

natchez trace

The story of Natchez Trace is the story of the people who used it: the Indians who traded and hunted along it; the "Kaintuck" boatmen who pounded it into a rough wilderness road on their way back from trading expeditions to Spanish Natchez and New Orleans; and the post riders, government officials, and soldiers who, from 1800 to 1830, made it a link between Mississippi Territory and the fledgling United States.

Natchez Trace Parkway is a unit of the National Park System that preserves a good part of the history associated with the original frontier road. When completed, the 450-mile parkway will roughly follow the route of the original Natchez Trace through the States of Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, connecting the cities of Natchez, Jackson, Tupelo, and Nashville.

Enrich your trip by taking the time to explore the many archeological sites, historical landmarks, nature trails, and recreational areas off the parkway. You can walk or ride over typical sections of the old trace and see for yourself what a frontier road looked like. Here and there you will find obscure remains—a house, an abandoned mine, or an old stream crossing—all associated with the people who lived on or traveled over this thoroughfare.

A Wilderness Trail To The Gulf

When the French arrived on the gulf coast in 1699, they found the Old Southwest occupied by the Natchez, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians. These Indians were relative late-comers to the region, for archeological evidence found in the many mounds and village sites indicates human habitation as long ago perhaps as 8,000 years. By 1733 the French had explored the area well enough to draw a map showing an Indian trail running from Natchez to the Choctaw villages near present-day Jackson, Miss., and then on to the Chicka-

aw villages in the northeastern part of the State. French traders, missionaries, and soldiers frequently traveled over the old Indian trade route.

In 1763 France ceded the region to England, and under British rule a large population of English-speaking people moved into the area around Natchez. British maps of the period show a trail called "Path to the Choctaw Nation."

During the American Revolution, Spain went to war against England and, as a result of the British defeat, claimed all the land between the Mississippi and the Chattahoochee Rivers and northward beyond present-day Memphis.

Beginning about 1785, men from Ohio, Kentucky, and other parts of the western frontier floated products such as flour, pork, tobacco, hemp, and iron down the Mississippi to the markets at Natchez and New Orleans. Once downriver the only way home was either to walk or ride the 450-mile trail from Natchez to Nashville. The volume of traffic grew until these colorful "Kaintuck" boatmen had trampled the trace into a crude road. For years the pioneer economy was largely based upon the Spanish silver they carried home.

The transformation of the boatmen's trail into the Natchez Trace in 1798 came when Spain surrendered all claims to lands north of the 31st parallel. The United States in the same year created the Mississippi Territory with Natchez as its capital. Adequate communication between the Territory and Washington, D.C., became important, and in 1800 Congress extended mail service to Natchez. The road was still a wilderness trail, and the Postmaster General complained that it could be used only "at a great expense to the public on account of the badness of the road which is said to be no other than an Indian footpath very devious and narrow." In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson ordered the U.S. Army to clear the road

between Nashville and Natchez, but the few troops assigned the task could not hope to complete it without substantial assistance. So, in 1806, Congress appropriated \$6 thousand to allow the Postmaster General to contract for improvements, and within a short time the old Indian and boatmen trail became an important frontier road.

The Government encouraged the construction of inns, or "stands" as they were then called, along the trace. With the signing of the Choctaw treaty in 1805, the first stand was built, and by 1820 more than 20 were in operation. These stands, operated by both Indians and whites, were rather crude structures, with the exception of Mount Locust and Red Bluff.

