

Exploring the Mississippi from the Twin Cities to the Quad Cities

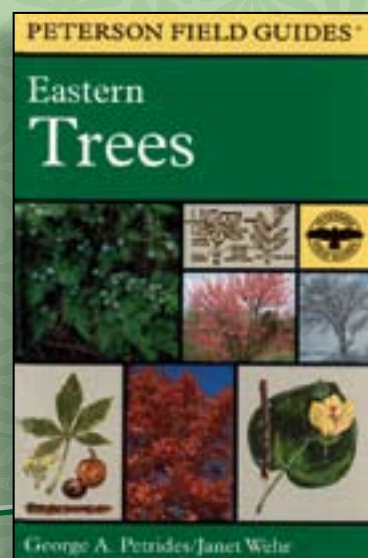
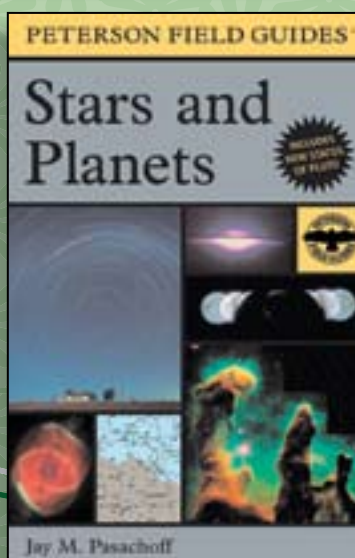
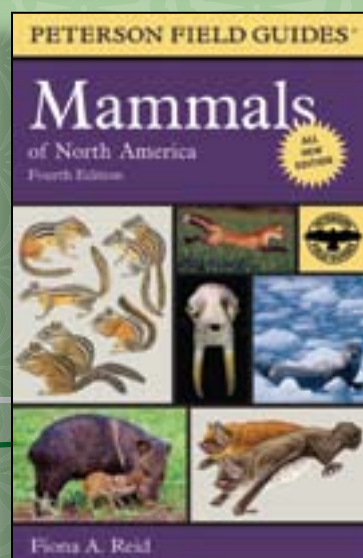
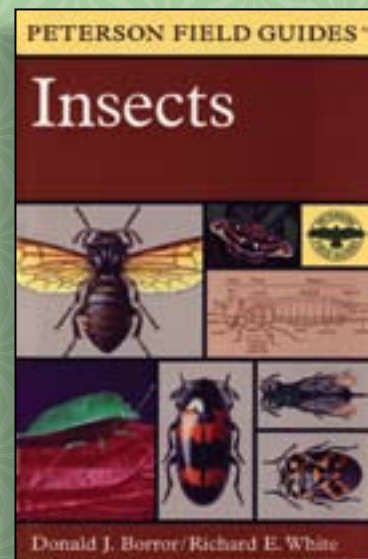
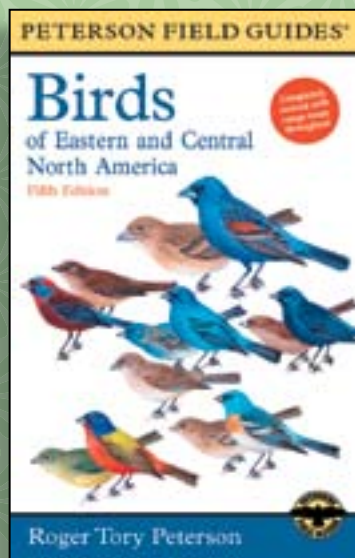
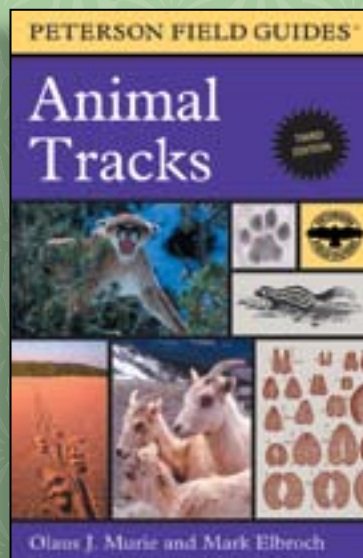
BIG RIVER

November-December 2007

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Tundra Swans
River Book Reviews

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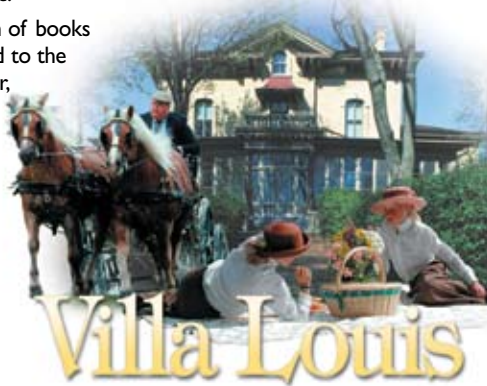
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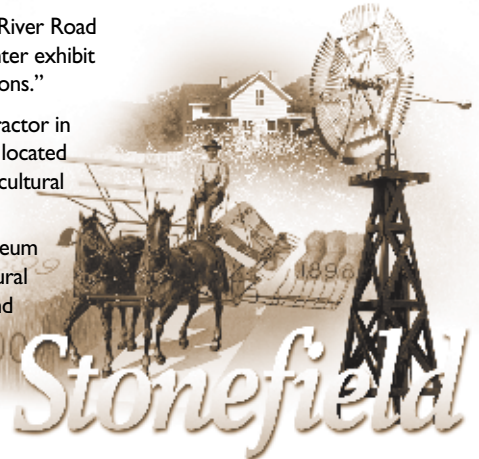
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November-December 2007

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Editor/Publisher

IN SEARCH OF THE BIG PICTURE

You might think of biology and geography as two entirely different subjects, but the story about migrating swans in this issue of *Big River* looks at an intersection of those two subjects. You might also think of history and economic development as unrelated, but the story about Galena, Ill., in this issue explores an intersection between those two subjects.

While it's often convenient to categorize knowledge into subjects, you do so at the expense of the big picture. There are not little cubbyholes in your brain labeled "mathematics," "economics," "history," "physics" and so on. All knowledge is linked up to all other knowledge. If your house is damaged by a flash flood, then meteorology, physics, economics, biology, engineering, political science, geology and knowledge from many other fields suddenly become very important, but not as separate enterprises. They become important where they all intersect, at your wet house.

Sometimes when I speak to a group of people about the river, I begin by telling them that the river is many things to people, and we make a list: swimming spot, highway, fishery, campground, bird flyway, hunting spot, source of drinking water, scenic backdrop, and so on. You can easily make a long list. Then I tell

them that *Big River* centers on the river, but explores it from every angle, because all of these activities affect all the others. I'm trying to get them to "think outside of the boxes" and to see the connections — to see the big picture.

Lately, I find myself doing this more often. Twice this summer Pamela Eyden and I took groups of

With a group of bright, curious people, and maps, mussel shells, plants and other river things in front of us, and the river itself all around us, it was the perfect setting to look at the big picture.

people out on the river as part of Winona State University's "University on the River," where we talked about bugs, birds, plants, history, development, engineering and agriculture while highlighting the connections — trying to show them the shape of the big picture. Many of the people on the trips had a lot of river experience, which they contributed to the discussions. With a group of bright, curious people, and maps, mussel shells, plants and other river things in front of us, and the river itself all around

Big River™

Big River Magazine (ISSN 1070-8340) is published six times a year by Open River Press with assistance from Riverwise, Inc., 70 1/2 E. Fourth St., PO Box 204, Winona, MN 55987; (507) 454-5949; fax: (507) 454-2133; email: editors@big-river.com; website: www.big-river.com

Reggie McLeod.....editor/publisher

Molly McGuire.....managing editor

Pamela Eyden.....news/photo editor

Contributing editors

Marc Hequet.....Twin Cities

Becky Sisco.....Dubuque, Iowa

Maureen J. Cooney...office/sales

Kathy Delano.....sales/design

Jenni McCool.....bookkeeping/subscriptions

Patricia McGuire.....bills & renewals assistant

Subscriptions are \$27 for one year, \$49 for two years or \$4.95 per single issue. Send subscriptions, single-copy orders and change-of-address requests to *Big River*, PO Box 204, Winona, MN 55987.

Second-class postage paid at Winona, MN.

POSTMASTER: send change-of-address requests to *Big River*, PO Box 204, Winona, MN 55987.

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us, it was the perfect setting to look at the big picture.

This issue of the magazine provides peeks at the big picture from many different perspectives. We go from a B-24 crashing in Lake Pepin, to giant ferrets, to migrating swans, to a view of the urban river, to a trip to Galena, and that's without even considering the news shorts. We hope you enjoy the views. ☺

Contacts (800) 303-8201. For information about stories, columns and River News, contact Reggie McLeod, Pamela Eyden or Molly McGuire (editors@big-river.com). For information about placing an ad in *Big River* or for information about selling *Big River Magazine* contact Kathy Delano or Maureen J. Cooney (ads@big-river.com). We must receive ads by Nov. 9 to get them into the January-February 2008 magazine.

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US Army Corps of Engineers dredge barge
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New EcoPark & Zoo

La Crosse, Wis. — With \$4.8 million in funding, La Crosse's old Myrick Park Zoo will be renovated and transformed into an environmental education center that will serve as the main entrance to a 1,100-acre wetland and 800-acre forest. The new Myrick Hixon EcoPark and Zoo is scheduled to open in 2008.

Visions of the ecopark are based on Myrick Park's location on the La Crosse River Marsh, which bisects the town, and its proximity to Hixon Forest Nature Center, along the bluffs. Both facilities needed updating, so instead of competing for funds, they joined forces.

Plans include displaying animals that are native to northern North America; creating an energy-efficient building that will be a model of conservation and native landscaping; adding a nocturnal-animal building and a modern aquarium; and providing environmental education to adults and children.

Seven La Crosse-area Rotary Clubs are helping to raise funds for the project.

Great Lakes Leaking

Toronto — The Great Lakes are deep, but not as deep as they were last year.

Lake Superior, the world's largest freshwater lake, has dropped to its lowest level in 81 years — 20 inches below average and 12 inches lower in the summer of 2007 than 2006. Shorelines have receded more than 50 feet in places, and the sinking water levels have wreaked environmental and economic hardship on power plants, cargo ships, wild rice beds and recreational boaters. Some people on Lake Superior suspect that their lake is being drained to benefit lakes Michigan and Huron. But those lakes have also seen water levels drop about two feet since 1970.

All of the Great Lakes are suffering lower than average water levels. Could dredging on the St. Clair River have something to do with it?

In 1962, the Army Corps of Engineers dredged a channel in the St.

Clair River, a major shipping channel connecting Lake Huron with Lake St. Clair, which connects to Lake Erie, via the Detroit River. It planned to place big boulders on the bottom of the river after the dredging, to prevent erosion and maintain water levels, but it didn't finish the project, because lake levels rose in succeeding years. Since then, studies have shown that parts of the channel have eroded from a depth of 27 feet to 60 feet. Environmental groups now charge that the erosion has created a big drain hole that must be plugged.

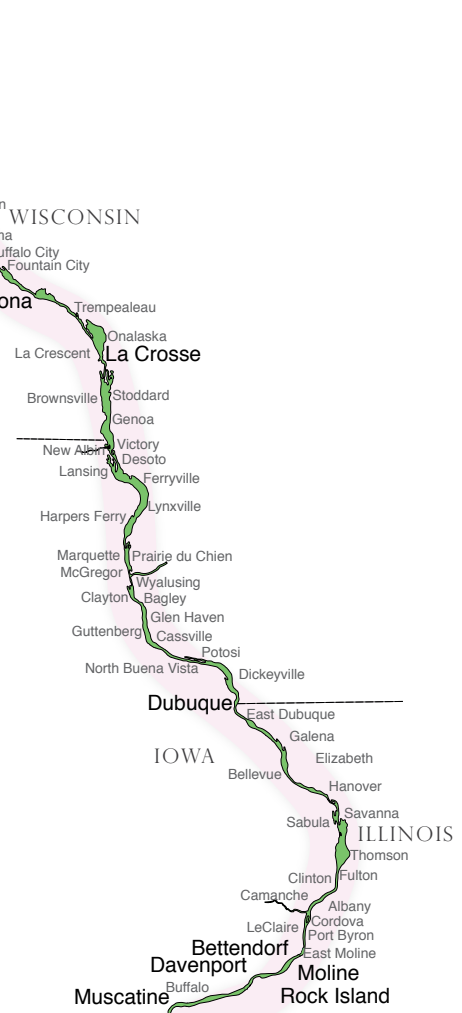
The International Joint Commission, an independent U.S.–Canada organization set up in 1909 to help resolve water problems and disputes, is investigating. Other possible contributing causes are global warming and drought. Its report is due out in 2010. Environmental groups say that's not soon enough. They say 2.5 billion extra gallons of water each day are flowing out of lakes Michigan and Huron because of the drain hole.

Popping Hillsides

La Crosse, Wis. — Some people are calling the torrential rainfall that tore through areas of southeast Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin in August 2007 the "1,000-year flood." The rain and the runoff killed 18 people and dumped unprecedented amounts of rain on small areas. The little town of Hokah, Minn., just a few miles from the river, got 15.1 inches of rain in less than 24 hours.

A house overlooking the river in Stoddard, Wis., slid down onto Highway 35, taking its neighbor's driveway with it.

A newly built dream home on a bluff over the river in Brownsville,



Minn., slid halfway down the slope.

Houses perched on steep slopes over the river have great views, but how stable are they, and how well do they stand up to intense rainfall?

In terms of stability, everything depends on how steep the slope is, how much moisture is in the soil and what kind of soil it is. The clay and silt soil that covers much of the limestone bedrock in the Upper Mississippi River Valley tends to slip when it gets wet. When it gets wet suddenly after a long dry period, as happened this year, the soils can act more like liquid than solid.

"If those soils are already a bit fluid, they flex, they give a little bit," said La Crosse County Planner Charlie Handy. "If they are dry and get saturated that quickly, it's like they pop. They explode." (WCCO-TV, 9-2-07)

When they do, the slope slides downhill.

La Crosse County currently limits building on 30-percent slopes, although the planning board was scheduled to hold a public hearing in October, and if a new ordinance is approved, development would be limited on slopes greater than 20 percent. The City of Winona prohibits development on slopes greater than 25 percent.

Many towns and counties have modest slope restrictions in place, but many may be taking a second look after the disastrous downpours of late summer.

Brain Bug

Phoenix, Ariz. — Six people died this summer after coming in contact with an amoeba that enters the body through the nose and attacks the brain. The amoeba, *Naegleria fowleri*, was discovered in Australia in the 1960s. The Centers for Disease Control have recorded 23 deaths since then.

This summer's six victims lived in Arizona, Texas and Florida. The amoeba lives almost everywhere in lakes, hot springs and dirty swimming pools. It prefers warm, quiet waters. Once infected, people have little chance of surviving.

New Corps on Black

Dubuque, Iowa — A team of eight Americorps workers lived on the historic dredge *William M. Black*, which is docked on the Dubuque riverfront, this summer.

Half the team worked at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, helping educators give tours. The others went to the Mathias Ham house site, where they built a retaining wall to protect a historic log cabin, repaired and painted an old schoolhouse, and helped rebuild a living-history exhibit. The exhibit recreates a kind of primitive lodging used in the early 1800s. Lead

Visit www.big-river.com for links to information about stories marked with the mouse .

miners slept in “badger holes,” holes dug into the ground, about four feet deep and lined with rocks, with a roof overhead.

