

**THE MISSISSIPPI COAST  
AND ITS PEOPLE**  
*A History for Students*

Written by

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# ***The Mississippi Coast and Its People***

## **A History for Students**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Why have people over the centuries decided to live on the Mississippi Gulf Coast? Let's look at our history to find out. As you read this booklet, you will notice that over the years many groups of people from different lands have chose the Gulf Coast as their home. The natural resources of the Coast have made it possible for newcomers to make a living and to enjoy a lifestyle that is special to people who live near the Mississippi Sound. These natural resources include waterways for transportation, natural harbors, plentiful seafood, nearby forests, and a beautiful coastal setting in which to spend leisure time. Throughout history the natural resources of the Mississippi gulf Coast have played an important role in attracting new residents to the area for both work and relaxation.

### **THE INDIANS**

The first people to live on the Coast were the American Indians. The Biloxi, the Pascagoula, and the Mochtobi tribes lived on the banks of the Pascagoula River, while the Acolapissa tribe lived near the Pearl River. The Gulf Coast Indians built long, one-story houses of mud, with bark roofs. They surrounded their villages with protective stockades and watch towers made of logs. We know from the large piles of shells (called "middens") which they left that they ate oysters and other seafood. They also grew corn and other vegetables. They hunted the big game of the Gulf Coast: buffalo, bear, and deer. The reasons that the first Indians decided to settle on this coast are lost in the distant past, but we can guess that the large supply of seafood and wild game made this area attractive.

### **THE PIONEER SETTLERS**

The first Europeans to come to the Mississippi Coast were looking for riches and land to claim for their king.

In the late 1600's the powerful nations of Europe were competing to own various parts of the new World. The area known as "Louisiana" (a huge area much bigger than the modern state of Louisiana) had already been claimed by the French. What is now the Mississippi Gulf Coast was part of French Louisiana.

The French already owned well-established colonies to the north in Canada and to the south in the Caribbean islands known as the West Indies. They wanted to build a city between these two colonies, near the mouth of the Mississippi River. This city would be a trading center, and it would also be a military base that would discourage the Spanish and the English from taking over the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River.

Two Canadian brothers of French descent, Pierre LeMoyne, Sieur d'Iberville, and Jean Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville, set out to start this city. Before they found the mouth of the Mississippi, they landed at Ship Island and Biloxi Bay. Here in 1699 they began a settlement on the shore of Biloxi Bay, in order to be near the deep-water harbor of Ship Island. The Ship Island anchorage was important to the French because it served as a base from which they could guard the mouth of the Mississippi River.

At first, the French hoped that the coastlands could be a major plantation or farming area, as were the French colonies in the West Indies. With this goal in mind, the French brought in German, Swiss, and French settlers, as well as black slaves from the West Indies and Africa. But things did not go well. The settlers soon learned that the Mississippi Gulf Coast was too cold in the winter for tropical crops like sugar cane, the main crop of the French colonies in the West Indies. Hurricanes wiped out crops and houses. Yellow fever killed many people.

In 1722, the French moved the headquarters of the colony to the new city of New Orleans, on the banks of the Mississippi River. Many of the disappointed and exhausted Gulf Coast settlers moved to this new city or to inland areas that had better soil than what they found on the sandy Gulf Coast.

The Gulf Coast residents who remained were now living in an isolated area. They made and traded in bricks, charcoal, and lumber for a living, and they hunted, farmed and caught seafood for their own use. A few small plantations grew up along the banks of the Pearl and Pascagoula Rivers, but the Gulf Coast never became the big plantation area that people often think of when they think of the South or Mississippi.

In the late 1700's there were only 500 people living on what is now the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Some had become successful farmers and herdsmen, some built boats, and some were in the lumber and forest products business. The swamps and inlets of the Gulf Coast sometimes attracted pirates and smugglers as well. French remained a common language of the coastal frontier settlements.

During the 18th Century, ownership of the Gulf Coast colony changed several times among the French, Spanish, and British. By 1811, the new country of the United States owned the Gulf Coast. In 1817, the Gulf Coast entered the union as part of the new state of Mississippi. The Gulf Coast was no longer as isolated as it had been in the past.

### **ANTEBELLUM DAYS (1817 - 1860)**

Throughout the Antebellum Period people from New Orleans came to the Coast in hopes of escaping the yellow fever epidemics that regularly swept through the city. Many of these people were wealthy enough to build large, beautiful, waterfront homes. They traveled by steamboat, bringing entire households, including slaves. Some of these people stayed permanently, both black and white. Similarly, wealthy plantation owners from inland Mississippi, Alabama, and rural Louisiana built summer homes on the Coast.

Hotels and boarding houses were built in the little towns along the Gulf Coast, marking the beginning of the tourism industry.

During the Antebellum Period, many immigrants from Europe came to the United States through the port city of New Orleans. Some of these people moved to the nearby Mississippi Gulf Coast. They came from Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, and various other countries. The Irish immigrants often worked in the building industry or at the local hotels and boarding houses.