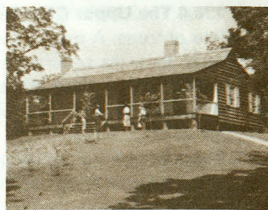
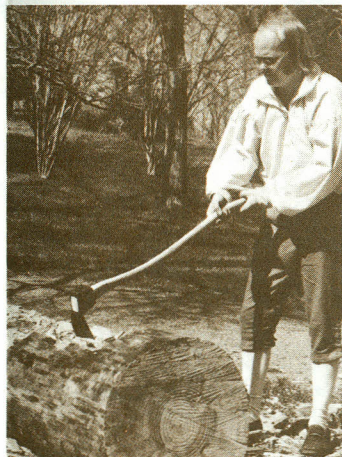
In 1812 the United States declared war on England. Because Spain was an ally of Britain, Gen. Andrew Jackson's Tennessee militia was ordered down the Natchez Trace to protect New Orleans from a threatened Spanish invasion from West Florida. The invasion did not materialize, and Jackson was ordered to disband the militia. He refused and marched his troops back up the Natchez Trace sharing their hardships and earning the nickname "Old Hickory." In 1815, the British attempted to seize control of the lower Mississippi, but Jackson stopped them at the Battle of New Orleans. The victors then followed the trace northward to their homes. Because of Jackson's victory march, his name has been associated with the trace more than that of any other man.

From 1800 to 1820 this rough road was the most heavily traveled in the Old Southwest. Boatmen, soldiers, postmen, missionaries, Indians, and pioneer settlers moved along the road sharing its discomforts and dangers. Steaming swamps, floods, insects, accidents, sickness, unfriendly Indians, and occasional robbers plagued travelers on the trace.

In January 1812 the steamer "New Orleans" made its first appearance at Natchez.

By 1819, 20 steamboats were operating between New Orleans and such interior cities as St. Louis, Louisville, and Nashville. No longer was it necessary for the traveler to use the trace in journeying north. Thus, steamboats, new roads, new towns, and the passing of the frontier finally reduced the trace to a quiet forest lane.

Today only a few sections of the historic trace remain. A paved parkway too smooth for yesteryear's traveler to imagine takes us through this land of historic adventure and natural beauty.



Accommodations

There are no overnight facilities along the parkway. Motels, hotels, and restaurants may be found in nearby towns and cities. The only service station is at Jeff Busby. Campgrounds are at Rocky Springs, Jeff Busby, and Meriwether Lewis. Campsites cannot be reserved; stays are limited to 15 days during periods of heavy visitation.

Seasonal Changes

Summer weather is generally hot and humid. The winter is usually cold and damp with occasional warm periods. Spring and autumn are mild and warm. Insect netting and repellent are recommended for camping.

The elevations above sea level along the parkway range from 105 feet in Mississippi to 1,020 feet in Tennessee.

Parkway Regulations

Uniformed park rangers patrol the parkway. They are there to help you have an enjoyable trip and to enforce the laws that govern the parkway's use.

Posted speed limits must be obeyed at all times. Speed limits are enforced through the use of radar.

Hauling and commercial trucking are not permitted.

Hunting and the use of firearms are prohibited.

All natural, historical, and archeological objects must be left undisturbed.

Tent and travel-trailer camping are permitted only at authorized campgrounds.

Build fires only in fireplaces. Carefully extinguish all cigarettes and matches; never throw them or other debris from vehicles.

Report all accidents, fires, and emergencies to the nearest uniformed park ranger. Check the map for the ranger station locations, or ask the telephone operator to connect you with the nearest park ranger residence or station.

Natchez Trace Parkway

The parkway, which runs through Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, with offices in the Tupelo Visitor Center, is in charge. Send all inquiries to him at Rural Route 1, NT-143, Tupelo, MS 38801, or telephone (601) 842-1572.