At the end of the day, the volunteers went back to the river to their simple bunks in the dredge. The museum staff played host to the group, sometimes making popcorn and bringing in movies.

“They work hard, but they’re still young and need to have some fun, too,” said a staff member.

The museum offers rooms on the *William M. Black* to visitors and tourists during warm-weather months.

The Americorps volunteers served five months on hurricane-recovery

Lead miners slept in “badger holes,” holes dug into the ground, about four feet deep and lined with rocks, with a roof overhead.

projects along the Gulf Coast before moving to Dubuque and working on the Ham House for six weeks. After that, several returned to the Gulf Coast.

Local Americorps teams pitch in and help throughout the year, but this was the second year a national group has worked at the museum.

“We’ll probably apply for their help again next year,” said Mark Hantelmann, projects manager.

Baby Mussels

Fairport, Iowa — Researcher Tatsuki Nakato of the University of Iowa released 5,000 baby Higgins Eye mussels into the river in Pool 16 in October, in an attempt to revive populations of the endangered native mollusk. The baby mussels should help bolster the mussels in a limited area near Buffalo, Iowa. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will help monitor the mussels’ growth.

Higgins Eye mussels were almost wiped out by the pearl button industry in the late 19th and early 20th century, when more than 60 button factories employed thousands of workers.

Riverfront Exposed

Rock Island, Ill. — When International Harvester built its massive Farmall plant on the river 100 years ago, the riverfront was dominated by industry and transportation, so people didn’t object to the factory blocking their view. But citizens here are cheering the demolition of the giant plant on Fifth Avenue.

The Farmall plant closed in 1986 and since then has been owned by LRC Development, which retained office space in the plant. The plant was demolished this fall, and many of its materials were recycled.

The city will use tax-increment financing to convert the open area from industrial to commercial and residential use, as part of a 20-year plan known as the Columbia Park Project Redevelopment Area.

The Pill in Tinseltown

Hollywood, Calif. — This town’s resident population of 5,000 pigeons will be reduced by half by the year 2012, if plans to put the birds on birth control succeed. It’s not the pigeons that bother people so much as the pigeon poop. The answer may be a birth control pellet called OvoControl P, manufactured by Innolytics LLC in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The birth control pellets are sized and distributed in ways that eliminate the possibility that other birds will eat them. Studies of the active ingredient, nicarbazin, show that the drug’s effect is reversible, and that there are no effects on other species, including species that eat the pigeons.

Innolytics worked with the USDA National Wildlife Research Center to develop a similar pellet for controlling Canada geese, which also gather in cities and create messes that annoy people and create human health problems.

Cleaning Up After Ford

St. Paul — Earlier this year the Ford Motor Company announced that next year it will vacate its 138-acre manufacturing facility on the Mississippi River in St. Paul. The announcement prompted a flurry of exuberant ideas for redevelopment. The City of St. Paul

Eagles Landing is situated on the banks of the Mississippi River in the National Historic Business District of Downtown Wabasha. It features 27 richly-appointed condominiums ranging in sizes from 1,400-2,055 sq. ft. Each home offers spectacular sweeping views of the Mississippi River and the bluffs beyond. Designed with all the amenities expected by those who appreciate quality. **Optional ownership of Private dock right outside your door.**
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developed five scenarios. Now pollution will be part of the discussion.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has been reviewing a company report on pollution at the facility, including several sites that were used to store and dispose of chemicals, paints and solvents, some of which are known carcinogens. Extensive clean-up may be required.

In August, Ford closed three youth baseball fields after tests found some soil samples with slightly higher levels of arsenic, copper and iron than the state standards allow, although the Minnesota Department of Health said the amounts were so small it had no reason to believe the condition of the field posed a community health risk.

Drawdown on 6

Winona, Minn. — Pool 6, between Winona and Trempealeau, Wis., is scheduled for a water-level drawdown next summer. Water levels would decrease a maximum of one foot at Lock and Dam 6, and one-half foot at the Winona gage. Lowering the water level stimulates the growth of aquatic plants, which helps fish, waterfowl and other wildlife and helps stabilize shorelines.

Public meetings were held in the fall; more will be held in the spring before the final level of the drawdown is set.

Before a drawdown is approved, scientists will have to assess the possible impact on freshwater mussels in the pool. A similar drawdown in Pool 5, in 2005, stranded and killed many mussels in some areas.

Reports on the drawdowns in Pool 8 and Pool 5 were recently completed and released by the Army Corps of Engineers. The reports detail a reduction in open water and an increase in the area dominated by marsh plants and submerged vegetation. Waterfowl used the areas more extensively.

For copies of one or both reports, email jeffrey.t.dezellar@usace.army.mil.

Star, but not Alone

LeClaire, Iowa — It looks like the last wooden-hulled steam paddlewheel workboat on the Mississippi will be

saved, despite a series of frustrating surprises.

The *Lone Star* has been sitting in the open on the banks of the river near the Buffalo Bill Museum for many years. After a prolonged fundraising campaign, the museum raised \$700,000 from the Vision Iowa fund and \$50,000 from the city to design a new shelter for the boat.

Then it discovered that the boat was too decayed to lift or move in order build anything under it. The second stumbling block was the discovery that the ground under the boat is unstable, making the original shelter design both expensive and impractical. It was designed to be asymmetrical, light and airy, with wide views of the river — in other words, with a lot of glass. Adjustments to make the building more stable created a \$189,000 shortfall. It was time for fundraisers to beat the drum again.

In late August the City of LeClaire donated \$204,000 from its capital improvements fund to complete the building, noting that the boat is the city's top tourist attraction.

After the building is ready, the museum will seek funds to restore the *Lone Star*.

Easier Stamps

Washington, D.C. — You don't even have to go to your local sporting goods store to buy a duck stamp, now that agencies in Wisconsin and Minnesota are selling them electronically. The new three-year program, also initiated in seven other states, aims to make it easier for hunters, birders and stamp collectors to get stamps.

Customers can buy an electronic duck stamp on the internet or by telephone, as well as through post offices and sporting goods stores. They receive a proof of purchase that works like a duck stamp for 45 days, long enough for the real stamp to arrive in the mail. Duck stamps are required for duck hunting and for access to some National Wildlife Refuges.

Since the program began in 1934, more than \$700 million has been raised for the purchase of wetlands and other waterfowl habitat.

Corporate River Research

Beacon, New York — IBM is joining with the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries to create a collaborative center for river research along the Hudson River. The immediate objective of the River and Estuary Observatory Network (REON) is to create a system of sensors, robots and computers that will continuously monitor 315 miles of the river. REON will use new IBM technology, including computational tools that allow scientists to analyze disparate bits of data as it is being collected. A new educational center has been built inside an old brick factory, and two more buildings will be built, including a state-of-the-art research laboratory.

"This is the future. If you can predict, you can protect," said John Cronin, Beacon Institute director, in a *New York Times* story (8-16-07).

Data collected by the sensors will be used by businesses and towns in the region, but REON hopes to create tools that could be used anywhere in the world, for example, to detect parasites and pollution, and to monitor invasive species.

Awards & Grants

- Princeton, Iowa, native Nancy Purington was awarded a \$6,500 matching grant from the Iowa Arts Council, for development of an exhibit called "Twelve Views of Water," based on the artist's four decades of river photography. The exhibit will open at the Muscatine Art Center in the summer of 2008.

- Jim Haring of Clinton, Iowa, was awarded the Izaak Walton League of America's 54 Founders Award in September. Haring, 72, has been involved in river clean-up projects and river education since he was a boy. His father Ralph was a charter member.

CP Buys DM&E

Sioux Falls, S.D. — The Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad was sold in early October to Canadian Pacific Railway, Canada's second largest railroad, for \$1.48 billion cash. If Canadian Pacific completes DM&E's plan to rebuild tracks and haul coal from the Wyoming coal fields, it will pay DM&E another \$1 billion.

To bring coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin, Sioux Falls-based DM&E had proposed rebuilding about 600 miles of track across South Dakota and Minnesota, and building 260 miles of new track south of the Black Hills, at a cost of \$6 billion. The project raised opposition from a number of towns and cities coal trains would pass through. The current route would bring the coal through downtown Rochester, Minn. — despite Mayo Clinic's fierce objections — to Winona, Minn., and then south along the river to the Quad Cities, before crossing to Illinois and markets to the east.

DM&E applied for and was refused a \$2.3 billion loan from the Federal Railroad Administration, which expressed doubts that DM&E could repay the loan. The railroad then sought private financing.

The Powder River Basin coalfields are so large that DM&E estimated it could ship about 100 million tons of low-sulphur coal per year along the lines, without cutting into the business of either the Union Pacific or the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads, which together carried 450 million tons of coal from Wyoming in 2006.

The Canadian Pacific was also attracted by more than a dozen ethanol plants being built along the tracks, which could boost DM&E's revenue forecast by 18 percent next year.

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board is expected to approve the sale by mid-December.

Swan Stage

Brownsville, Minn. — A new overlook of Pool 8 opened this fall, just in time for the arrival of thousands of tundra swans and other waterfowl. The overlook, a joint project of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern Railroad, is three miles south of Brownsville on Highway 26. The new lookout features a parking lot, safety railing, informational kiosk and interpretive signs. It complements an existing overlook about 1.5 miles south.



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Going Alien

California — We write in every issue of *Big River* about Asian carp, round gobies, zebra mussels and other invasive species that have hitched rides to the Upper Mississippi River and wreaked destruction on native species and natural habitats here. We hardly ever get a chance to write about a river species making a pest of itself somewhere else.

As anglers on the Upper Mississippi know, our native northern pike is a tough customer. Californians would probably agree, after fighting this toothy, cool-water predator for more than a decade. Millions of dollars and thousands of labor hours have been spent trying to eradicate the fish from Lake Davis, a reservoir in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, using poison, electro-fishing and explosives. The State Department of Fish and Game fears that the pike will destroy local trout-fishing and tourist industries, and then migrate to other fragile ecosystems downstream, such as the San Joaquin-Sacramento delta, where it could dine on local salmon and smelt.

The northern pike's native range extends from Alaska to Labrador, and south across the Midwest to the Northeast states. In California, it is classed as a "detrimental animal." (*New York Times*, 9-12-07)

Bridge Fell, Money Lost

Minneapolis — The Interstate I-35W bridge collapse into the Mississippi River on August 1 killed 13 people. Other effects were felt throughout the Twin Cities. Among them, 35 workers for Aggregate Industries were laid off for six weeks. The downed bridge cut off the company's distribution yard from the quarry on Grey Cloud Island. Aggregate Industries supplies limestone, sand and gravel to construction companies in the area. (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 8-1-07)

River Services, Inc., lost \$240,000 in gross revenue during the six-week channel closure, mostly due to a shipment of 30,000 tons of icing salt that could not be completed.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation expected construction of a replacement bridge to begin

October 15, with the new bridge finished by December 2008.

New Resources

• A *Watershed and Wetland Protection Information Kit* is available at the website of the Center for Watershed Protection. The guidebooks, brochures and manuals in the kit include a User's Guide to Stream Assessment and Smart Watershed Benchmarking Tools, among other practical tools.

• The Peterson Ornithological Collection at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Ill., was opened to the public in October. The collection includes 1,000 rare ornithological books, periodicals and records dating back to 1886. The collection was a gift of well-known bird scholar and birder Peter Peterson before his death in 1997.

• The Army Corps of Engineers has released a 2007 edition of the *Mississippi River Flood Control and Navigation Maps*, which was last published in 1998. The book contains 111 maps, covering the river from Cairo, Ill., to the Gulf of Mexico, and a lot of information about landings, access points and facilities. The book costs \$22 and is also available on CD, through the Corps' New Orleans District and Memphis District websites. 🐭

Small is Beautiful

St. Paul — St. Paul's rejection of The Bridges, a massive mixed-use project on its Mississippi riverfront, sends a message to other developers that the city will stick to its plan for smaller-scale riverfront development.

"The city's public policy over riverfront development on the West Side Flats over a 20-year period is staying the course," said Patrick Seeb, executive director of St. Paul Riverfront Development Corp., a nonprofit that promotes the city's riverfront. "Other developers can proceed with confidence that the city remains committed to the master plan."

St. Paul developer Jerry Trooien sought zoning changes and \$125

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million in tax-increment financing for his \$1.5 billion "lifestyle center." Plans for the 40-acre site included a 30-story hotel, condos, entertainment and 430,000 square feet of retail space across the Mississippi River from downtown St. Paul.

In September, the St. Paul City Council rejected rezoning with a 5-2 vote.

The Bridges' backers decry what they say will be lost jobs and a missed chance for greater prosperity in downtown St. Paul and the city's West Side neighborhood across the Mississippi.

River advocates, however, say denying the project as proposed was a good decision.

More development along the riverfront is all but inevitable. However,

The Bridges' backers decry what they say will be lost jobs and a missed chance for greater prosperity in downtown St. Paul.

the decision re-enforced the city's intention to limit building height, extend neighborhood street grids to the river and maintain neighborhood character. Critics of The Bridges say it would have privatized the riverfront and blockaded the street grid on a scale so massive, scoffed one critic earlier, "that it would create its own weather."

Developing to the more modest scale of the city's master plan "may take longer and require more patience," said Whitney Clark, executive director of Friends of the Mississippi River, a St. Paul-based river-advocacy group, "but you don't build meaningful, connected, organic communities overnight."

Another Link

Hastings, Minn. — A 77-acre tract of unusual Minnesota prairie has been protected and linked with a greenway along the Mississippi River in Minnesota's Dakota County.

The Hastings Sand Coulee was to open in October as a state Scien-

tific and Natural Area (SNA), owned and administered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The area is an unusual dry sand and gravel prairie in a shallow, sandy ravine, or coulee, two miles south of Hastings, where the Vermillion River enters the Mississippi. Sand Coulee's 13 rare species include James' polyanisia, or clammyweed, a prairie regal fritillary butterfly and the gopher snake.

Only two percent of Dakota County's prairie remains. The Sand Coulee is the largest remaining tract. It is part of a 20-mile greenway along the Mississippi River that allows animals and plants in one natural area to move to other natural areas and the river.

SNAs preserve significant biological and geological areas. About 10 of Minnesota's 140 SNAs are as close to the Mississippi as the Hastings Sand Coulee.

The areas are open to the public, but "it's a very light-on-the-land experience," said Peggy Booth, who supervises the program for Minnesota's DNR. "There aren't trails and picnic areas like there are at many others."

Hastings is observing its ses- quicentennial this year. Part of the charm of the new natural area for Hastings residents is that it allows people to see what Dakota County looked like 150 years ago.

Smart Turtles

Brownsville, Minn. — The five-mile stretch of river between Brownsville and Genoa, Wis., was once full of 625 acres of islands. By 1989 all but 130 acres had eroded and washed away in the high water levels created by the lock-and-dam system. The Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies have worked for several years to restore the islands. This fall they're building 12 new islands in the Raft Channel below Brownsville.

Phase I and Phase II of the Pool 8 islands project created Horseshoe Island, Boomerang Island and a set of islands near Stoddard, Wis. The first stage of Phase III was finished last year, just downstream of Stoddard. New islands increase fish and aquatic vegetation, and reduce suspended

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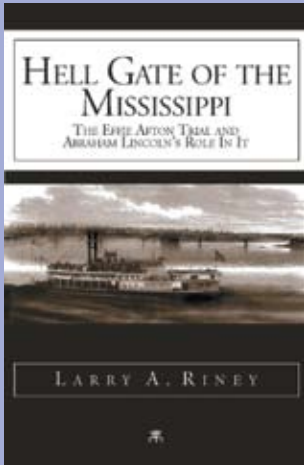


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sediments in the water.