During the Antebellum Period the great steamboats of the Mississippi River made it possible for people from many parts of the United States to travel downriver to New Orleans. From there they could take a steamboat to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. People came to the Coast from both the Northern and Southern states. Many were of English, Scottish, or Scotch-Irish ancestry. Some of these people moved to the Mississippi Coast in order to set up new businesses for the growing communities, such as sawmills, boatyards, and stores. For example, the town of Handsboro, now a part of Gulfport, was a successful industrial center before the Civil War. It was founded by business men from New York, and many of its settlers were from New England and other northeastern states.

Before the Civil War most of the black people of the Gulf Coast were slaves. Some worked on the few small plantations on rivers near the coast. Some worked in the households of the owners of the beachfront mansions. Others worked for sawmills, brickyards, or hotels. Some slaves worked on cargo schooners in the Pearl River region of Hancock County and were known as excellent schooner captains.

Not all Coast blacks were slaves. Some were free people who owned farms or businesses. For example, the area known as Bayou Bernard (now a part of Gulfport) was named after an Antebellum free black man who owned a metal works business.

### *Questions for Review*

1. What Indian tribes lived on the Mississippi Gulf Coast?
2. How do we know that the Indians ate oysters and other seafood?
3. What motivated the first Europeans to build a settlement on the Gulf Coast?
4. The French had hoped to make the Coast into a plantation area. Explain why they were unsuccessful.
5. In what ways did the early settlers make a living?
6. What part did New Orleans play in the growth of the Mississippi Gulf Coast during the Antebellum days?
7. Name the types of work done by blacks on the Coast during the Antebellum days.
8. How did tourism begin on the Mississippi Coast?
9. State how the steamboat helped the Coast to grow.

### **NEW GROWTH AND NEW PEOPLE**

The Civil War interrupted the growth of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. However, the completion of the first east-west railroad between New Orleans and Mobile in 1870 signaled the beginning of great changes for south Mississippi. (Within a few years, the coast towns were connected by rail to Jackson as well.) Goods and people could travel quickly, easily, and cheaply by rail. As a result, businesses grew and flourished. The population of the coast towns grew and changed as people from many different places arrived to take part in this economic boom.

During the twentieth century the automobile and the airplane became part of the way of life of the people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the rest of the nation. Improved transportation, combined with many other changes in our society, has made us a nation of people "on the move." It has become much easier to change jobs and hometowns than it was in the days of d'Iberville.

During the past 100 years--and especially since World War II--so many people have moved to the Gulf Coast for so many different reasons that it is possible here to discuss only a few of the highlights of this migration to the Coast. The sections below will give you an idea of the variety of reasons people have had for becoming Coast residents.

## ***The Seafood Industry***

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is located along one of the world's most fertile fishing grounds. Coast residents and tourists have always enjoyed eating the oysters, shrimp, fish, and crabs so plentiful in local waters. However, a large seafood industry did not appear on the Gulf coast until the 1880's, when railroads, new canning methods, and commercial ice production made it possible to preserve and ship seafood nationwide. By 1904, Biloxi was the world's largest exporter of seafood by tonnage. Over the years, the seafood industry in its many forms has been important in all Gulf coast towns; however, most of these early seafood canneries were in Biloxi. These factories required many workers, both to catch the seafood and to can it. There were not enough people in Biloxi and nearby towns to fill all the jobs available.

To solve this problem, the factory owners arranged to bring in experienced seafood workers from Baltimore, Maryland, the leading seafood canning town of the time. These people were immigrants of Polish descent, but were called "Bohemians" by coast residents. Beginning in 1890 and for twenty-eight years thereafter, the Polish workers traveled to the Coast by railroad car to spend part of the year working in Biloxi. They lived in company-owned housing called camps. Even the children worked in the factories. A few of the Polish workers decided to settle permanently on the Gulf Coast, where some of the descendants live today. Most, however, returned to Baltimore.

In the 1880's another group of people began to work in the Biloxi seafood factories: the Yugoslavians (then called Austrians). Unlike the Polish, they came to stay. These immigrants had left their homeland of Dalmatia (a coastal region of Yugoslavia) both to better themselves economically and to escape being drafted into the army of their conquerors, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When a family saved enough money, a man could buy his own boat, a great triumph on the road to independence. Families also put much value on education. The descendants of these immigrants have entered many different businesses and professions.

From 1914 through the 1930's the factory owners went to south Louisiana to recruit still another group of workers for the Biloxi seafood industry. These new workers were called "Frenchmen" in Biloxi, and today are known as "Cajuns" or "Acadians" in south Louisiana. They are the descendents of Catholic French-Canadian settlers who were expelled from Canada by the British in 1755 because they refused to become Protestant and swear allegiance to the new British overlords. These refugees wandered for as much as thirty years, undergoing many hardships. (You may have read about their experiences in Longfellow's poem, *Evangeline*.) Most finally settled in south Louisiana. The "Frenchmen" who moved to the Mississippi Coast often stayed in touch with relatives in nearby Louisiana. Like the Yugoslavians, they have branched out into many occupations in addition to the seafood industry.