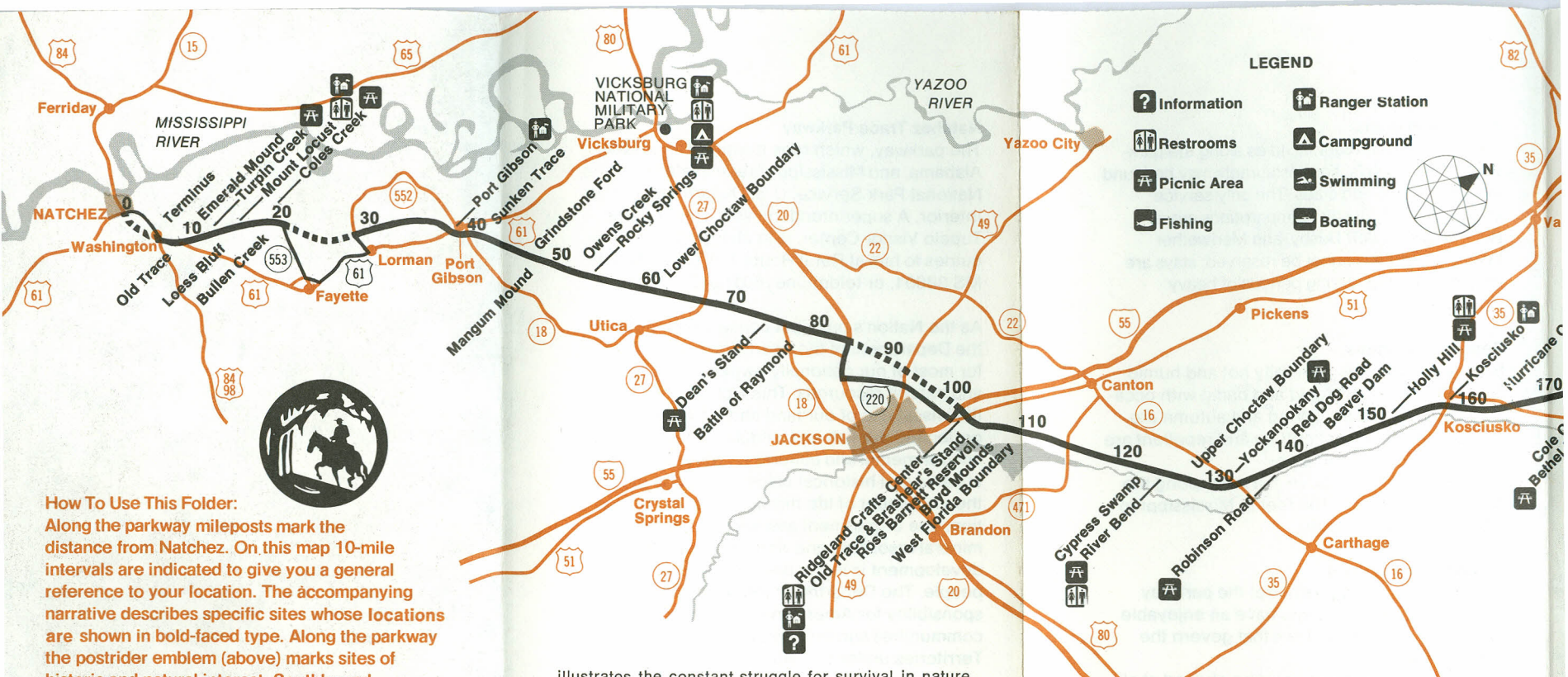
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

A Word About Safety

Drive defensively and make rest stops regularly.
Slow down at sundown and during rainstorms.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR





How To Use This Folder:
 Along the parkway mileposts mark the distance from Natchez. On this map 10-mile intervals are indicated to give you a general reference to your location. The accompanying narrative describes specific sites whose locations are shown in bold-faced type. Along the parkway the post rider emblem (above) marks sites of historic and natural interest. Southbound travelers should go to the end of the folder and read backwards. Northbound travelers begin below.

8.1 Terminus. Current southern end and junction with U.S. 61. **8.7 Old Trace.** A section of the original roadway can be seen here. **10.3 Emerald Mound** was built about 1300 by the ancestors of the Creek, Choctaw, and Natchez Indians. The mound covers nearly 8 acres and measures 770 by 435 feet at the base. **12.1 Turpin Creek** picnic area. **12.4 Loess Bluff** shows a deep deposit of topsoil (loess) blown into the area during the ice age. **15.5 Mount Locust** was one of the first stands, the name for an inn in Mississippi, on the Trace. This restored stand, with its frontier furniture and utensils, has living history programs March through October. Restrooms and a ranger station are also located here. **17.5 Coles Creek** picnic area. **18.4 Bullen Creek** nature trail, leading through a mixed hardwood-pine forest,

illustrates the constant struggle for survival in nature. The walk takes 15 to 20 minutes.

