \$147,017.75 Operated as toll bridge until bought by state in 1936.

Note: Trusses fabricated by Nashville Bridge Co. Full name is Julia S.

Tutwiler Bridge.

Source: Alabama State Highway Department.

EPES RAILROAD BRIDGE; TOMBIGBEE RIVER ca.1870 -

Epes, Sumter Co. Ala. 16.395480.3618095

Two structures: ca. 1870; 1928.

1870-Between 1868 and 1871; Alabama Great Southern RR. built a turn bridge consisting of one (and perhaps three) 3-panel Warren fixed spans, each about 130' long; and a camelback main span consisting of two 2-panel Pratt trusses cantilevered from the center. The turn span was about 200' long, with a 25' diameter pier. Its western end abuted below the tip of the 110' high chalk bluffs that bounds the river at this point.

PHOTOS: AL 7-7; 7-14.

1928 - The Southern railroad replaced the bridge with a lift span (riveted/pinned Warren through truss) about 180' long, and a thru Warren riveted fixed span about 114' long, built by the American Bridge Company. The 1928 spans are wide enough for two tracks, but the approach cut on the western end is only one track wide.

Photos: AL 7-8 thru 7-12.

Sources: Owens; History of Alabama; Plaque on bridge; Alabama State Highway Department; Chief Engineer's Office; List of Bridges.

Note: The Southern RR declined to provide information about this bridge.

GORGAS BRIDGE, TOMBIGBEE RIVER 1930-

U.S. route 11, at Epes, Sumter Co., Alabama 16.395590.3617870.

Built in 1930 by the Alabama Bridge Corporation (a state-owned corporation).

Trusses fabricated by the Nashville Bridge Co. 1@ 120' and 2@ 160' 4-panel riveted, steel, Warren deck truss spans; 21'9" deep 1@ 160' 4-panel riveted, steel camelback Warren thru truss span; 3692' of l-beam trestling. Length overall: 4295'2 $\frac{1}{2}$  Bearing: N47<sup>0</sup>E.

Photo: AL 7-13.

Source: Alabama Highway Department

BULL MOUNTAIN CREEK BRIDGE 1924-

1.6 miles N of Smithville, Monroe Co., Miss., on Ms. route 25.

16.371650.3772620 (1952). The 1924 truss is 15 meters east.

In September of 1871, a commission reported to the Monroe Co. Supervisors that it would cost \$700 to build a bridge across the creek. Whether the bridge was built was not determined.

In 1924, Monroe Co. paid the Camp Construction Co., a local firm, \$1,845 to erect a 100' long, 16' wide steel Pratt through truss. It has been abandoned, but still stands intact, though much rusted and without decking.

In 1952, the state completed a new bridge: 28 @ 30' I-beam spans 1 @ 210' I-beam cantilever (60', 90', 60') span. I-beams are of wide flange variety. LOA: 1,050'. Width: ca, 30'. Bearing: N2<sup>0</sup>'E.

Sources: Monroe Co. Board of Supervisors minutes: Miss. State Highway Department.

BUTTAHATCHIE RIVER BRIDGE 1861- [ca. 1921]; 1931-

At north gate of Columbus Air Force base. Reached from north from U.S. 45 via Ms. 373. 16.363900.3725575

In 1859, Lowndes Co. hired Green T. Hill to build a latticed bridge, weather boarded and covered with shingles, at or near Ford's ferry on the Buttahatchie river. The cost of this bridge on the Hamilton road was to be not less than \$2,500. In 1889, Monroe and Lowndes counties jointly hired L. D. Booth to build a covered bridge for \$1,299. The last covered bridge on the site, removed in the early 1920s, had concrete-filled cylinders for piers; it could have been the 1889 bridge.

In 1931, to aid rural free mail delivery, the state built the present bridge. Whether there was some temporary structure there during the intervening decade was not determined. The 1931 bridge consists of: 8@ 30' I-beam spans, 24 wide; 1@ 209' I-beam cantilever (59.5', 90', 59.5') span, 24' wide. Piers and bents are precast concrete. LOA: 449'. Bearing: N0<sup>0</sup>22'E.

Contractor: Royce Kershaw, Inc., Engineering & Construction, Mobile,

Ala. Cost: \$31,055.99

Sources: Lowndes Co. and Monroe Co. Boards of Supervisors Minutes; Miss.

State Highway Department; Allen, Covered Bridges; Special Collections,

Mississippi State University Library.