During the late 1970's and 1980's the seafood industry attracted another group of workers to the Gulf Coast, the Vietnamese. They left Vietnam after the fall of their capital city, Saigon. Those who settled on the Mississippi Gulf Coast became shrimpers,

seafood factory workers, and boatbuilders, especially in Biloxi and Pass Christian. Some have become factory owners or have branched out into other business and occupations.

Today there are about 3000 Vietnamese-Americans living on the Gulf Coast. They have been there ten years or less, and the Vietnamese language is their main language. Many have also learned English, especially the younger people. Yet many Vietnamese immigrants want their children to remember their heritage. For example, there are special schools that teach Vietnamese reading and writing to Vietnamese children born in the U.S. On the Gulf Coast today a person can attend a church service in the Vietnamese language, rent video cassettes in Vietnamese, shop in stores where English is seldom spoken, or see business signs in both Vietnamese and English.

### ***Tourism***

The coming of the railroads made vacation traveling easier and brought more tourists to the Gulf Coast. New Orleans businessmen could commute by train every summer weekend to the Coast, while their families enjoyed weekdays there as well. Later, railroads connecting the Coast with cities as far north as Chicago spurred an even greater tourism "boom." During the late 1800's through the late 1920's, many hotels were built. A variety of restaurants, entertainment spots, and other attractions grew. For example, schooner races brought thousands of spectators to the Coast. Bathing piers with special diving and swimming areas were built. Some hotels had piers with covered rooms or "pavilions" over the water. Dixieland jazz bands played for dances in these pavilions, which were cooled by the sea breezes in the days before air conditioning. Tour boats for hire could take visitors for a sail in inshore waters or to offshore islands such as the Isle of Capris, a barrier island that once existed between Ship Island and Horn Island. Health-oriented hotels, boarding houses, and sanitariums offered relaxation and relief for various maladies.

Many visitors enjoyed the simple pleasures of nature on the Coast. Here is a description of a typical tourist family's activities during the 1930's:

Recreation here is simple; entire families golf, sail, swim, and fish. From the seawall, piers, and boats, small nets baited with meat are lowered, a bushel basket being filled with crabs in a short time. Another diversion is gigging or spearing flounders, flat-bodied fish that swim in to the shore waters at night and burrow in the sand. The equipment for "floundering" includes a spear and a torch or *flambeau*. On still, moonless nights the flickering yellow light of *flambeaux* illuminates the dark along the water's edge as the flounders wade about in the shallow water spearing the fish. (quoted from *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State* by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration 1938.)

Two tourist seasons developed on the Gulf Coast: the summer season and the winter season. In general, the summer visitors came from nearby areas such as New Orleans, while the winter visitors arrived by train from as far away as Chicago and the



northeastern states. The winter visitors were called "snowbirds," because they migrated south to escape the cold winters of their hometowns. Some people from each group liked the Gulf Coast so much that they became permanent Coast residents.

Modern tourists usually arrive by automobile and stay in a hotel or motel for a few days, rather than for weeks or months, as in the past. Some modern-day visitors are actually part-time residents who own vacation homes or condominiums on the Mississippi Coast. Some frequent visitors still choose to move to the Gulf Coast when they retire. Hancock County attracts many retirees and vacation home-owners from nearby Louisiana.

### *Questions for Review*

1. What form of transportation contributed to an economic boom on the Coast after the Civil War?
2. Why didn't the seafood industry prosper sooner than the 1880's?
3. Discuss the experiences and backgrounds of the groups of people who moved to the Coast to work in the seafood industry. How were they alike? How were they different?
4. Discuss how the Coast's natural resources and man-made attractions have been enjoyed by tourists over the years.
5. How are today's tourists and their experiences different from those of the past? How are they similar?
6. Define these words and explain how they are related to Coast history: Bohemian, snowbird, camps, Saigon, pavilion, Acadian, Dalmatia.

### ***The Lumber Industry***

A short distance north of the coastal towns lies a forest known as the Piney Woods. Until the late 19th century, the Piney Woods was a great wilderness of huge pine and hardwood trees, covering much of south Mississippi. It was very isolated, and travel was difficult except by boat on the streams that flowed through the woods. The few people who lived there herded cattle, hunted, or farmed.

The first Europeans to settle on the Mississippi Gulf Coast were interested in the products of the forests. The French colonists shipped lumber to their colonies in the West Indies, where most of the trees had been cut down at an early date to make way for the vast sugar cane plantations.

From colonial times through the Antebellum Period, the trees of the local river swamps and the nearby Piney Woods were cut down, floated down the streams, cut into lumber at Coast sawmills, and sold. Some Coast residents made charcoal, an important household fuel, by burning wood in large furnaces called "kilns." The town of Kiln was named for this industry.