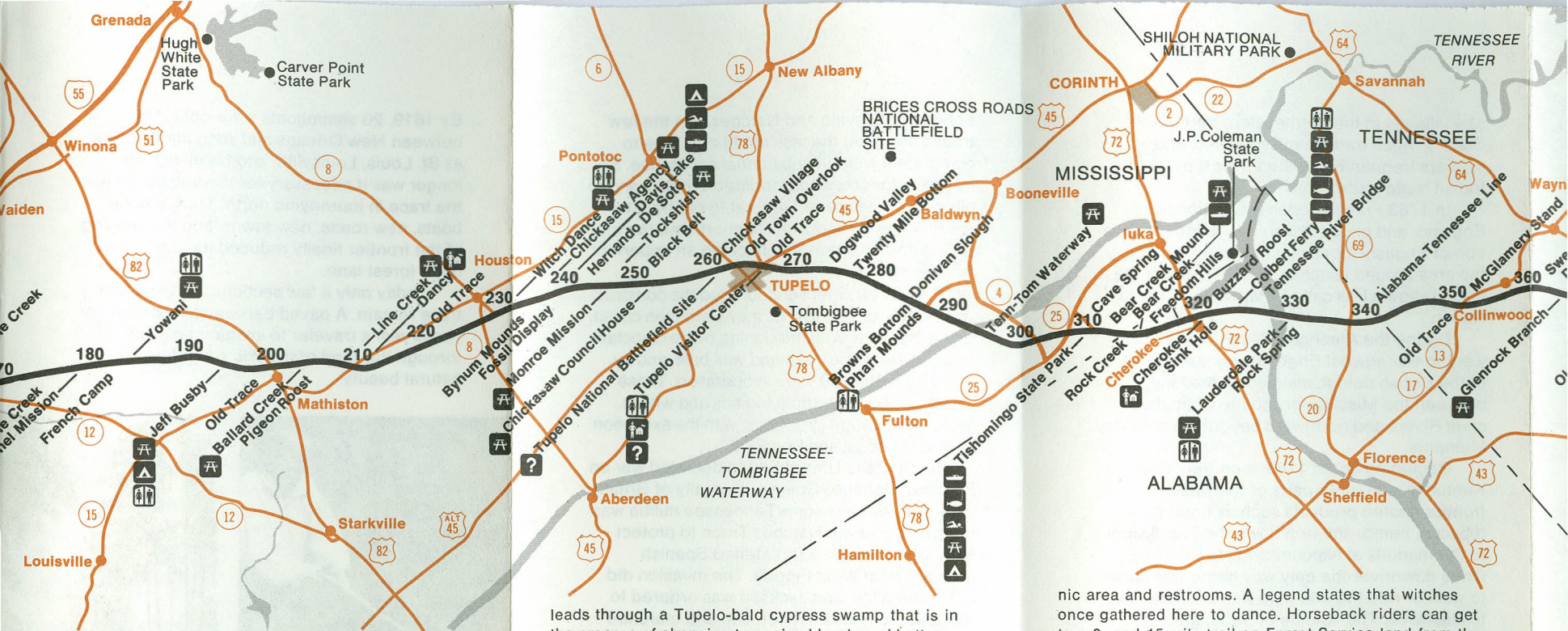
Parkway uncompleted from mileposts 20 to 30.4. Use Miss. 553, U.S. 61, and Miss. 552 as connecting routes.

39.2 Port Gibson Ranger Station. **41.5 Sunken Trace** Trail follows a deeply eroded and sunken section of the original Trace. Five-minute walk. **45.7 Mangum Mound.** Copper ornaments and other artifacts found in these hilltop graves have revealed much to archeologists and anthropologists about the people who once lived here. Burnett's stand once stood near Bayou Pierre at Grindstone Ford. Early-day travelers heading north considered themselves in wild country once they crossed this bayou. **52.4 Owens Creek** fills with water after a heavy rainfall and creates a waterfall. **54.8 Rocky Springs** townsite can be reached by a short trail from the parking lot. A section of the Old Trace is also nearby. A campground, picnic area, restrooms, and a ranger station are located here. **61.0 The Lower Choctaw Boundary**, which you cross here, was the north-south dividing

line between the earliest settled part of Mississippi and the Choctaws' land. **73.5 Dean's Stand** was operated by a farm family. Many farmers ran stands to supplement their meager income. A picnic area is here. **78.3 The Battle of Raymond**, a part of the Vicksburg campaign in 1863, was fought near here.