LAWRENCE FERRY BRIDGE, BUTTAHATCHIE RIVER late 18th C.-1951

NW of Caledonia, Lowndes Co., Miss. 16.375150.3729800

In April 1951, an old metal truss bridge on this site collapsed; it was of such antiquity and neglect, that no one knew which government was responsible for it. In 1879, Lowndes and Monroe counties conferred on jointly constructing a bridge at Lawrence ferry. The Monroe county supervisors' minutes mention an iron bridge on the Buttahatchie nearing completion in 1885, but it may have been another bridge. At any rate, Monroe county repaired the approaches on its side in 1900 and in 1926. A photograph, dating back to the pre-WWI horse-and-buggy days shows a 7-panel Pratt truss, very deep in proportion to its length and width. It is more like the late 19th C. trusses in Pennsylvania than the shallower, early 20th C. bridges usually encountered in this area.

Sources: Monroe and Lowndes counties' Boards of Supervisors minutes;  
Local History Room Lowndes Co. Public Library.

U.S. ROUTE-45 BRIDGE; BUTTAHATCHIE RIVER 1945-

13 miles N of Columbus; Lowndes Co., Miss. 16.367500.3726675

Built by state; 1942-1945; for new Columbus-Aberdeen road to bypass Columbus Air Force Base: 1@ 150' 7-panel; riveted; steel parker through truss, 28.5' deep; 27.66' wide; 17@30' and 2@ 60' concrete girder spans. Re-enforced concrete bents and piers. Minimum clearance: hor. -25.66'; vert.-15'.  
Bearing: S25<sup>0</sup>21'E. Length overall: 781.75' Costs: Truss- \$19,000.  
Total: \$101,446.95.

Principal contractor: Trinidad Asphalt & Manufacturing Co.

Source: Miss. State Highway Department

CATALPA CREEK BRIDGE [1830s]-

8 miles W of Columbus, Lowndes, Co., Miss., on Old West Point road.

16.353850.3709800

In the fall of 1869, the Lowndes Co. supervisors considered making repairs to the Catalpa creek bridge on the Starkville-Tibbee Station-Columbus road. The bridge had been maintained by the county for thirty-five years.

The date of the present iron truss is unknown. It is an 80', 5-panel, pin-connected Pratt through truss, about 16' deep and 16' wide. It is in very deteriorated condition, and is supported under the panel points by telephone-pole pilings. A 213' trestle approaches the truss from the northern bank.

Sources: Inspection; Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors Minute B Book.

TIBBEE BRIDGE, TIBBEE CREEK [1895] --

0.75 miles N of Tibbee, Clay County, Mississippi 16.348350.3711950

1896-Southern Bridge Co., of Birmingham, Ala., built a 129.5', 7-panel, wrought-iron, pin-connected Pratt through truss, ca. 18.5' deep, ca. 18' wide; length overall-432.5'. Piers are concrete-filled steel cylinders.

Photo: MS 1-66; 1-67.

Source: Local History Room, Tombigbee Regional Library, West Point, Ms.

Note: This bridge replaced a bridge at Rocky Ford, where the Columbus-West Point road had formerly crossed Tibbee creek. In 1887, Lowndes Co. considered building a new bridge at Rocky Ford. Apparently that project was abandoned in favor of a route through Tibbee Station.

BLEWETT'S BRIDGE; COLUMBUS-PICKENSVILLE ROAD & LUXAPALILA CR, 1837-  
[ca. 1865]; 1925-

Route 69 SW of Columbus, Ms. 16.369600.3705000.

At least three structures: Wooden-covered toll bridge, 1837; steel truss  
bridge, 1926; concrete girder span, 1975.

1837- In this year, or shortly thereafter, "Major" Thomas Blewett built a covered bridge at a ferry site on the Luxapalila Cr,. He operated it as a toll bridge, but allowed county residents free passage. In 1841 he repaired flood damage and replaced the abutments with brick pillars. The Lowndes Co. Police Board Court reconfirmed his charter for 20 years in Mar 1857. In 1861 the county purchased the bridge for \$500. In 1868, Green T. Hill, who lived near the bridge, petitioned with others that the Pickensville Rd., which led from "where Blewett's bridge formerly stood," be discontinued. The bridge must have been destroyed since the Civil War, since it is implicitly referred to in the O.R.