During the Antebellum Period the Coast lumber industry was quite important. Sawmills shipped lumber from the Ship Island harbor to New Orleans, from which it was shipped to many parts of the United States and the world. The tall pine trees made excellent ships' masts, a very important product in the days of sailing vessels.

The lumber industry grew even more after railroads were built to connect the interior Piney Woods with the Gulf Coast in the decades following the Civil War. Now it was easier to reach the deep woods and ship the logs by rail as well as by stream. In a short time, a deep-water port was built at the southern end of the railroad, and the new town of Gulfport was built on the land near the port. A deep channel was dug into the Mississippi Sound, allowing large freight ships to enter the Gulfport harbor. Now it was possible for great quantities of lumber to be shipped world-wide from Gulfport. By 1907, Gulfport shipped more pine lumber than any port in the world.

To the east in Jackson County and to the west in Hancock County, the lumber industry also grew. The Pascagoula River and the Pearl River flowed through pine and cypress forests, and many trees were cut and floated down these two streams. New railroads brought in timber from previously inaccessible inland forests, to be processed and shipped to many nations. The community of Gautier in Jackson County was founded as a creosote area.

From the Coast north throughout the Piney Woods, sawmills sprung up. Many backwoods farmers, both white and black, went to work at these sawmills. In addition to hiring local people, the lumber companies also brought in skilled workers and managers from other lumber-producing parts of the United States.

Turpentine "stills"--where the sap of the pine tree is made into turpentine, a paint thinner--were also common. The turpentine stills employed many black people who were brought in by the lumber companies from cotton-growing regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Like some of the early Biloxi seafood workers, the turpentine workers lived in company-owned housing near their worksites.

After much of the Piney Woods had been cut down, many of the lumber companies either went out of business, reduced their number of workers, or moved on to forests in other states. As a result, many people of the Piney Woods area had a hard time making a living. Their jobs in the sawmills and turpentine camps were gone, and the cut-over, eroding land could no longer support them as hunters, farmers, or herdsmen. Over the years, some of these people and their descendants have moved to the Gulf Coast towns to take many types of jobs ranging from teaching to shrimping to shipbuilding. In

addition, many residents of the Piney Woods now drive to their jobs on the Coast each day.

### ***Ports, Shipping, and Manufacturing***

When the lumber began to disappear, the ports of Gulfport, Pascagoula, and Moss Point had to look for other products to ship. Gulfport leaders encouraged the growing of fruits, vegetables, and pecans on the Gulf Coast. These were shipped by boat or rail from Gulfport. The small communities of Long Beach and Ocean Springs became well known for their small farms and orchards that grew many kinds of fruits and vegetables (such a farm is called a "truck farm"). Pecans and citrus fruits were important in Ocean Springs. Radishes were the specialty of Long Beach. Italian immigrants experienced in truck farming were among those who moved to Long Beach to join in this business.

Today, the cities that grew as lumber shipping centers now have ports that ship everything from paper and grain to petroleum and chemicals. Gulfport has specialized in the banana trade and is one of the world leaders in this industry. Moss Point is the site of a paper mill. Pascagoula processes oil and chemicals. Industrial parks and additional deep-water channels have attracted manufacturing companies, which in turn have hired local workers and attracted workers from other parts of the country as well.

### ***Boatbuilding and Shipbuilding***

A boatbuilder was among the first settlers to arrive on the Gulf Coast with d'Iberville, and boatbuilding is still an important local skill. Up and down the Gulf Coast you can see large and small boats being built in people's yards. Knowing how to build, repair, and use boats is part of the local Coast heritage. This knowledge, combined with the fact that the forests of the nearby Piney Woods supplied excellent wood for boatbuilding, made the Coast a logical place for the development of a large boat and shipbuilding industry.

Until railroads were built on the Coast after the Civil War, boats were the easiest form of transportation for traveling to and from the Coast. Boats were as essential then as cars are today. Sailing schooners and steamboats brought goods and people to and from New Orleans and Mobile, the nearest largest cities. Of course, boats were used locally for travel, recreation, and fishing.

Knowledge of boats and boatbuilding has contributed to the growth of industry on the Gulf Coast. Gulfport boatbuilders early in this century produced some of the last great wooden ocean-going sailing vessels. During World War I the Pascagoula-Moss Point area, a local boatbuilding center, was chosen as the site of shipyards for the war effort. During the 1930's, Ingalls Shipyard was established to build welded metal boats. Later, Ingalls became part of Litton Industries, now the largest employer in Mississippi. During World War II, local workers supplied boats for the military from boatyards on Biloxi's Back Bay and in Handsboro (Gulfport), while barges were built for the U.S. Army in Moss Point. Today on the Mississippi Coast you can find people building or repairing

anything from a small wooden skiff to a huge, computerized naval vessel. As shipbuilding has become more "high tech," engineers and other shipbuilding specialists from throughout the nation have moved to the Coast to work in shipbuilding and related industries.