The Pool 8 project is just one of many similar projects the Corps has taken on between St. Paul and Cairo, Ill., in the last two decades. Island construction zones have become familiar sights on the river. You can sometimes watch from the shore as dredges, barges and helper towboats maneuver about, excavating and shaping artificial structures that have been carefully designed to withstand the forces that washed away the original islands.

The Corps dedicated five new islands in Spring Lake near Buffalo City, Wis., in October, and gave river lovers a chance to name them.

The Spring Lake project — a collaboration of the Corps, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin and Minnesota departments of natural resources — built the islands out of dredged material, 32 acres all told, at a cost of \$4.3 million.

Why did the natural islands disappear? Construction of the locks and dams, beginning in the 1930s, kept the water in the Main Channel at least nine feet deep — but an unforeseen result of the permanent higher water was more open water and consequently greater wind and wave erosion. Meanwhile, silt from the vanishing islands became suspended in the water blocking sunlight, killing vegetation and destroying fish and wildlife habitat. As the plants vanished, so did their buffering affect on wind and waves.

How do you build an island? Engineers looked at existing river flow conditions and examined old aerial photos to pinpoint where islands used to be. Thereafter, one of the hard parts was coordinating several agencies and the public, said Don Powell, project manager for the Corps' Environmental Management Program.

The other hard part was building islands in backwaters, which means operating barge-borne heavy equipment in shallow water. "They can load 'em light when you're drafting only four feet of water," said Powell. "Or else you have to dredge your way into those areas."

Powell is pleasantly surprised that vegetation, fish and waterfowl

have returned to the artificial islands in only a year or two in some cases. The Fish and Wildlife Service has tracked growing game fish populations near the structures.

The new islands are away from the Main Channel and so won't affect commercial navigation. Fifty to 200 feet wide and up to two miles long, the artificial land forms are clearly visible at normal river levels — but high water may submerge them, cautioned Powell.

What's to prevent the artificial structures from washing away just as their predecessors did? Rock riprap and willow and other vegetation line the artificial islands to hold soil in place. Also, rock wings extend at 90-

The other hard part was building islands in backwaters, which means operating barge-borne heavy equipment in shallow water.

and 45-degree angles from the main body of the islands to encourage the river to sculpt natural-appearing areas. Rebuilders hope their isles will last at least 50 years.

The contractors left some areas deliberately bare for turtles and other beach lovers.

In fact, Turtle Island may be a good name for one of the new structures. Sharonne Baylor, an environmental engineer based in Winona, Minn., with the Fish and Wildlife Service, marvels that turtles found one artificial beach while the contractor was still building it.

"How did those critters know where to come?" asked Baylor.



Island building is serious work, but it sometimes looks like big toys playing in the mud. (Army Corps of Engineers)

Boat Accidents

- Waupeton, Iowa — Two Iowa men were thrown from a boat near Waupeton on August 30 after crossing over the waves created by a towboat on the Mississippi. The driver of the boat, Robin Peterson, 56, of Sherrill, was rescued by towboat workers, but Douglas McMurrin, 44, also of Sherrill, drowned.

According to Dubuque County Sheriff Ken Runde, Peterson and McMurrin were heading upriver on the Wisconsin side of the river in a 16-foot, V-bottom boat when they passed a towboat heading downriver. When Peterson crossed over the towboat's wake in order to dock at Waupeton on the Iowa bank, the men were dumped into the river.

Crew members on the towboat noticed an unoccupied boat and deployed a life boat. They picked up Peterson but did not find McMurrin.

Peterson was charged with drunken driving. Neither of the men was wearing a life vest.

Runde said crossing a towboat's wake is dangerous. The more weight a tow is pushing, the more dangerous the wake can be, especially when boaters aren't paying attention, he said.

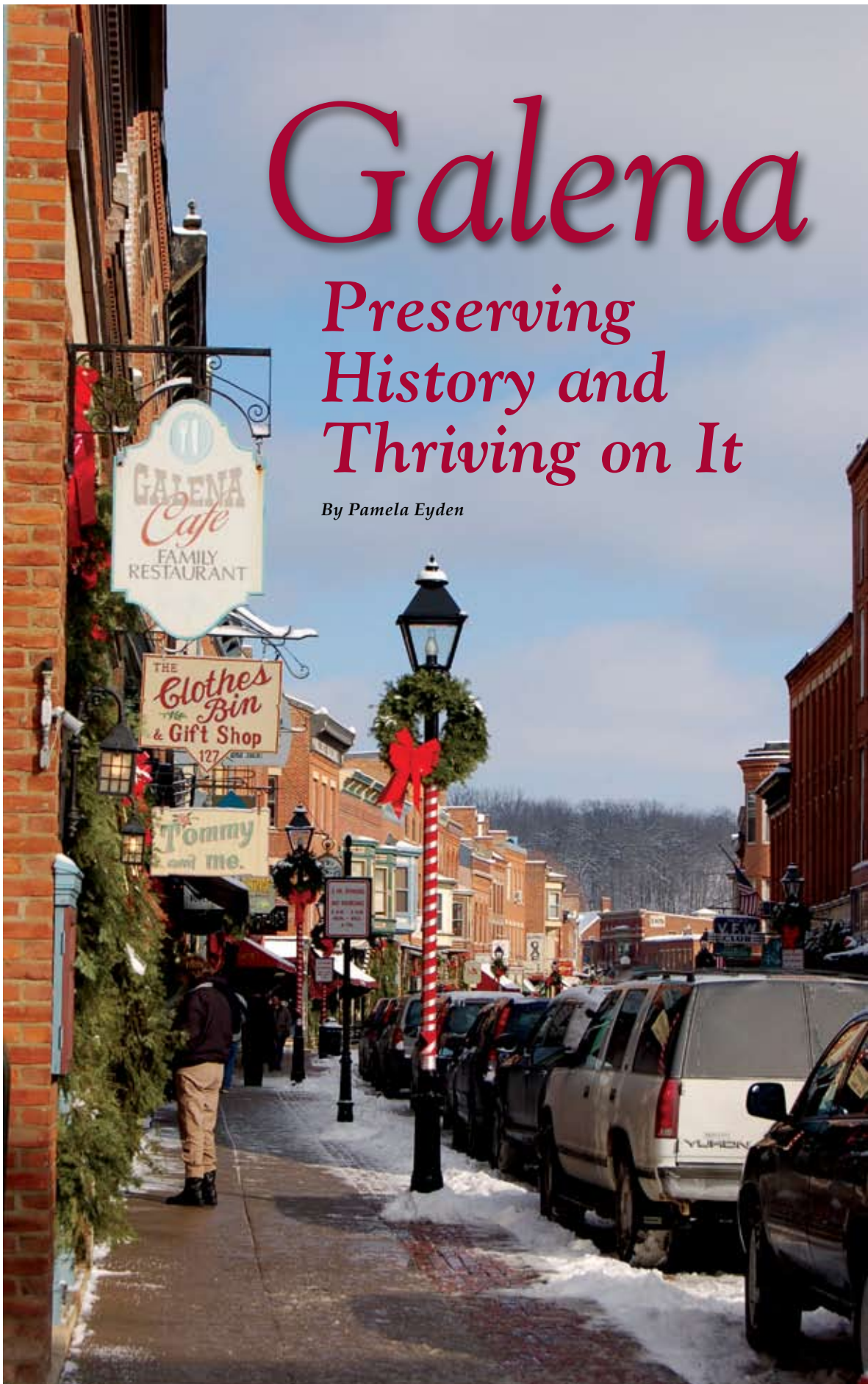
- Stillwater, Minn. — Nine people were taking a fast ride on a 41-foot sport yacht on the St. Croix River one late June night, when the boat ran ashore full speed, plowing 60 feet up a rocky, wooded shore before coming to a stop. The \$250,000 Sea Ray Sun-

(River News continues on page 34)

Galena

Preserving History and Thriving on It

By Pamela Eyden



(Galena-Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)

In the mid 1800s, Galena, Ill., was a showpiece of prosperity and civilization on the edge of the frontier. With a population of 14,000, it was half the size of Chicago. Nearby lead mines had created enormous wealth. The town levee was crowded with 200-foot steamboats, many of them carrying settlers into the frontier that would become Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Then the Civil War took the wind out of the economy, railroads trumped steamboats, and steel trumped lead. The mines closed. The levees were empty. One hundred years after its heyday, the city was in the doldrums.

River towns north and south of Galena suffered similar downturns. But Galena, current population 3,400, managed to turn its economic fate around. With 1.3 million visitors a year, it is the third most visited city in Illinois, after Chicago and Springfield.

Galena is set into gentle, rolling hills above the Galena River (formerly called the Fever River), just a couple miles from the Mississippi. Cars and RVs creep along narrow streets that were built for horses and buggies. Visitors stay in bed-and-breakfast inns and historic hotels in town, or in new motels just up the hill. They visit galleries and spas, eat well and shop a lot. But mostly they come to see the restored 19th century beauty of the town. About 85 percent of this picturesque town — more than 1,000 buildings — is on the National Register of Historic Places. Stair-step sidewalks climb from Main Street to Bench Street to Prospect and High Street.

Momentum for Restoration

Two factors account for much of Galena's turnaround: it refused to tear down its old buildings, and it attracted new wealth, in the form of visitors and investors from Chicago.

To hear local historian Daryl Watson tell it, Chicagoans have always been attracted to Galena. Back in the 1920s when U.S. Route 20 was newly paved, Chicago motorists streamed in to see the fall colors and Ulysses S. Grant's home, which was then managed by the city. They created

the first traffic jam in town, which local papers described as "impassable."

The first step in reviving Galena came when the Army Corps of Engineers built a 25-foot-high flood wall in 1951.

Until that time

the town suffered periodic,

severe floods

that damaged

much of the down-

town. The

Galena River

runs at a fairly fast clip down out of the hills,

but it levels out at Galena and drops just one inch in the

3.5 river miles to the Mississippi.

When the Mississippi rises, water backs up to Galena's doorstep. The flood wall boosted confidence that restoration might be worthwhile.

Traffic was an issue in the 1960s, when federally-funded "urban renewal" became popular. Galena's mayor applied for federal money to demolish two blocks of Main Street to provide parking for tourists. He asserted that people wouldn't bother with the town if they couldn't easily park their cars. The application was so controversial, it led to a city-wide referendum resulting in a four-to-one vote against tearing down the Main Street properties.

Frank Einsweiler, then a 68-year-old retired contractor, is credited with providing strong direction to renew the town instead of gutting it for parking. He became mayor a few years later.

"Frank Einsweiler insisted that if Galena didn't use its history and its historic architecture as the means to an end, it would have nothing over other communities," said Daryl Watson, who worked as Einsweiler's assistant for many years. Watson now

teaches local history at a community college.

By that time, the state of Illinois had already restored two prominent buildings — Ulysses S. Grant's home and the Old Market House.

There are really two Grant houses in Galena. Ulysses S. Grant was down on his luck when he arrived in 1860 with his wife and children to help run the family leather-works business. He'd given up a military career



Ulysses S. Grant and his family lived in the house above, when he came to help his brothers run the family leather goods business. (Alfred Mueller collection, Galena Public Library)



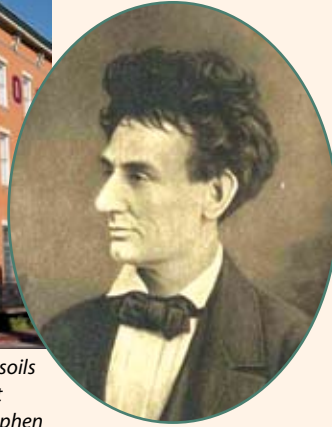
The first Grant home has been restored as a private residence. (Galena Public Library)



Grant used this house as an occasional retreat later in his life. It is now a Galena State Historic Site. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)



The DeSoto House was just a brick shell sinking into unstable soils when a group of investors took it over. The hotel prizes its past guests, including Abe Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan and Stephen A. Douglas. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)



The Old Market House, left, was neglected for many decades. (Alfred Mueller Collection, Galena Public Library) Now restored, below, it operates as a museum and exhibit hall. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)



The old Waterworks Building now houses the Convention and Visitors Bureau. (Alfred Mueller Collection, Galena Public Library)



and failed in several endeavors afterward. The Grants rented a modest, two-story brick house (now restored) on the west side of the Galena River. After the Civil War, local businessmen gave Grant a fine Italianate-style home, which he visited occasionally until the end of his life. The state of Illinois took over the house in 1955 and restored it — complete with original furniture — to its 1868 appearance. It is referred to as the “Grant Home.”

The state’s second restoration was the Old Market House, a Greek Revival-style public building built in 1845. Ideas had circulated for years about remodeling the building, replacing it with something modern or just tearing it down and building a parking lot. Restored in 1957, the Old Market now serves as a museum and exhibit hall.

These projects added momentum to the idea of broader restoration, but there was still pressure to clear the way for more cars. The turning point came with the painstaking restoration of two Main Street buildings — the Coatsworth Building and the DeSoto House Hotel.

“Main Street looked pretty rough at that time, but Einsweiler set these two buildings as top priority. Both of them were very difficult to restore,” said Watson.

The city found federal and state aid, as well as private money, to restore the Coatsworth Building, but many people still had doubts about the project. Some wanted to build a multi-level parking structure. The Coatsworth Building finally reopened in the 1980s, faced with white Milwaukee brick, like the original. It now serves as a senior residence and public meeting space.

The DeSoto House Hotel, built in 1855, has a rich history. As the hotel website points out, Abe Lincoln spoke from the hotel balcony in 1856, and his rival Stephen A. Douglas stayed at the hotel in 1858, before the two debated in nearby Freeport. It served as Ulysses Grant’s presidential campaign headquarters in 1868. But by the 1960s it had declined into a “traveling salesman-type hotel — with bare light bulbs, metal frame beds

and knotted-rope fire escapes,” as local historian Scott Wolf characterized it. Wolf works for both the hotel and the public library.

By the 1970s, he said, most architectural fixtures had been scavenged, the interior had been gutted and the walls were bowed. Then a group of

When restoration was complete and the hotel reopened in 1985, the value of surrounding Main Street properties went up. That attracted investors for other projects.

investors from Rockford, Ill., stepped in. They spent “probably millions” to stabilize and rebuild it. When restoration was complete and the hotel reopened in 1985, the value of surrounding Main Street properties went up. That attracted investors for other projects.

Today the DeSoto House is the oldest continuously operating hotel in Illinois. Guests park their cars in a modern, enclosed, four-level parking garage that was carefully built inside the facade of a historic stable next door.

The Chicago Influence

Most funding for restoration seems to have come from individuals investing their own money on their own property. Wealthy Chicagoans were, and still are, one source of money to restore the mansions and homes that are the most historically and architecturally significant buildings in town. After all, they have been buying second homes in Galena to escape the pressures of city life for more than 100 years. Some homes have been in the same Chicago family for generations. Others have been purchased for more short-term, speculative purposes.

“It would be interesting to know the percentage of Chicago people who’ve bought in here in the last 30 years. It’s probably quite high,” said Watson.