The present bridge is named after Green T. Hill, a local tradition assumes it is because he built a bridge there. It is more likely that the name came from Hill's residential proximity. Hill died in 1870, and unless he built a bridge during the preceeding 18 months on a road that had been discontinued, the name is something of a misattribution. In 1928, the official Columbus map showed the present Pickensville road as "Blewett's Bridge road," but a 1930 bridge-painting contract called the bridge "Green Hill Bridge."

1925- In August, the county completed a riveted, steel Pratt through truss span on this spot 100.5' long, and two lanes wide.

Photos: MS11-62 thru11-64.

1975- Weakened truss bridge removed and replaced with a concrete girder span to accommodate Corps of Engineers modification of channel for flood control.

SOURCES: Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors Minute Books; Local History Room, Lowndes Co. Public Library; Columbus Democrat; 20 Nov 1841; Southern Argus; 7 Dec 1841; Official Records of the War of the Rebellion; Ser. 1; vol 17, pt. II; pg. 819.

JEMISON'S MILL BRIDGE, LUXAPALIA CREEK 1840s -

1/4 mile S of Steens, Lowndes Co., Mississippi 16.377900.3713950

There have been wooden bridges on this site since the 1840s, when it was known as Jemison's Mills bridge. In 1860, Green T. Hill built a covered bridge for the county, for \$1,500. In 1885 it was replaced by another covered bridge. The brick piers of this bridge are just west of the present steel truss.

1938 -- 108', 6-panel, riveted/bolted, Pratt through truss built for county by D.S. McClanahan & Son, truss fabricated by Decatur Iron & Steel Co., (Decatur, Ala.?), designed by C.L. Wood, county engineer.

Photo: MS11-65; (There is a photo of the 1885 covered bridge in the collection of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.)

Sources: Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors Minute Books; Local History Room, Lowndes Co. Public Library; Plaque on bridge.

STEENS BRIDGE, YELLOW CREEK [19th C.]-

1/2 mile N of Steena; Lowndes Co., Ms. 16.377425.371075

The present bridge was preceded by a wooden, covered bridge, sold for \$10 when the present steel truss was built. The age of the site is not known. The concrete pier and abutment of the wooden bridge remain, just east of the present bridge.

1930 -- 126' 7-panel, riveted/bolted, Pratt through truss, ca. 18' deep, 17' wide. Built for Lowndes Co. by D.S. McClanahan & Son, truss fabricated by Decatur Iron & Steel Co. (of Decatur, Ala.); designed by C. L. Wood, county engineer.

Cost: \$8,000.

Sources: Lowndes Co. Board of Supervisors Minute books; Local History Room; Lowndes Co. Public Library; Plaque on bridge.

MAHORNER'S BRIDGE, NOXUBEE RIVER, ?-1882; 1884-

6. mi. E from Macon, Noxubee Co., Ms. on Ms. 14 to McLeod. 4.5 mi. S on McLeod-Shuqualak road. 16.363750.3654250

In 1882 Noxubee Co. board of supervisors approved a petition to replace the Mahorner's bridge across the Noxubee river. The Penn Bridge Works, Beaver Falls, Pa.; received the contract for the superstructure. They erected a 120'; pin-connected, wrought-iron, Pratt pony truss turn span with vertical end posts. (Two 6-panel wings cantilvered from a half-panel in the center.) Hgt: 9'1"; width, c-c trusses: 12'4". Wood plank decking.

Center turn pier: Brick with stone capping, ca. 35' high, 15'4" diameter at top. Completed inn 1884.

Costs: Pier-- (\$17.50/1000 bricks; 21 bricks per cubic foot) \$3,298.75.

Capping -- \$390.

Trestling -- \$334. Earthworks and levee -- \$796.81.

Placement of capping -- \$125. Superstructure -- Original contract for 100' turn span -- \$2475; additional 20' -- \$400. Total cost of bridge in minute book -- \$7,994.06.

Two fixed spans replaced the approach trestles at a later date. They are of the same style construction as the main span.

East: 59'; 4-panel, pin-connected, Pratt half-hip pony truss, hgt.- 9'1"

West: 54'8" pin-connected; 4-panel Pratt half-hip pony truss, hgt. - 9'1"

The bottom chords of the east and main spans are built up from angle-beams and plates. The west span has flat eye-bars. Length overall of bridge: 194'.

Sources: Noxubee Co. board of supervisors minute book #8.

Catalogue of Penn Bridge Co., 1887; inspection.

Photos: MS11-52 thru MS11-61.