### ***The Federal Government***

During the Twentieth Century the federal government has been a key factor in bringing new jobs and new residents to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Since World War I, several federal installations on the Coast have been expanded, and new ones have been founded. The government has continued to provide jobs on the Coast up to the present day, through its local installations and through its contracts with private companies such as Litton Industries.

During World War I, sailors were trained at Gulfport's Naval Training Station. This station later became a Veterans Administration hospital. Another hospital for veterans was built in Biloxi during the 1920's. Both hospitals today attract patients and staff members from many places and employ local workers.

Between 1934 and the end of World War II, a Coast Guard Air Station on Biloxi's Point Cadet served as a base from which seaplanes could patrol the Gulf of Mexico. During the war these planes were used to watch for German submarines and to rescue survivors from boats that had been attacked by German submarines in the Gulf.

At the outbreak of World War II the U.S. Navy chose the Gulfport area as a site for a new "Naval Construction Battalion Center," also known as a "Seabee" base. At this base sailors are trained in building and engineering. During the same time period, Biloxi was chosen as the site for a new Air Force training base known as Keesler Field. Keesler Field has since become Keesler Air Force Base. Keesler Air Force Base houses many technical schools that teach electronics, computer science, administration, air traffic control, engineering, and other subjects. Both Keesler and the Naval Construction Battalion Center employ many people and greatly help the economy of the Gulf Coast.

People who choose a military career often retire after twenty to thirty years of service. They then receive retirement pay and benefits, and are free to live wherever they wish. Many people stationed at Gulf Coast bases have chosen to stay on the Coast after they retire. They like the warm climate, the water-related activities, the low taxes, the availability of on-base military medical care and other benefits, and the friends they have made in the area while stationed on the Coast as military personnel. Today there are almost 8,000 military retirees living in Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson counties, with most living in Biloxi, Gulfport, and Ocean Springs.

The National Space Technology Laboratories (known as NSTL) is a very large federal facility that stretches from the Pearl River swamps to just west of Bay St. Louis in Hancock County. Originally called the Mississippi Test Facility, this site was first used by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to test the rocket engines

that would send men to the moon. Later, space shuttle engines were tested at NSTL. Many agencies and companies in addition to NASA are housed at NSTL. The United States Navy does important oceanographic research at NSTL, and the United States Army manufactures and tests ammunition. In addition, various federal agencies, universities, and private companies work on projects involving weather research, fisheries, geology, map-making, pollution control, satellites, and more.

NSTL has attracted many people to the Gulf Coast from all over the United States and some from foreign countries. Many of these people are trained in science and technology. The civilian employees of NSTL have contributed greatly to the population growth of Bay St. Louis, Diamondhead, and other parts of the Coast. In addition, some of the military personnel assigned to NSTL have retired and become permanent Coast residents.

## **SUMMARY**

Over the years people from many backgrounds have chosen to move to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Some have come because the Coast offered them a way to make a living. Others have come because the Coast offered them a pleasant place to retire. Throughout history the natural resources of the coastal environment have played a key role in making it possible for people to find work and enjoyment in their chosen home.

### *Questions for Review*

1. How has the presence of military bases and other federal installations led to growth in the Coast's population?
2. What kinds of work are done at NSTL in Hancock County?

### *General Discussion Questions*

1. What groups of people moved to the Coast primarily to find work? What groups came for other reasons?
2. Which Coast industries and businesses have depended on the resources of the natural environment? Which ones have been water-related?
3. Explain how various types of transportation have influenced the growth of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
4. In what ways has the growth of the Coast been influenced by forces from outside the area?
5. Discuss the similarities and differences of the seafood and lumber industries.
6. What part has Louisiana played in the story of the Mississippi Gulf Coast?

## PROJECTS FOR STUDENTS

1. Talk to your parents, grandparents, or other relatives about why your family (or your family's ancestors) moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Write about your discoveries or present them to the class, whichever your teacher prefers.
2. Write a fictional story of play in which you show a newcomer's experiences on his or her first day of living on the Mississippi Coast.
3. Compare today's Mississippi Coast with the descriptions of the area given in the tour guides published by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's. These books are entitled *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State* and *The Mississippi Gulf Coast--Yesterday and Today*. Both are available at local libraries. Each book contains detailed "guided tours," which you can follow today, noting what has changed and what has remained the same.
4. Compare today's Coast with what you see in old photographs of the Coast. Photographs are available in books and collections in the public libraries, as well as in many family photo albums.
5. For Mississippi History students: Contrast and compare the Coast with another section of the state. For example, how is the Gulf Coast different from (or similar to) the Delta plantation area, in the past and today?
6. For American History students: Choose an important event or trend that you have studied in American History, and write a paper or speech in which you show how this event or trend affected the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Possible topics include the Industrial Revolution, the World Wars, the Great Depression, slavery, the Vietnam War, the Louisiana Purchase, the space program, etc.