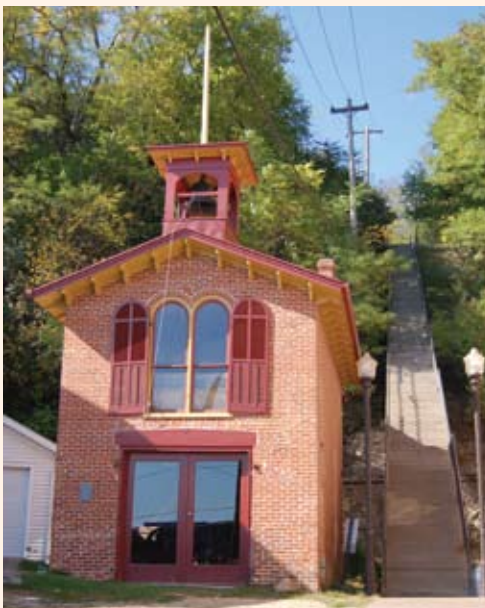
(Galena continues on page 47)



Quiet streets, footpaths and parks make Galena a very walkable city. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)



The Fiddick House is on “Quality Hill,” one of many 1800s neighborhood nicknames that are still used. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)



An old fire station was turned into a stylish home, without sacrificing its historic character. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)

The Day WWII Came to Lake Pepin

By Bob Parrott

If you were to canvass people in the Lake Pepin area today, chances are you couldn't find anyone who remembers the day in 1944 that a B-24 Liberator bomber crashed into the ice of Lake Pepin.

For those not familiar with military aircraft, a B-24 was a four-engine, propeller-driven plane built for long-range bombing runs. It had a 110-foot wingspan and ten 50-caliber machine guns, and could carry 8,800 pounds of bombs. It was normally flown with a crew of 10.

On December 15, 1944, there were no bombs falling or bullets flying — at least not in Minnesota — but the war was on everyone's mind. The front page banner of the *Lake City Graphic* newspaper read, "One Week Nearer Victory." Full-page ads encouraged people to "buy at least one extra \$100 war bond over and above your regular purchases." Meat, butter, sugar, fruit and alcohol were luxuries, and the local hardware store was suggesting practical gifts. People were planning for another war-time Christmas.

A B-24 was being ferried from St. Paul to Kansas City, with a three-man skeleton crew. It was a cold, snowy Friday afternoon, and a brief, squally snowstorm had kicked up over the lake. Less than half an hour into its flight, the plane circled low over Pepin, Wis., and turned westward, possibly in an attempt to reach an emergency landing field at Frontenac, Minn.

At about 2 p.m. the plane went down, struck the ice and exploded in a mass of flames. It plowed a quarter-mile-long hole in the two-inch-thick

ice, extending upstream from the point of impact. The plane was demolished by a second explosion as its wing tanks blew up.

Snow was blowing over the lake, and visibility was very poor. Watchers on shore could hear the plane, but could not see it. Although the Army occasionally flew planes in the area, hearing bombers was unusual.

Three Lake City firemen, Ben Simons, Woody Key and Willard Peterson, pushed their boat

After three days of searching, Army officials gave up hope that any of the crew had escaped the crash.

ahead of them across the ice to reach the scene, which was about two-thirds of the way across the river between Maple Springs, Minn., and Pepin, Wis. They were the closest responders, since Pepin had no fire or rescue service. When they arrived at the crash site, they found nothing but oxygen tanks floating amid the broken ice, and parts of the plane scattered over a wide area of ice.

After three days of searching, Army officials gave up hope that any of the crew had escaped the crash. A diver was called from Chicago to search for the bodies. Knee-deep mud

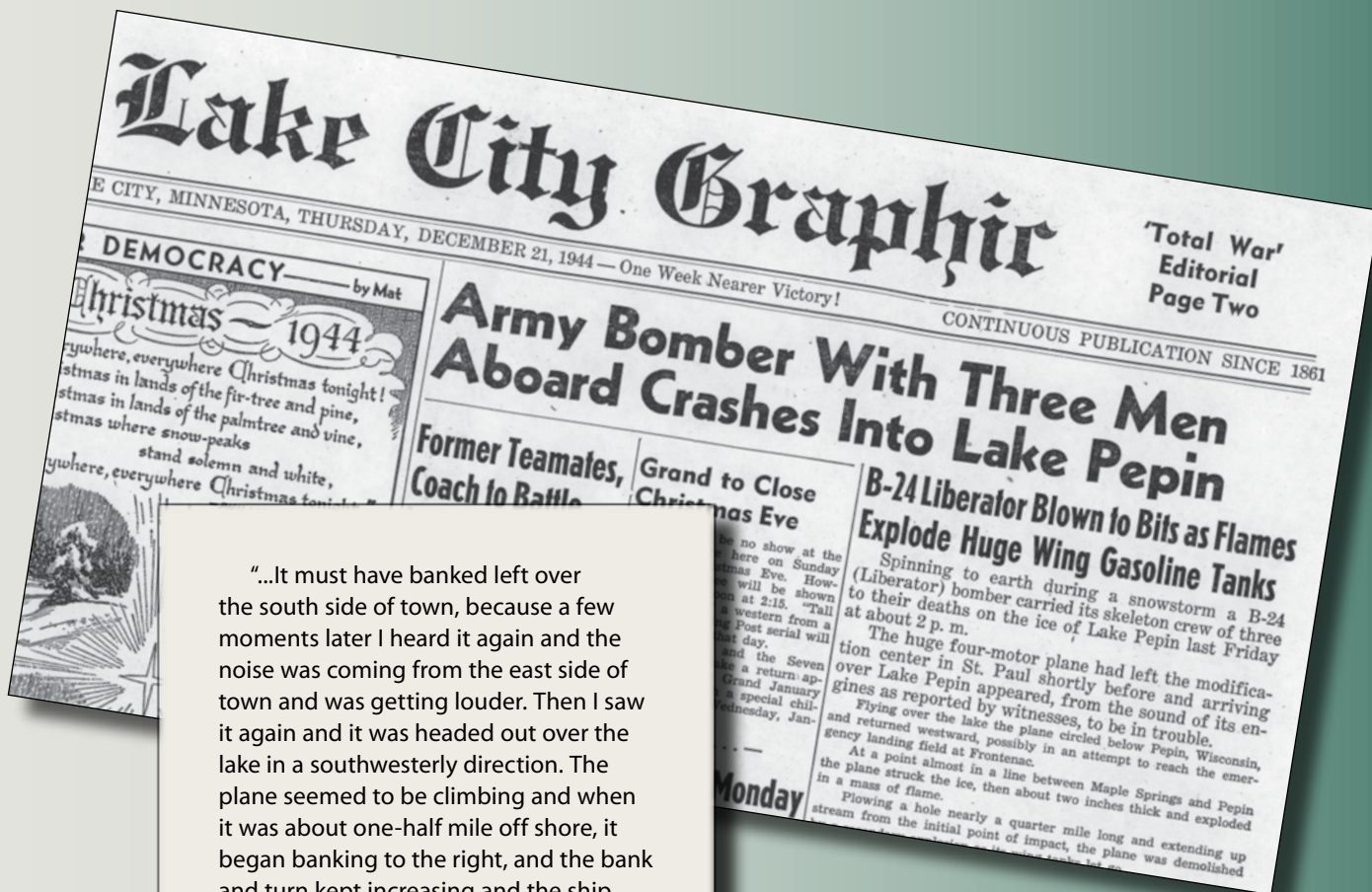


This Air Force photo shows a four-engine B-24 Liberator, the same model that crashed into Lake Pepin. (Air Force Link)

on the lake bottom handicapped the diver's efforts, as did working under 24 feet of water in total darkness beneath the ice-capped and snow covered surface.

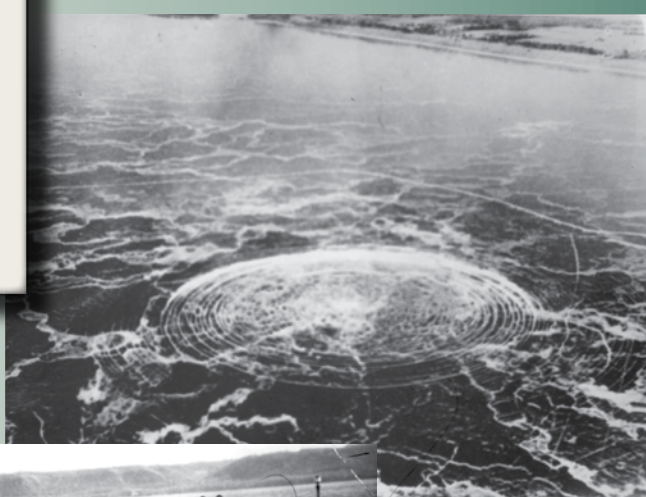
The official military report said the crash was caused by the inexperience of the crew and bad weather. It cost the lives of the pilot, captain Dan D. Mitchell, Houston, Texas; flight officer Buddy Bob Beasley, Lubbock, Texas; and flight engineer Sergeant Edward A. Demski, Trenton, New Jersey. Their remains were not recovered until April 23, 1945.

The Army recovered about 60 percent of the plane using a barge with a clam shell dredge, also in April 1945. The Army was quite secretive about the salvage operation, because, according to some, it wanted the pieces back as a matter of national security, because the plane had been modified at Wold-Chamberlain Airfield in Minneapolis for a special mission. Just two years earlier, 16 B-25s had been modified at Wold-Cham-



"...It must have banked left over the south side of town, because a few moments later I heard it again and the noise was coming from the east side of town and was getting louder. Then I saw it again and it was headed out over the lake in a southwesterly direction. The plane seemed to be climbing and when it was about one-half mile off shore, it began banking to the right, and the bank and turn kept increasing and the ship just kept spiraling down and crashed through the ice. It made a terrific crash and immediately after it hit, there was another explosion and smoke and flames erupted from the spot."

— L.M. Potter, Pepin, Wis. (statement to Maynard Bauer, Major, Army Air Corps, Station Accident Officer, December 16, 1944, in the Army report of the accident)



Above: An aerial photograph of the crash site shows the lake ice broken up "in concentric circles for a quarter mile around the spot," according to the Lake City Graphic story of 12-21-1944.

berlain for use in the famous Jimmy Doolittle bombing raid on Japan.

The Army quit making B-24s at the end of the war. In the 62-plus years since this incident, divers and treasure hunters have made many attempts to find any pieces the Army might have missed. Most all of those attempts have been futile. As time goes by, the chances of finding any remaining pieces of this aircraft are fading just like the memories of the event. ❧

Bob Parrott works for the Lake City Graphic newspaper in Lake City, Minn. He was a youngster when these events occurred. This is his first story for Big River.



Left: The debris was retrieved from the lake bottom the spring after the crash and towed back to Lake City.



Tundra swans' dense white plumage insulates the bird against the cold and also provides buoyancy. Their long necks have more vertebrae (60) than any other animal, including the giraffe — very useful for maneuvering roots and tubers out of soft mud on the river bottom. (Don Poggensee)



Tundra swans vary in size from 4 to 4.5 ft. long, including a four-inch bill and an eight-inch tail. They have wingspreads of about seven feet. (Allen Blake Sheldon)

They're Here, Then Gone —

Listen for These White Swans' Songs

By Molly McGuire

On crisp November nights, listen closely and you may hear the high, quavering *who-oo-who* of migrating tundra swans. Look carefully into the sky for a glimpse of moonlit white birds as they make their annual trip from the Arctic across the prairies and Great Lakes to the Atlantic seaboard. Tundra swans number about 100,000; about 25 to 50 percent stop to rest and feed in a few pools of the Upper Mississippi River.

The Eastern Population (EP) of tundra swans nests on the Arctic coast from the North Slope of Alaska, along the northern tundra of the marshy deltas of the Mackenzie and Anderson rivers in the Northwest Territories, and along the Nunavut coast to Hudson Bay, breeding between latitudes of 68° and 72° N.

By early September, before the young cygnets are strong enough for the long flight, the temperatures force

them to move south to the northern boreal forest where they stay more than a month. Then they fly through the prairie provinces of Canada, some through eastern Canada, and some through the Dakotas and Minnesota; and on to wintering grounds stretching from New Jersey to South Carolina.

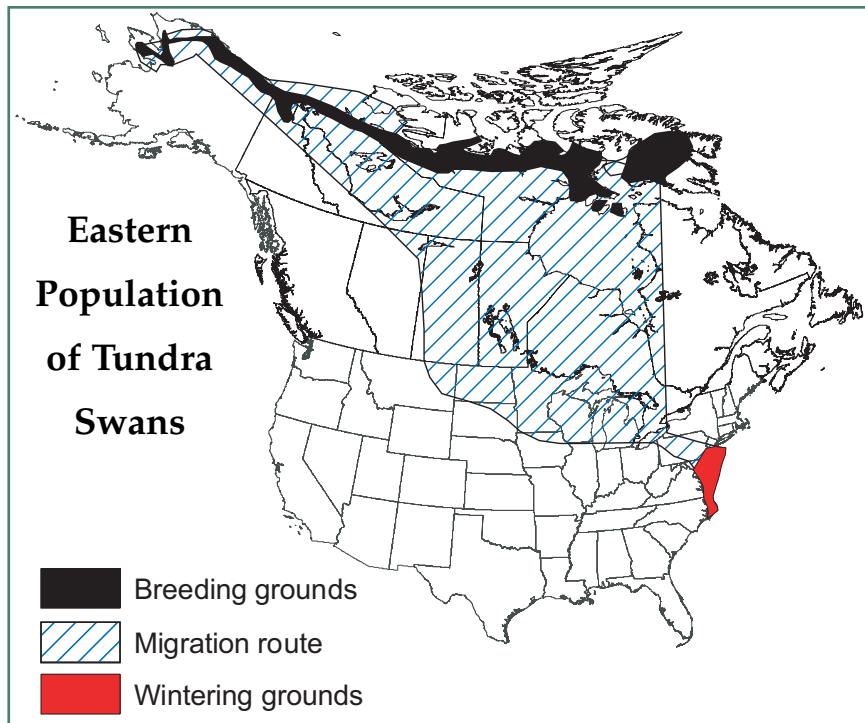
Their 4,000-mile migration takes about 73 to 84 days, nearly one quarter of the year. It is estimated they spend about 100 hours in the air, flying at speeds of 30 to 37 mph. They can maintain sustained speeds of 50 to 60 mph, and more with a good tail wind.

About halfway through the trip, thousands stop on the Mississippi River between Wabasha, Minn., and Clinton, Iowa, where they rest and feed mainly on aquatic plants — arrowhead, sago pondweed and wild-celery. Many will stay until freeze-up

forces them out, usually in December. Researchers believe the swans are in good condition when they arrive here in the fall, and do not need to store up nutrients as they do during spring migration, when they need to have enough energy to start a new brood as soon as they arrive on the breeding grounds. In the fall, weather dictates when they leave the Upper Miss area — there is no real advantage in arriving early at the wintering grounds.

Camping on the Upper Mississippi

Aerial counts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) show more and more swans on the Upper Miss during fall migration. In the early 1980s, swans rested mainly in Pools 4, 5 and 5a (Red Wing to Winona, Minn.) There was a 700 percent increase from the early 80s to 2002,



Tundra swans spend nearly half their lives migrating between their breeding grounds and wintering grounds. (Courtesy of USGS)

with the major increase in Pools 7 through 9 (Trempealeau to Genoa, Wis.). The November 2006 aerial survey showed a one-day record, 52,000 swans, on the Upper Miss Refuge, 31,000 of which were in the Wisconsin Islands Closed Area in Pool 8 near Brownsville, Minn. Wildlife managers credit good food supplies, thanks to the 2001 Pool 8 drawdown; shelter from restored islands; and less disturbance by people in the Closed Area. After Pool 5 drawdowns in 2005 and 2006, swan use increased in the pool, between Alma, Wis., and L&D 5 (Whitman Dam). This area includes the Weaver Bottoms, which was one of the hot spots for viewing tundra swans in the early 80s, then declined as vegetation declined.

Researchers found that often swans will rest in hunting Closed Areas during the day, but if there is a lack of food, they will move to the open hunting areas at night. After duck-hunting season, swans sometimes leave the Closed Areas to more productive backwaters, but stay put when there is plenty of food available.

For the first time, the "Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans," by the Ad Hoc Eastern Population Tundra Swan Committee, includes representa-

tives from the Mississippi Flyway, largely because of the numbers of swans staging on the Mississippi. This group determines what size of population to maintain, then how many can be killed by hunters each year. Tundra swans are hunted in six states: Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, North Carolina, Virginia and New Jersey.

Home on the Road

Tundra Swans spend about half their life migrating. Radio collars help researchers determine the route of individual birds, and aerial surveys tell us how many are where at a given time, but a lot of research still needs to be done.

Their numbers seem to be healthy and even growing, but several factors could change this. Tundra swan cygnets take a long time to mature, and must start their trip south before they are fully grown. There is barely time for one clutch of chicks, so if anything happens to all the cygnets, that's it for the year. Swans don't breed until they are two to three years old. Some of their nesting area is near gas/oil exploration, and the development that comes with it. One researcher found that nesting swans are sensitive to human disturbance within 1,600 ft.

That far north, climate change is expected to have a sharp effect. The Swan Research Program is studying trumpeter and tundra swan hybridization, observing that adjacent but separate habitats are blending together, and are likely to cause similar species once isolated to interbreed.

The traditional wintering grounds for the tundra swan was in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland, but since aquatic plants started declining in the 1970s, most swans go further south to coastal North Carolina. Swans also began flying inland to feed in fields. From 2002 to 2006, an average of 67 percent of EP swans wintered in North Carolina, many in the Pocosin Wildlife Refuge, where about 25,000 swans spend the winter. Recently, the Navy had its sights on a new landing field close to the refuge, but the outcry from state officials and the public convinced the Navy to look elsewhere.

About 3,500 to 4,000 EP swans are shot every year during hunting seasons, and many are also killed in subsistence hunting in Alaska and Canada. Lead poisoning is the next most commonly-reported cause of death.

Since the mid-1950s, tundra swans have fed in agricultural fields on their spring migration. Many believe that the aquatic vegetation is not generally available then, and that grain helps them bulk up for nesting and restore body mass lost during the winter. There is also speculation that eating more grain contributes to their increasing numbers, may influence their route and reduces their dependence on wetlands.

Swans take longer on their spring trip, and may be held back by winter conditions. Because the FWS does few aerial bird counts in the spring, it has no accurate count of swans that use the river then. In March 2000, a survey of Pools 4 through 11 found almost 23,000 swans. Eighty-two percent of these were in areas that are open to hunting in the fall. 🌊 🦢

Molly McGuire is managing editor of Big River.

🦢 Visit www.big-river.com for links to more information about tundra swans.

Sizing Up the Bridges

By Reggie McLeod

Bridges become an important part of your life when you live near the Mississippi River, but the collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis on August 1 brought the subject into sharp focus. People studied bridge ratings like baseball scores and for a few days, at least, breathed a little more shallowly as they drove across bridges.

Thirteen people died in that tragedy, and many of us thought, "That could have been me. How safe are other Mississippi River bridges?"

On the following two pages is a table with information about the 43 traffic bridges between Coon Rapids, Minn., and Muscatine, Iowa — excluding railroad and pedestrian bridges. The first thing one notices is that 23 of those bridges cross the 35 miles of urban river in the Twin Cities. The other 20 cross 358 miles of river from Hastings, Minn., to Muscatine. About three times as many people cross those urban bridges on an average day than cross the other 20 bridges.

While the Twin Cities' bridges are, on average, only 1.5 miles apart, below Hastings they tend to cross the river about every 30 miles. The bigger river cities — La Crosse, Wis.; Dubuque, Iowa; and Clinton, Iowa — have two each. Appropriately, the Quad Cities area has four bridges, one of which, the Government Bridge, has the distinction of being the oldest and lowest rated open bridge in our survey. It's a beautiful old double-decker swing bridge that carries both railroad and vehicular traffic from Davenport to the downstream end of Arsenal Island, near the site where the first bridge was built across the river in 1856.

The longest stretch of river between bridges is from Prairie du Chien, Wis., to Dubuque — 53.4 miles. A ferry at Cassville, Wis., about midway, relieves some of the incon-



Above: Black Hawk Bridge crosses the river at Lansing, Iowa. (Reggie McLeod)

Left: You can get a magnificent view of the St. Paul skyline from the High Bridge. (Reggie McLeod)

venience during the warm months, but most of the year a drive from Cassville to Guttenberg, Iowa, will take well over an hour by car, while a crow with a GPS would only need to fly 6.5 miles.

It could be worse, and it was in the 1970s, when the Marquette-Joliet Bridge was being built between Prairie du Chien and Marquette, Iowa. Shortly after the bridge was opened, inspectors discovered that some of the steel wasn't up to the specifications, and the bridge was closed while parts were replaced. A ferry helped when the weather and river allowed, but about 80 miles of river was bridgeless for some time.

We usually take bridges for granted, but they are very expensive and very important to communities and individuals that depend on them, which frequently leads to disputes. Contractors, agencies and politicians in the Twin Cities are currently battling over plans for the new I-35W Bridge and the partially completed I-494 Bridge. Because of the low volume of traffic using them, the communities near Lansing, Iowa, and Savanna, Ill., have sometimes had to battle for funds to keep their bridges open.

The table on the following pages lists the cities linked by a bridge, but it's often not that simple. Many bridges cross the Main Channel from a city to an island, sometimes an


island in the same state, as in Winona, Minn., and La Crosse, Wis. Then the highway continues on causeways and across smaller bridges to the other side. In these cases we ignored the islands and listed the cities on each side of the river. Where the bridge ends near two or more cities, we usually listed the larger city.

For bridges that actually span from one state to another, the states usually agree that one or the other will take responsibility for that bridge's maintenance.

The "sufficiency rating" in the National Bridge Inventory uses four factors to generate a value between 0 and 100, with 100 being a perfect score. The rating considers lane width and other measures in addition to a bridge's structural condition.

The term "functionally obsolete" refers to the bridge design, judging that in some way it is not functioning as well as a bridge at that site might. Perhaps it has too few lanes, which causes traffic jams. The term does not refer to its structural safety.

The term "structurally deficient" refers to a structural defect or defects that may affect bridge safety.

We collected most of the information for the table from Nationalbridges.com, a website that provides searches of the National Bridge Inventory, and from the Army Corps of Engineers *Navigation Charts*. 

Bridges Over the Mississippi — Twin Cities to Muscatine

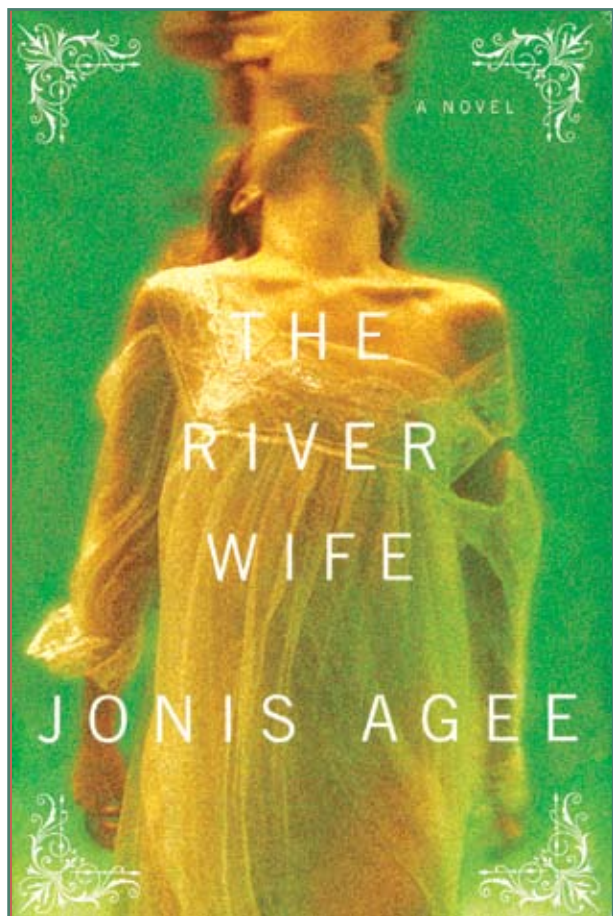
Name(s)	West to East	River Mile	Year Built	Length (Spans) Navigation Span	Sufficiency Rating	Avg. Daily Traffic
Richard P. Braun Bridge Minnesota Highway 610	Brooklyn Park to Coon Rapids, Minn.	865.0	1985	1,326 ft. (11) 122 ft.	84	42,000 (2004)
I-694 Highway Bridge	Brooklyn Center to Fridley, Minn.	860.4	1963-w 1988-e	776 ft. (5) 194 ft.	82.8-westbound 90.3-eastbound	71,000 (2004)
Camden Bridge 42nd Avenue North Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	857.8	1975	1,450 ft. (10) 244 ft.	76.6 structurally deficient	11,000 (2003)
Lowry Avenue Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	856.4	1905	889 ft. (5) 145 ft.	41.3 structurally deficient	15,300 (2003)
Broadway Avenue Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	855.4	1986	857 ft. (4) 186 ft.	77.3	22,600 (2003)
Eighth Avenue Bridge Plymouth Avenue Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	855.0	1980	944 ft. (5) 141 ft.	82.8	9,700 (2003)
Father Louis Hennepin Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	854.3	1988	1,037 ft. (1) 485 ft.	85.4	25,800 (2003)
Third Avenue Bridge St. Anthony Falls Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	854.1	1917	1,887 ft. (7) 150 ft.	80.2	15,500 (2004)
I-35W Highway Bridge (collapsed August 1, 2007)	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	853.2	1967	1,907 ft. (3) 390 ft.	50 structurally deficient	141,000 (2004)
10th Avenue Bridge Cedar Avenue Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	853.1	1929	2,153 ft. (7)	76.9	11,600 (2003)
Washington Avenue Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	852.6	1965	1,131 ft. (3) 228 ft.	93.9	21,500 (2003)
I-94 Highway Bridge Dartmouth Bridge	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	851.7	1963	1,001 ft. (6) 286 ft.	85	167,000 (2004)
Franklin Avenue Bridge Cappelen Memorial Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	Minneapolis to Minneapolis	851.5	1923	1,054 ft. (5) 275 ft.	50 structurally deficient	9,500 (2004)
Lake St./Marshall Avenue Bridge	Minneapolis to St. Paul	849.9	1989	1,484 ft. (2) 228 ft.	89.9	13,200 (2004)
Ford Parkway Bridge Intercity Bridge	Minneapolis to St. Paul	847.8	1927	1,524 ft. (5) 188 ft.	77.4 functionally obsolete	22,500 (2003)
West Seventh Street Bridge Fort Road Bridge	Ft Snelling, Minn., to St Paul	845.6	1961	1,198 ft. (7) 258 ft.	67	56,000 (2004)
I-35E Highway Bridge Lexington Bridge	Mendota Heights, Minn. to St. Paul	843.3	2001	1,406 ft. (6) 330 ft.	85	75,000 (2004)
Smith Avenue Bridge High Bridge	St. Paul to St. Paul	840.5	1986	2,770 ft. (3) 210 ft.	85.3	18,000 (2004)
Wabasha Street Bridge	St. Paul to St. Paul	839.5	1996	1,253 ft. 316 ft.	97.5	5,800 (2001)
Robert Street Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	St. Paul to St. Paul	839.2	1926	1,429 ft. (8) 158 ft.	73.6 functionally obsolete	19,000 (2004)
Lafayette Bridge Federal Highway 52 Bridge	St. Paul to St. Paul	838.8	1968	3,366 ft. (3) 350 ft.	49.5 structurally deficient	81,000 (2004)

Name(s)	West to East	River Mile	Year Built	Length (Spans) Navigation Span	Sufficiency Rating	Avg. Daily Traffic
I-494 Highway Bridge Wakota Bridge (under construction)	S. St. Paul to Newport, Minn.	832.4	2003	1,892 ft.	82	89,000 (2004)
St. Paul Park Bridge (closed in 1999)	Inver Grove Heights to St. Paul Park, Minn.	830.3	1895	1,661 (1) 192 ft.		3,900 (1998)
Federal Highway 61 Bridge Hastings High Bridge	Hastings, Minn., to Prescott, Wis.	813.9	1950	1,857 ft. (3) 502 ft.	49.1 functionally obsolete	32,500 (2004)
Federal Highway 63 Bridge Eisenhower Bridge	Red Wing, Minn., to Hager City, Wis.	790.6	1958	1,631 ft. (3) 420 ft.	44.8	11,500 (2004)
State Highway 25 Bridge Wabasha-Nelson Bridge	Wabasha, Minn., to Nelson, Wis.	760.2	1987	2,462 ft. (1) 402 ft.	73.5	4,750 (2004)
State Highway 54 Bridge	Winona, Minn., to Bluff Siding, Wis.	725.8	1941	2,288 ft. (3) 534 ft.	49.8	11,900 (2004)
I-90 Highway Bridge Dresbach Bridge	Winona Cnty, Minn., to Campbell Tnshp, Wis.	701.8	1967	2,490 ft. (12) 411 ft.	77	26,000 (2004)
Cass Street Bridge (westbound) Cameron Avenue Bridge (eastbound)	La Crescent, Minn., to La Crosse, Wis.	697.5	1940-w 2004-e	2,532 ft. (3)-w 462 ft. 2,573 ft. (3)-e 475 ft.	65-w 86-e	22,296 (2003) 19,800 (2003)
State Highway 82 Bridge Black Hawk Bridge	Lansing, Iowa to Vernon County, Wis.	663.4	1931	1,631 ft. (3) 640 ft.	39.9 functionally obsolete	2,290 (2004)
Federal Highway 18 Bridge Marquette-Joliet Bridge	Marquette, Iowa, to Prairie du Chien, Wis.	634.7	1974	1,916 ft (10) 450 ft.	74.7	12,000 (2002)
City Island Bridge Federal Highway 61 Bridge	Dubuque, Iowa, to Grant County, Wis.	581.3	1982	2,951 ft. (1) 635 ft.	87.4	18,400 (2004)
Julien Dubuque Highway Bridge	Dubuque, Iowa, to East Dubuque, Ill.	579.3	1943	5,761 ft. (3) 803 ft.	43.4 functionally obsolete	26,800 (2004)
Savanna Highway Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	Sabula, Iowa, to Savanna, Ill.	537.8	1932	2,481 ft. (4) 508 ft.	45.9 functionally obsolete	2,450 (2005)
North Clinton Bridge Lyons-Fulton Bridge	Clinton, Iowa, to Fulton, Ill.	520.0	1974	3,013 ft. (3) 450 ft.	65.7 functionally obsolete	9,800 (2004)
Clinton Highway Bridge Gateway Bridge	Clinton, Iowa, to E. Clinton, Ill.	518.1	1956	4,166 ft. (1) 568 ft.	56.6 functionally obsolete	10,000 (2004)
I-80 Highway Bridge Fred Schwengel Memorial Bridge	LeClaire, Iowa, to Hampton Township, Ill.	495.4	1967	3,488 ft. (16) 350 ft.	65	26,000 (2005)
Iowa-Illinois Memorial Highway Bridge	Bettendorf, Iowa, to Moline, Ill.	485.8	N: 1935 S: 1960	5,149 ft. (3) 710 ft. 5,018 ft. (3)	60.6 functionally obsolete	32,900 (2005)
Iowa Interstate RR and U.S. Govt. Railroad and Highway Bridge (National Register of Historic Places)	Davenport, Iowa, to Rock Island, Ill.	482.9	1896	1,848 ft. (1) 110 ft.	26.4 functionally obsolete structurally deficient	18,415 (2003)
Centennial Highway Bridge	Davenport, Iowa, to Rock Island, Ill.	482.1	1940	3,854 ft. (5) 517 ft.	43.5	25,500 (2005)
I-280 Highway Bridge	Davenport, Iowa, to Rock Island, Ill.	478.3	1970	4,194 ft. (1) 519 ft.	67.9	21,200 (2004)
Muscatine Highway Bridge Norbert F Beckey Bridge	Muscatine, Iowa, to Rock Island County, Ill.	455.9	1972	3,018 ft. (1) 500 ft.	66.6	4,150 (2004)

Reviewing a Raft of New Books for River Lovers

(Stay Close to the River This Winter)

By Pamela Eyden, Molly McGuire and Reggie McLeod



The River Wife

Jonis Agee, Random House, New York City, 2007, 393 pages, \$24.95, hardcover.