## FURTHER READING

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*Mississippi Harvest* by Nollie W. Hickman. University of Mississippi Press, University, Mississippi, 1962. (lumber industry)

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## PHOTOGRAPHS



A round trip ticket on the excursion train made it possible for New Orleans residents to spend the day on the Coast. Businessmen, shoppers, students, and tourists could commute between New Orleans and the Coast with ease. This photograph was taken at the Bay St. Louis train station, probably during the 1920's. Passenger trains no longer serve the Gulf Coast. *Joe Scholtes Collection.*



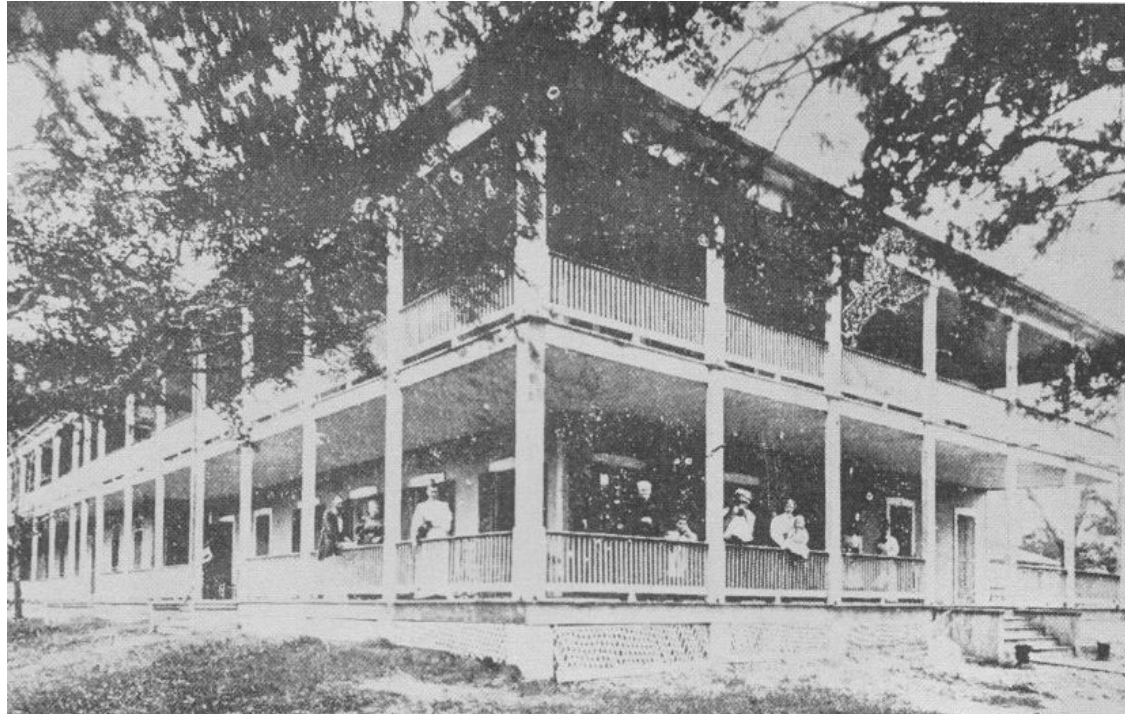
Today and in the past the tourism industry has provided jobs for local residents of the Gulf Coast. These lifeguards worked on the Isle of Caprice, a barrier island that disappeared into the sea in the 1930's. During the 1920's the island was a popular resort. Some people believe that the human interference with the island's vegetation caused the loosened sand to blow and was away. *Scholtes Collection.*



Tour boat *Nonpareil* on its way to the Isle of Caprice during the 1920's. This offshore island, which later disappeared, offered gambling and liquor during Prohibition, as well as dancing, swimming, and other activities. Marathon swim races between Biloxi and the island were popular. Other Coast tour boats took visitors on scenic cruises up local rivers.

*Courtesy Joe Scholtes Collection.*

The Ocean Springs Hotel, built prior to the Civil War. Ocean Springs was a resort known for the healthful effects of its springs. People believed that the spring water cured various ailments. Over the years many tourists and retirees have been drawn to the Coast because of a belief that the climate, fresh air, and recreational opportunities contribute to good health. *Courtesy Biloxi Public Library*



Scene inside an early seafood factory in Biloxi. This picture of Polish workers was taken by Louis Hines, whose photographs of children in Biloxi and other American towns brought national attention to the problem of child labor. You can see a collection of his photographs on display at the Seafood Industry Museum in Biloxi. *Photo courtesy Biloxi Public Library.*



Factory-owned housing for seafood industry workers in Biloxi during the early days of the industry. These dwellings were known as "camps." Steam whistles at the nearby factories awakened residents before dawn to call them to work when the boats arrived with their catch. Each factory had its own distinctive whistle style for calling its workers. *Photo courtesy Biloxi Public Library.*