A blurb on the back cover of Jonis Agee's novel *The River Wife* says, "Make sandwiches and turn off the phone, because this is a novel you won't put down."

Blurbs like that are usually hyperbole, but this one proved true for me. I just wish I'd followed its advice and found a place to read undisturbed, which is what I wanted to do from the first page.

The time and the setting couldn't be juicier for a novel that takes place on the Mississippi River. After a framing prologue, the story begins during the great earthquake at New Madrid, Mo, in 1811. A teenaged girl cries for her mother as the house shakes and the river hisses.

"Her narrow iron bed, with its lovely white scrollwork — a luxury somehow accorded a girl of 16 though her father was against it from the beginning — slid back and forth behind the partition as if they were on the river, the roar so loud it was like a thousand beasts from the apocalypse set loose upon the land, just as her father had predicted."

The roof beam collapses on top of her, crushing her legs. Believing, like their neighbors, that judgment day is upon them, the crazed family flees, taking all the clothing and food.

"Farewell, dear girl, we shall meet on the far shore, clothed in His bright joy," her father says. The rasp in his voice, a candle and a wet deerskin is all he leaves to comfort his daughter.

Poor Annie Lark. This is only the first of many chilling betrayals and surprises in store for her and the characters that succeed her through this 393-page novel, which traverses 120 years on the river.

Annie is crippled for life, but she's no victim, and it's a wild and gritty life she leads. Her husband, One-Armed Jacques Ducharme, is a French fur trader who becomes an inn keeper, then a trader, then a pirate, always making the most of his location on the river, as riverboats, slave traders, and Confederate and Union soldiers move up and down. One-Armed Jacques is the pin around which the whole story centers. John James Audubon, wandering about, looking for birds, plays a key part at one point.

Agee's done plenty of historical research for this imaginative tale. The book meanders like a river through more

than a century of the fortunes and misfortunes of a host of complicated, peculiar and unpredictable characters — Annie, One-Armed Jacques, Omah, Laura Burke Shut, Little Maddie, L.O. Swan. Agee's writing is fine. Her previous books include *Sweet Eyes*, *Strange Angels* and *The Weight of Dreams*.

For a person who loves to read, there's nothing so luxurious as a book so absorbing that the rest of life seems pale in comparison, at least for a few days. This is one. (PE)

A Guide to Effigy Mounds National Monument

Dennis Lenzendorf, Eastern National, Fort Washington, Penn., 2007, 130 pages, \$15.95, paperback.

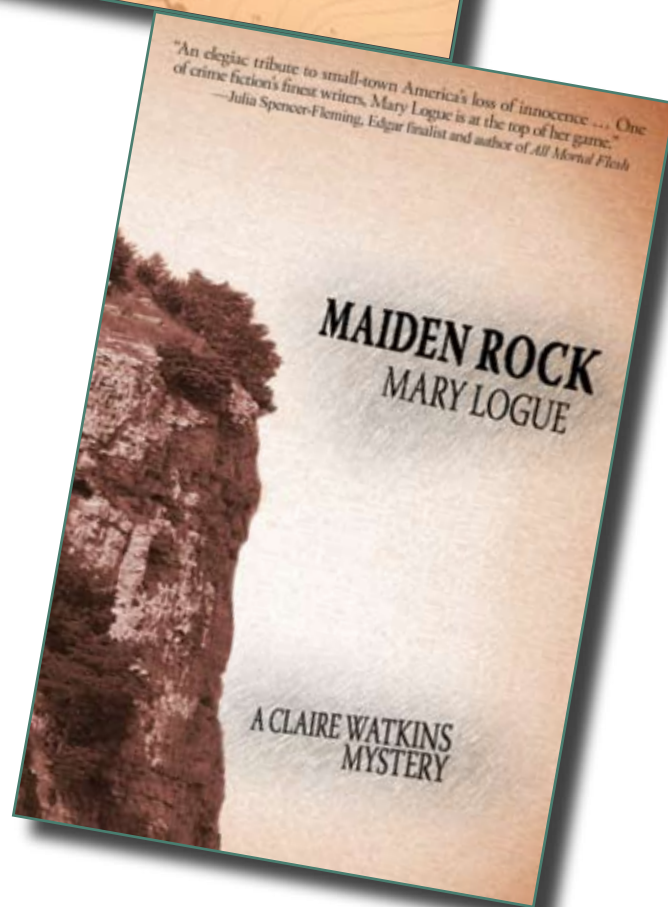
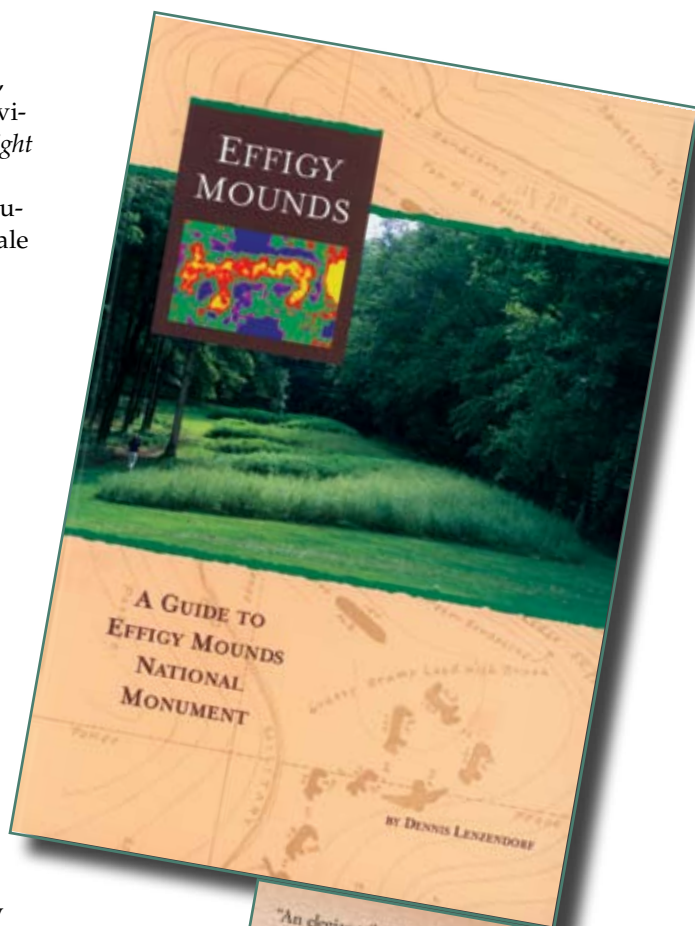
The Effigy Mounds National Monument, just upriver from Marquette, Iowa, is a remarkable place for a number of reasons: it has the largest collection of Indian mounds, the largest collection of effigy mounds, a great little museum, amazing Mississippi River overlooks and miles of scenic hiking trails. The area is also sacred to some people.

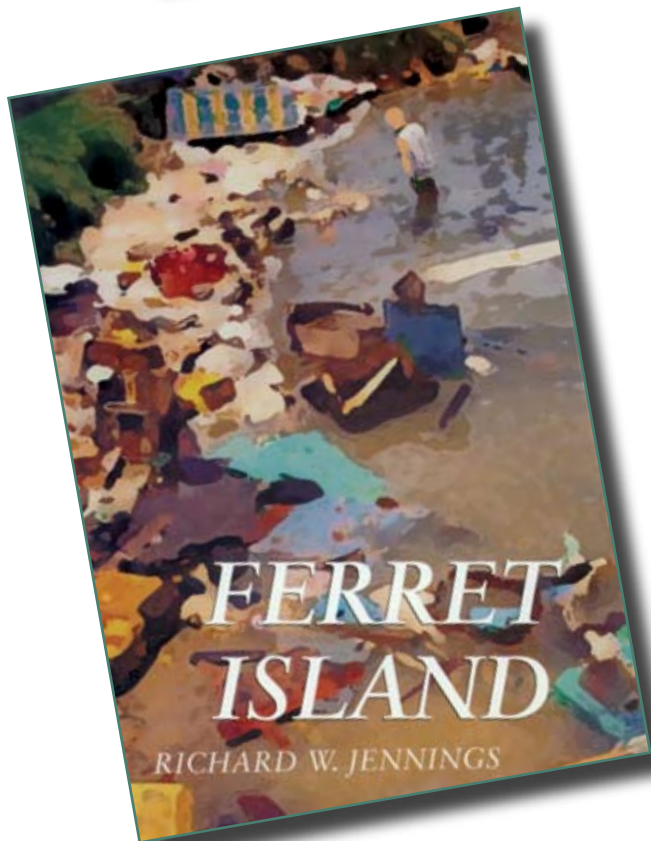
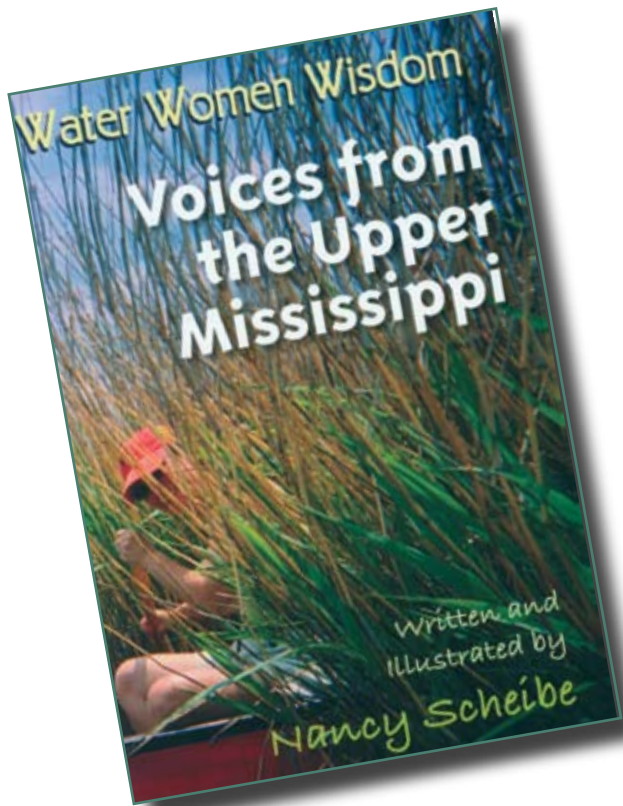
This guide is a bit of a hodgepodge, but it covers a lot of ground in its slim package. The first 30 pages gallop through 12,000 years of history before the settlers arrived. Then a timeline summarizes highlights in history from 1673, when Marquette and Joliet arrived at the Mississippi River nearby, to 2002, when the Yellow River Bridge Boardwalk Trail was completed. Then follows a history of white people discovering and trying to understand the mounds, then a history of how the monument came into being and how it came to be what it is today. A couple of pages offers ideas about the mounds from a member of the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) Tribe of Nebraska. The final section of the book describes places and trails in the monument.

Several individuals who were important to the monument and local archaeology are profiled briefly, including Ellison Orr, who explored and documented countless sites over most of his long lifetime. He and his son, Fred, conducted field studies until the elder Orr was well into his 80s.

As someone who usually visits the monument at least once a year, I enjoyed the book, especially learning about the history of the Yellow River Valley. A casual visitor to the monument might wonder why people built so many mounds here — what makes this place special. The book does a good job of explaining that the monument is on the edge of a huge area stretching across southern Wisconsin that was rich with effigy and other types of mounds. The more important question might be "Why is this the largest intact group of mounds, and why were nearly all the others destroyed?" This book does a good job of answering these questions.

"Today, Effigy Mounds National Monument preserves remnants of a cultural tradition of the people who built mounds of earth. Within the national monument, 206 known mounds are preserved, 31 in the shapes of animals. At one time, an estimated





10,000 mounds existed in northeast Iowa alone, today less [sic] than a thousand remain." (RM)

Maiden Rock

Mary Logue, Bleak House Books, Madison, Wis., 2007, 240 pages, \$24.95, cloth, \$14.95, paperback.

Detective and crime writers often turn the locale into a main character of their books. The map has become speckled with writers covering their stomping grounds, from Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles to Tony Hillerman's four-corners. Mary Logue has staked out Pepin County, the smallest county in Wisconsin and one of the most picturesque — with its steep bluffs rising from Lake Pepin.

This fifth book of the Claire Watkins series sets pivotal events in the story on the edge of Maiden Rock, the dramatic cliff towering over Lake Pepin (See "A Hike on Maiden Rock Bluff" *Big River* September-October 2007). Watkins is a deputy sheriff and mother of a teenage daughter who goes missing after a Halloween party. Methedrine, missing persons and deaths keep the county stirred up from early in the book until the last page.

Logue does a good job of capturing the attitudes and speech of the local people, but doesn't devote a lot of energy to the sights, smells and sounds of the area. The book is a light, enjoyable read. The perspective constantly shifts between the points of view of a half-dozen characters, giving the reader enough information to keep a step or two ahead of Watkins. Readers from the area will enjoy the scenes taking place in Wabasha, Durand, Pepin, Nelson and other familiar spots. (RM)

Water Women Wisdom: Voices from the Upper Mississippi

Nancy Scheibe, Singing River Publications, Inc., Ely, Minn., 2007, 243 pages, \$16.00, paperback.

This book records the first leg of Ely artist Nancy Scheibe's paddle down the Mississippi to celebrate her 50th birthday. The 2004 journey took Scheibe and traveling companion Heather Jeske from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to Red Wing, Minn. Along the way, they were joined by numerous other canoeists and kayakers for portions of the trip, and organized gatherings with women to talk and share personal stories. The first women invited to speak at these groups were "grandmothers," from the Native American tradition of calling any woman over 50 a grandmother, whether she has children or not.

Stories from the gatherings are sprinkled throughout, while the narrative flows as a journal through the book. The reader can choose to read the stories, or just the travel journal, or go back and forth. I skipped some of the personal stories, then went back to read more later. Many of the women told stories of painful life experiences, what they had learned and how they had found personal strength.

A powerful spiritual theme runs through both the grandmother stories and the river travels. Scheibe often sees messages and connections in nature, such as a bird showing them the way, a lone basking turtle reminding her that being alone is okay, a snake in the road giving her the message that taking no action can have negative results. Thankfully, she did not interpret all her animal encounters this way. I read over these parts pretty fast, as well as some of the detailed descriptions and personal experiences about the paddlers. Self-renewal, getting closer to one's real self, community and women's wisdom were motivations for taking and sharing the journey.

Their experiences with the river itself gave me a good idea what to expect if I ever think of taking such a journey. In this way, the account serves as a helpful guide. A windy crossing of Cass Lake became a little dangerous, a warning for others. Scheibe's descriptions of campgrounds, wildlife, weather events, paddling challenges and locking through are interesting for both real and armchair Mississippi River paddlers.

This September, Scheibe resumed her river trip at Red Wing with another traveling partner, and planned to arrive in St. Louis mid-October. She planned gatherings along the way, as in 2004. Two more jaunts will complete the journey in New Orleans. (MM)

Ferret Island

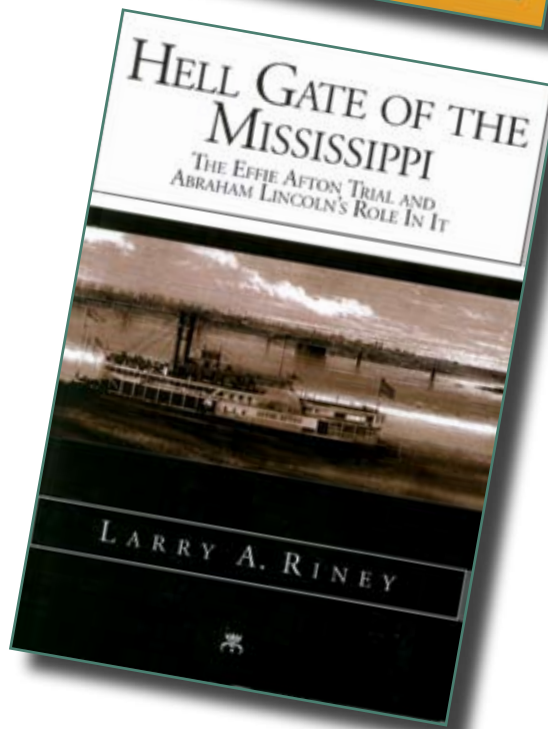
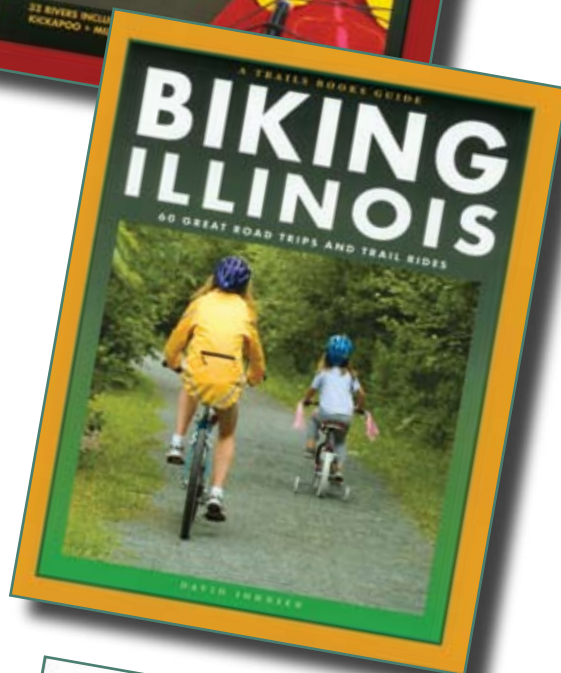
Richard W. Jennings, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2007, 227 pages, \$6.00, hardcover.

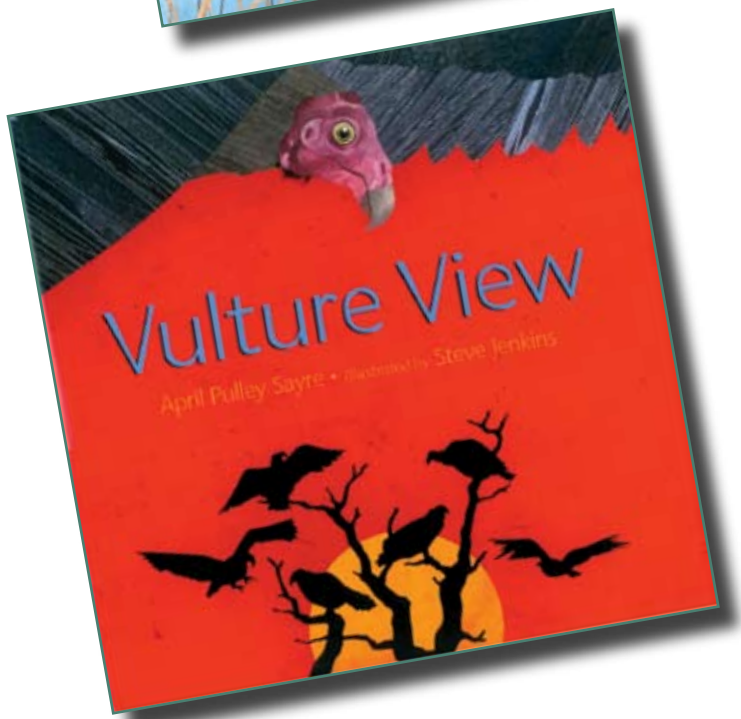
Mississippi River sandbars and islands are not exactly wild around here, but wild enough to keep an eye out for snakes and turtles and various furry, four-legged critters that may be wandering about. But when young Will Finn is washed up on an island down by Memphis he finds fierce mutant ferrets the size of golden retrievers. The island also harbors Daschell Potts, a reclusive, probably demented, author whose claim to fame is his notoriously popular book *Folderol*, a philosophical and inspirational story about a duck swimming in a circle.

Will makes do on the island, using flotsam that washes up on shore, including a BarcaLounger and assorted junk food. As he says, "On the Mississippi River, if you keep your eyes peeled, whatever you're likely to need will eventually pass by."

He is overjoyed to discover Potts, his favorite author, but is aghast at the man's missing ear, removed by a particularly nasty ferret. Trying to get a peek at what he thinks is Potts' new manuscript, Will stumbles into trouble, but always figures something out or is rescued in the nick of time. (He's proud of his personal motto, courtesy of his fourth-grade teacher, "Where there's a Will there's a way.") It takes Will a while to figure out what kind of scheme Potts is organizing involving ferrets, fast food and burger wrappers.

Richard Jennings tips his hat to Mark Twain more than a few times in this juvenile novel. Will Finn's best buddy on the island is a friendly and helpful ferret, Jim; *Huckleberry Finn* and *Folderol* are the two books that a local town





council deem worthy of destroying. Not to mention the chapter titled “Life on the Mississippi,” and the pretty, blond girl who also lands on the island and gets lost in a cave with Will.

The action really gets going after Will (barely) escapes the island (Warning: SPOILER ahead) through a tunnel under the river dug out by thousands of sharp ferret teeth. He catches a ride on a turnip truck and falls off, meets a misguided federal officer in hot pursuit of rampaging parrots, and enlists the help of a former-congressman/ex-con-turned-Homeland Security agent, Pierre Narf. In an attempt to save the world, Will must pursue Potts and his school bus full of giant hungry ferrets.

Yes, it’s a wacky ride, and adults will chuckle along with the younger readers for whom this book is written. Along the way, I learned a few fun facts about ferrets: they steal things; they smell bad; and they smell really bad when they are really big:

“...you learn that a ferret’s smell is not a rancid stink like the monkey house at the zoo, but a rich and complex bouquet on the order of Ethiopian coffee, Honduran cigars, or Parmesano Reggiano cheese, an aroma that’s immediately identifiable, a musky essence that announces, ‘I am weasel, smell me more.’”

Jennings sneaks in a plug for a previous novel, *Stink City*, about a boy whose family has a secret recipe for an incredibly stinky and successful catfish bait. Mmm... there’s no denying the olfactory possibilities of the Mississippi River. (MM)

Biking Illinois

David Johnsen, 2006, 132 pages;

Biking Iowa

Bob Morgan, 2006, 116 pages;

Paddling Iowa

Nate Hoogeveen, 2006, 183 pages;

Paddling Southern Minnesota

Lynne and Robert Deibel, 2007, 198 pages;

Paddling Southern Wisconsin

Mike Svob, 2006, 180 pages;

Trail Books, Madison, Wis., \$19.95, paperback.

All of these books suggest dozens of outdoor excursions, each of which are sketched with a clear map and detailed explanations of what to expect, points of interest and useful information, including campgrounds and rentals. They all include trips on or near the Mississippi River.

To take in a pannier or canoe, you’d probably prefer to copy the pages you need, but the descriptions include enough detail to tempt you to while away a frigid afternoon daydreaming of summer adventures. (RM)

Hell Gate of the Mississippi — The Effie Afton Trial and Abraham Lincoln’s Role in It

Larry A. Riney, Talesman Press, Geneseo, Ill., 2006, 323 pages, \$19.95, paperback.

Hell Gate of the Mississippi is a meticulous, engaging book about the who, why and how of one of the most famous trials on the Mississippi River. In May of 1856 the *Effie Afton* steamboat crashed into a railroad bridge over the Mississippi. Captain Hurd, owner and pilot of the boat, sued the Railroad Bridge Company for building the bridge at a treacherous location and thereby endangering river traffic. Abraham Lincoln, a young, relatively inexperienced lawyer from Springfield, Ill., was recruited to join the legal team defending the Railroad Bridge Company.

The trial was important because the privately funded bridge was the first railroad bridge to span the river, linking the expanding agricultural areas of Iowa with markets in the East. Railroads were poised to triumph over riverboat shipping, and river people up and down the Mississippi knew it. They protested the bridge before it was built. Two weeks after it was completed, the *Effie Afton* crashed into it, burst into flame and burned up the bridge. The steamboating community celebrated the bridge’s demise and supported Captain Hurd throughout the first, high-profile trial, which ended in a hung jury, and through succeeding attempts to win the case.

Abraham Lincoln was one of several lawyers arguing the case, and gave a summary speech for the defense. He was paid \$800 for his labor, not nearly as much as he was paid for other work. The author points out, however, that it was no doubt good strategy for a country lawyer with political ambitions to work for influential Chicago railroad interests.

To the author’s credit, the book was far more absorbing than one might expect from a story about a long-past legal dispute. I’ve heard about the *Effie Afton* incident, but didn’t know why the trial was still in public memory 150 years after it happened.

For my taste, though, the book exhausted me with details in places, such as an explanation of exactly where the stones for the short piers supporting the bridge spans were quarried. The story is good enough that I just wanted the author to get on with it and not slow down for such historical footnotes. (PE)

Fifty Uncommon Birds of the Upper Midwest

Watercolors by Dana Gardner, Text by Nancy Overcott; University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, Iowa, 2007, 112 pages, \$34.95, hardcover.

While you are holed up in a heated room under artificial light this winter, you might want to pick up this book and dream of birding days to come.

The uncommon birds that are the subject of the book are uncommon because their numbers have decreased (red-headed woodpecker), or because they may be here one year and not the next (snowy owl) or because they’re just plain hard to find (Townsend’s solitaire).

It’s a very satisfying book just to sit and look at. Dana Gardner’s watercolor illustrations are beautiful, evocative and stylish. Gardner paints distinctive details of each bird and its plumage, along with a few key elements of a typical place where it might be seen. A kind of silence surrounds each bird — the backgrounds are left serene and dreamy, like the wide open spaces of nature. For example, the Acadian flycatcher perches on an oak twig, from which dangle old, curled, brown oak leaves. The bird’s soft brown back and slight head crest, its white eye ring and the configuration of white bars on its black wing are all concisely portrayed. The background is a hazy blur of spring green.

The text by Nancy Overcott is amiable, informative and easy to read. She tells about each bird and recounts at least one birding adventure involving it. Her friends and neighbors, and other birders are characters in these little stories, most of which take place near her home in Fillmore County, Minn., where she writes about birds for the *Fillmore County Journal*.

The book is a companion to Gardner and Overcott’s earlier book *Fifty Common Birds of the Upper Midwest*, published in 2006. (PE)

Vulture View

April Pulley Sayre, Illustrated by Steve Jenkins; Henry Holt and Company, LLC, New York City, 2007, 32 pages, \$16.95, softcover.

At first glance, vultures don’t seem a plausible subject for a book for small children. After all, they’re kind of bizarre-looking, with a preference for food that been dead awhile and therefore stinks. But Sayre tells their story in light-hearted rhymes suitable for young children.

“Up, up! Turkey vultures tilt, soar, scan to find the food that vultures can... eat!

That snake over there? No, no.

That fox over there? No, no.

That bear over there? No, no.

Vultures smell the air. They sniff, search, seek... for foods that...REEK!”

Turn the page and there’s a gorgeous paper collage of a rotting deer carcass.

This would be a great book to read to a child who lives in the Upper Mississippi River Valley, where turkey vultures soar. (PE) 🦅

Photo Contest Winner



This photograph was taken on Lake Pepin by Kate Halverson of Lake City, Minn.

Send entries for the January-February contest to *Big River* by November 16. If we select your photo to print in these pages, we'll send you three free copies of the magazine. The contest is open to amateurs, professionals, adults and kids. Email a digital JPEG (.jpg) photo file — high-resolution photos only, please — to photos@big-river.com. Write

"PHOTO CONTEST" in the subject line.

Or send a print to Photo Editor, *Big River*, PO Box 204, Winaona, MN 55987. (We cannot return photographs, though.)

Include your name, address, phone number and a short description of the photograph — who or what it is, when and where it was taken, etc. ☰

(*River News* continued from page 15)

dancer was owned by Bradley Smith, who also owns a bar in Bayport, Minn., and was on board at the time of the accident, a mile south of the Stillwater Lift Bridge. (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 6-12-07)

- Rock Island — A couple on a pleasure boat above Lock and Dam 15 were getting ready for dinner on August 26 when they discovered they were drifting into the dam. Their anchor rope had gotten tangled in the engine's propeller and been cut. They called a lockman, who told them to put on their lifejackets and stand out on deck to grab the "last chance" ropes hanging from Arsenal Bridge. He also called 911 and alerted bridge employees, who grabbed ring buoys and headed to the Iowa side. Meanwhile, a towboat sped toward the scene to help.

Instead of tying off their boat on the ropes, the couple had grabbed hold of them and let the boat go. They were soon rescued, although their boat got lodged in debris seven feet in front of the dam and had to be tied off there until water levels dropped. It was retrieved in October.

According to the Army Corps of Engineers, people were rescued at Rock Island District dams four times this summer. (*Tower Times*, July-September 2007)

Feasting on Asphalt

The Food Network's zany and pernickety Alton Brown rode his motorcycle up the Great River Road last summer on a hunt for good, locally-made food. Calling his motorcycle excursion "Feasting on Asphalt," Brown stopped at eight restaurants in the

Upper Mississippi River region:

- Breitbach Brother's Country Restaurant in Balltown, Iowa, a German community north of Dubuque. Besides being known locally for its great fish fries, soups and pies, Breitbach's is the oldest restaurant in Iowa and has been in the same family for six generations.