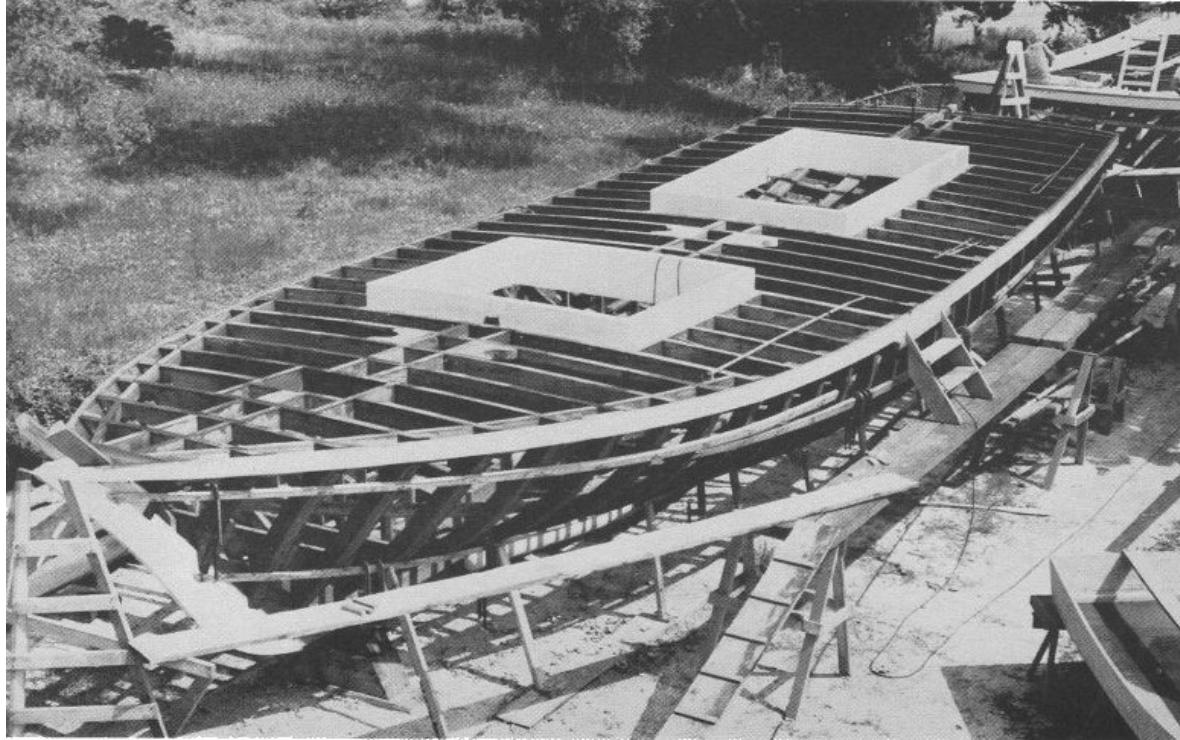
These shrimp pickers worked at the Lopez, Dukate Company in Biloxi in 1911. Workers received a nickel for peeling a bucket of shrimp. (Note bucket in boy's hands.) The shrimp juice on the hands of the pickers turned the nickels green. These green nickels, were later spent; Biloxi cash registers were full of green "shrimp nickels." Louis Hines photo.

*Courtesy Joe Scholtes Collection.*





This is a 50-foot long wooden sailing schooner under construction at Bill Holland's boatyard in d'Iberville. Boats like this were widely used on the Coast before the 1930's for shrimping, oystering, hauling freight, and racing. The Seafood Industry Museum is raising funds to build two schooners, to be used for racing, for educational purposes, and as tour boats. *Courtesy Seafood Industry Museum.*