Mike Breitbach, owner of Breitbach Brothers, said Brown and his crew spent nearly five hours at his place. Brown interviewed Breitbach, while crew members sampled each of the pies.

"He didn't eat because he was too busy being entertained by the building," Breitbach said.

Other restaurants included in the tour were:

- Kalmes Restaurant, located in St. Donatus south of Dubuque, where

Brown feasted on fried chicken livers and Luxembourg noodles.

- The Whistle Stop Cafe, a small-town, down home restaurant near the railroad tracks in Frontenac, Minn.

- Russian Tea House in St. Paul, where one can get authentic Russian food, such as piroshki, cabbage rolls and borscht, for take-out.

- Olsen Fish Company, a northeast Minneapolis company that boasts of being "the world's largest lutefisk producer."

- Mickey's Diner, a classic diner in downtown St. Paul that serves big breakfasts and other classic American diner food.

- Bob's Java Hut in south Minneapolis, where one can watch races on a big-screen television while sipping on espresso.

- Viking Inn, a restaurant, bed-and-breakfast inn, and dinner theater rolled into one in Crosby, Minn. The Viking serves mead, or fermented honey brew, along with meat pies and other food with a Medieval flair.

Bluffs Reconsidered

Dubuque, Iowa — The City of Dubuque is considering measures to protect three bluff areas along the Mississippi River and along U.S. highways 20 and 52.

Bluff preservation became an important issue after the city gave developer A.J. Spiegel permission to build a condominium by the bluff along the Mississippi, at the base of Eagle Point Park, and to build high-rise condos for seniors on top of the bluff overlooking downtown Dubuque and the river.

The first thing a city-appointed advisory committee did was to define what a bluff is: an area that rises at least 10 feet for each foot of ground it covers and is at least 20 feet high.

In its preliminary recommendations, the committee included land 50 feet from both the top and bottom of the bluff for protection. It said the city should consider adding building setback requirements, limiting the height of buildings near the bluffs and minimizing the visual impact of new development from the Mississippi River.

The preliminary plan also sug-

gests developing a tree and vegetation plan for the areas and helping bluff-area property owners eliminate invasive tree species.

The committee recently collected public input. It will send its final recommendations to the city's zoning board. The zoning board will then decide what, if any, changes to make to the plan before passing it along to the Dubuque City Council.

Dragons Rule

Dubuque, Iowa — Four members of Dubuque's dragon-boat racing crew qualified for the national team this year and in September went to Sydney, Australia, to participate in the world dragon-boat competition. Tom Weitz and Sue Miller, Dubuque; Rod Reicher, Dyersville, Iowa; and Ken Mulholland, Hanover, Ill., made the team. The team, named Solid Steel, practices on the Mississippi River three times a week during the open-water season.

Teams consists of 22 paddlers, a drummer and a stern person. Their boats are long and narrow and weigh

*A carved dragon's head
decorates the front, and the
"tail" holds the drummer.*

400 to 600 pounds. A carved dragon's head decorates the front, and the "tail" holds the drummer. (In traditional Chinese culture, dragons rule the river.)

The United States team did well, winning the Nation's Cup, which is much like a "best in show" prize based on its overall performance.

The team also picked up a gold medal in the 500-meter race, which was the last race of the four-day event. About 20 nations sent crews to the competition.

"That was a photo-finish race, with the U.S. team coming in just an inch or two ahead of the second team," said Gary Carstens, Dubuque, president of the U.S. federation and an international official. The U.S. team covered 500 meters in just 1 minute and 48.748 seconds, while the second-place team, from the Philippines, did the stretch in 1 minute and

49.156 seconds.

The first world championship took place in Yueyang, China, in 1995. The competition occurs every two years.

Carstens said dragon-boat racers are dedicated to the water. "We're like Canadians. When we have children, we like them to be born with paddles in their hands," he said.

Slow Boat to Everywhere

St. Paul — David Nelson is trying to float a deal that would turn retirement into a river cruise for 200 well-heeled drifters on "a slow boat to everywhere," as his website puts it.

His proposed river vessel, the *Marquette*, would be the first residential cruise ship traveling inland waterways continuously throughout the year, said Nelson, a St. Paul real-estate developer and longtime houseboat resident.

Live-in passengers, including Nelson and his wife, would ply the Mississippi from St. Paul to New Orleans and continue to Gulf of Mexico destinations on inland waterways.

The \$90 million, live-on vessel would feature up to 200 residential units. Prices would range from about \$300,000 for 500-square-foot studios to \$500,000 for 900-square-foot units with two bedrooms and two baths. Annual fees for buyers in this waterborne condo would be an additional \$13,000 to \$23,000.

The *Marquette* would include a deli, restaurant, grocery store, fitness center, beauty salon and theaters. A bus and a rental-car hauler would follow on land for residents who want ground transport at the next stop.

Nelson is targeting retirees but notes that you could work from the boat. It will have a satellite dish, high-definition TV, fast Internet and phone service.

Nelson says he will go ahead with the project if he can bank \$5,000 in earnest money from prospects interested in 60 percent of the on-board units. As of early October, he had signed up six. 🌊

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Art work by Gail Pommerening, Mississippi Sunset

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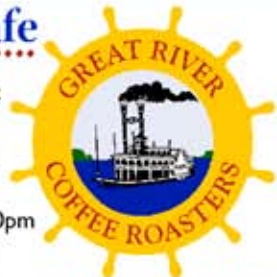
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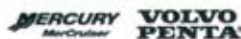
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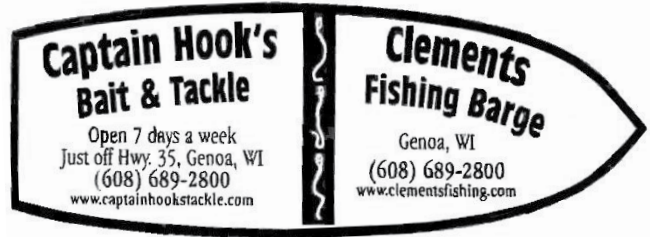


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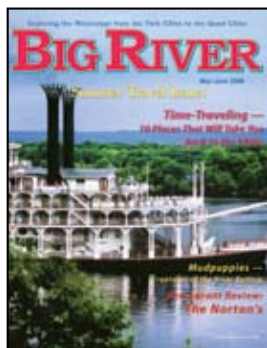
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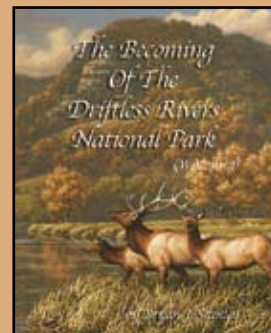
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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation required by 39 U.S.C. 3685

1. Publication Title: Big River
2. Publication Number: 1070-8340
3. Filing Date 10-3-2007
4. Issue Frequency: every other month
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$27.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Big River, 70 1/2 E. Fourth St., Winona, MN 55987
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: same
9. Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Reggie McLeod, same; Reggie McLeod, same; Molly McGuire, same
10. Owner: Open River Press, Inc.; Reggie McLeod, 267 E. Sanborn, Winona, MN 55987
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: none
12. Tax Status: Has not changed during preceding 12 months.
13. Publication: Big River
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data: September-October 2007
15. Extant and Nature of Circulation, Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months; a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run): 3,604; b. Paid Circulation; (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 2,205; (2) Mailed In-county Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 141; (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 456; (4) Paid Distribution by

- Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 172; c. Total Paid Distribution: 2,974; d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 103; (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 21; (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: 91; (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 35; e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 250; f. Total Distribution: 3,154; g. Copies not Distributed: 450; h. Total: 3,604; i. Percent Paid: 94%.
15. Extant and Nature of Circulation, No. Copies Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date; a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run): 3,850; b. Paid Circulation; (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 2,232; (2) Mailed In-county Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 165; (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 497; (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 186; c. Total Paid Distribution: 3,080; d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 129; (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: 24; (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: 20; (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 0; e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 198; f. Total Distribution: 3,293; g. Copies not Distributed: 557; h. Total: 3,850; i. Percent Paid: 94%.
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the November-December 2007 issue of this publication.
17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete: Reggie McLeod, editor and publisher.

(Galena continued from page 19)

Carl and Marilyn Johnson moved from Chicago in 1970 with four children, and bought an 1850-vintage house with five bedrooms and space for Carl's art studio. Since then they have worked on two homes, done major restoration on three downtown buildings and have "materially improved" two more. They now live above Carl Johnson's Gallery on Main Street.

"We moved here because it was a place where we could get out of the suburbs and dig into a project and make it happen," Marilyn said.

Marilyn, who is passionate about history, has researched all of the buildings the Johnsons have worked on or lived in. She is particularly fascinated by the 1820s upright timber building they restored, called the Stockade, which was used in the Black Hawk War. Having accumulated copies of letters and ledgers from the original builder, Indian trader Amos Farrar, she is considering writing a book about him.

"We've had the good fortune to live out here in the boondocks, really, and still make a living," Marilyn said. "But it's very intense, living on Main Street. Now that we're in our 70s, we've bought a condo in Chicago, so we can go there to relax."

Carl Johnson is currently chair of the town's Historic Preservation Commission, which decides what kinds of alterations can be made to buildings inside the commercial historic district. It is sometimes a very contentious process.

"Meetings in Galena are very lively," Watson agreed. "People care, and they care a lot." Persistent hot buttons include: what should and should not be changed, which streets to improve, zoning and taxes. "People are always trying to strike a balance between livability and tourist development."

Livability versus Tourism

That balance point keeps shifting. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Main Street was populated with locally-owned businesses that served the community — hardware stores, shoe stores, phar-

macies — as well as antique shops that gave the town a reputation for being an antique hunter's paradise. They operated with small-town casualness, posting signs in the window, saying "Back in 10," or "Catch me at home." Today, both the practical businesses and the antique shops are gone. Antiques were pushed out by eBay and high rents. If you stroll down Main Street today, you'll find restaurants and shops that sell everything from local wine to French linens, from T-shirts to teapots. Deep, wide 19th century-style storefronts make for great window shopping, but it's a whole different scene now.

"Residents drive across Main Street, but we don't go there. All the

To accommodate visitors, this city of 3,400 residents has to provide utilities, water and sewage treatment for 40,000 people.

businesses are tourist-oriented," said Scott Wolf, who restored and lives in an 1850s-era house in the old German neighborhood still called Cabbage Town. Wolf is not alone in his wry disappointment in the shift.

Parking continues to be an issue. When 25,000 visitors come to town for special events, they have to park somewhere. Competition for free three-hour parking spots on Main Street is fierce. For those not willing to walk, trolleys carry people from the visitors center into and around the town. Outlying pay lots at least help generate some city revenue.

To accommodate visitors, this city



Even the second and third floors of most downtown Galena buildings are occupied, as they were in the 1800s. (Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau)

of 3,400 residents has to provide utilities, water and sewage treatment for 40,000 people. There's little industry in town to help shoulder the burden. The city council has refused to increase property tax rates for three years now, and a referendum to increase the local sales tax by a half percent failed. Galena retains just 1.5 percent of the total 6.75 percent sales tax — and that's not enough to keep up with infrastructure demands, according to city administrator Mark Moran.

"Without new sources of revenue, we're just putting bandages on services," he said. The search for funding never stops. Galena's prominent position and reputation helped win federal and state grants to help pay for a \$15-million sewage treatment plant a few years ago, but a new plant for a less popular city would have cost half as much.

"We want to be as good as we can be to attract visitors, and tourism is a very competitive business. We want more bike trails and pleasant downtown parks, but we have to pay for it," Moran said. ❧

Pamela Eyden is Big River's news and photo editor.

Indian Mounds Park

Modern Transportation and Ancient Mounds

By Reggie McLeod



Indian Mounds Park presents a panoramic view of the river and downtown St. Paul. (Courtesy of the National Park Service)

Most popular river overlooks offer broad expanses of islands and backwaters, where there is not a lot happening other than the passing of an occasional boat or flock of birds. However, Indian Mounds Park, perched more than 200 feet above the river on Dayton's Bluff in St. Paul, provides a view of an urban river full of activity.

Transportation is the theme of this overlook. On the river below, barges line the shore and tows push them back and forth. Pleasure boats head for the St. Paul Yacht Club. In switching yards at the base of the bluff, railroad cars are shuffled into and out of

trains. Across the river, corporate jets zoom into and out of Holman Field. The view upriver is interrupted by a succession of busy bridges, with the High Bridge in the distance climbing to Cherokee Heights. The *Delta Queen*, *Mississippi Queen* and *American Queen*

In the park, just up the hill from the overlook, lie six large burial mounds that may have been built as long as 2,000 years ago by Hopewell people. At one time at least 37 mounds graced this area.

tie up at the Lower Landing, on the downstream side of downtown. You may see bicyclists on the path along the river. The downtown St. Paul skyline serves as a backdrop. A beacon atop a tower marks the crest of the hill in the park.

Downtown St. Paul is on a bluff, too, though not as high as the park. Looking at the river from downtown, the rocky face of Dayton's Bluff is a prominent landmark.

Despite the modern bustle, signs of the ancient past are close at hand. In the park, just up the hill from the overlook, lie six large burial mounds that may have been built as long as 2,000 years ago by Hopewell people. At one time at least 37 mounds graced this area.

In the mid 1800s scientists excavated the mounds and found numerous graves and artifacts, including copper, projectile points and a skull covered with red clay molded into the shape of a face.

Many of these large, round mounds found near the river in the Upper Midwest are Hopewell mounds. The Hopewell Culture originated in Ohio, but it's unclear whether the people or just their ideas and culture spread out over a larger area.

At the base of Dayton's Bluff, Carver's Cave probably served as a kind of cathedral for hundreds of years. It contained a lake and many rock carvings on its walls and ceiling. It was damaged by railroad construction and much of the artwork was damaged or destroyed, though it is still considered a sacred site by Dakota people. The entrance is closed.

A Dakota village, Kaposia, was located just downstream in the 1800s.

The park itself is 117 years old. It has 2.9 miles of trails, a large shelter and picnic areas.

The Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, at the base of the bluff, offers more trails and public land.

To get there take East Seventh Street east from downtown St. Paul to Mounds Boulevard. Turn right onto Mounds and follow it to the park, which will be on the right. Take the first right into the park to park near the overlook. ☸



The beacon in Indian Mounds Park guides airplanes overhead. (Suzanne Hequet)

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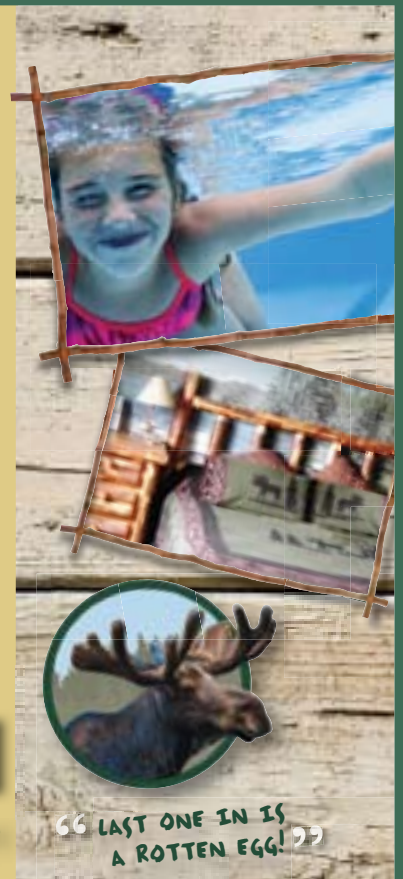
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