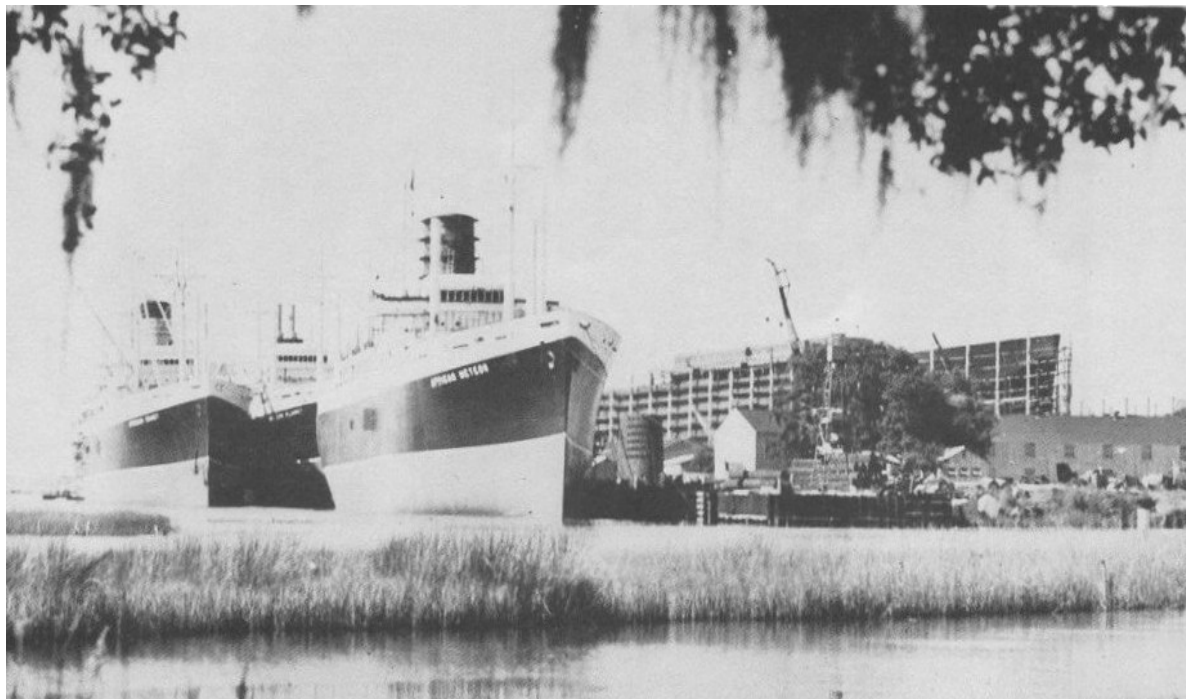




Employees of the Westergard Boat Works on Biloxi's Back Bay pose in front of a partly finished boat for this photograph during World War II. Westergard was one of several Coast boatyards that built various types of vessels for the military. Local boatbuilders spent the war years building minesweepers, lifeboats, tugboats, submarine chasers and other craft. *Photo courtesy Joe Scholtes Collection.*

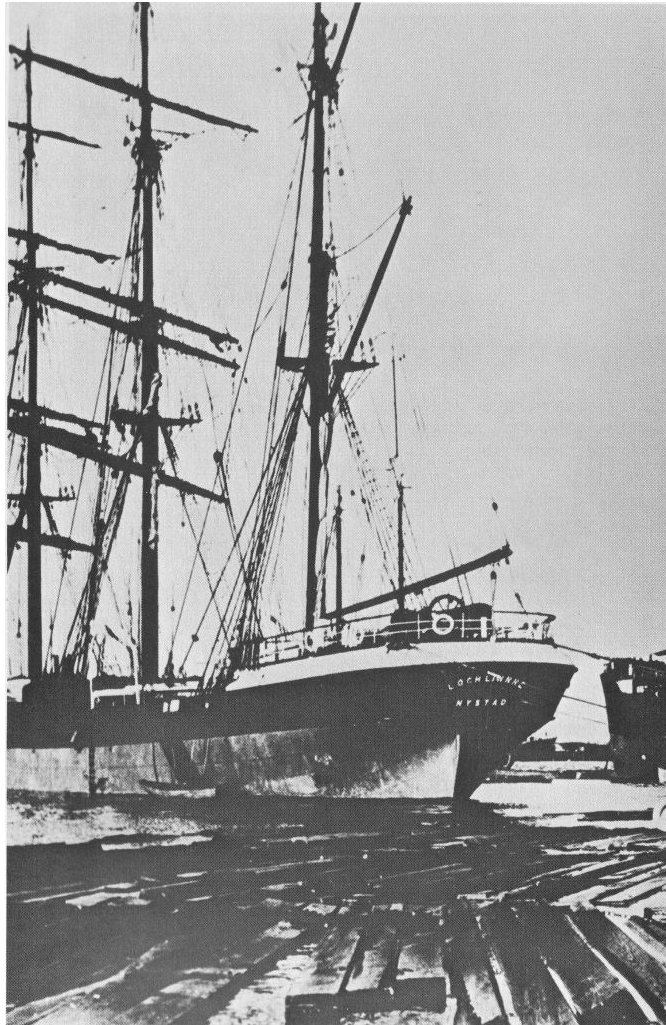


1950's photograph of Ingalls Shipyard. Ingalls was attracted to Pascagoula in the late 1930's by a \$100,000 grant from Mississippi's "Balance Agriculture With Industry" program. This state program provided government help for private industry, in order to create jobs for the unemployed. Ingalls is now a division of Litton Industries, the state's largest employer. *Courtesy Joe Scholtes Collection.*





This picture, probably taken around the turn of the century, shows part of the Edward Hines Sawmill in Kiln. Sawmills transformed cut trees into usable lumber. Notice the stacks of lumber to the left side of the photograph. *Photo courtesy Hancock Bank.*



During the early twentieth century, Mississippi lumber arrived at the new port of Gulfport by train. It was loaded onto ships at the Gulfport harbor, to be sent to many parts of the world. *Photo courtesy Mississippi State Port Authority.*



The modern Port of Gulfport handles general cargo of many types. Much of the "containerized" cargo is shipped in the large box-like containers you see here. The large crane in the background lifts the heavy containers in order to load or unload the ships. *Photo courtesy Mississippi State Port Authority.*

Scene of the early days of Keesler Field, later to become Keesler Air Force Base. Land for Keesler Field was donated to the federal government by the city of Biloxi. *Photo courtesy Office of History, Keesler Training Center, KAFB.*