Parkway uncompleted from milepost 87 to 101.5. Use I-20, I-220, and I-55 as connecting routes.

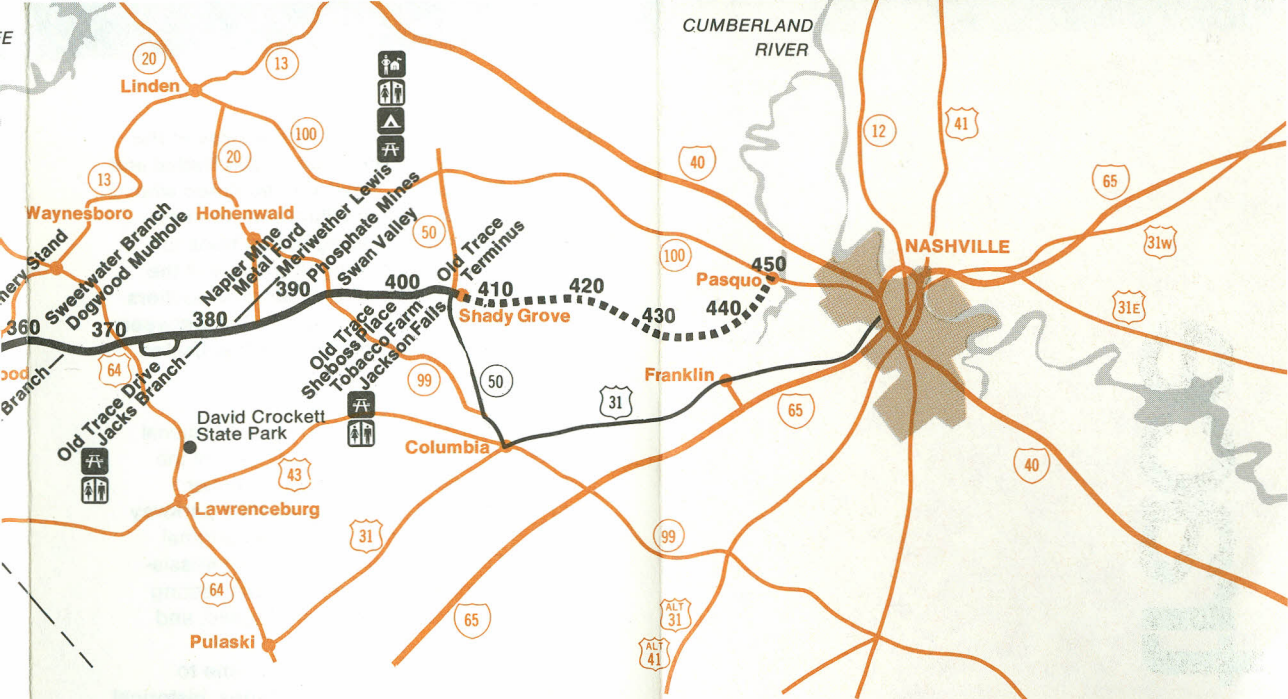
102.4 Ridgeland Crafts Center features demonstrations and sales of Mississippi crafts. Exhibits, information and restrooms are also here. **104.5 Old Trace and Brashear's Stand** was advertised as "a house of entertainment in the wilderness" to 1806 travelers. **105.6-113 Ross Barnett Reservoir** parallels the parkway for 8 miles. Access to the State-operated facilities is via Miss. 43 or the Airport Road. Do not park along the shoreline. **106.9 The Boyd Mounds** were built more than 500 years ago by different Indian groups who heaped new graves on top of old ones. **107.9 The West Florida Boundary**, which was drawn in



1763 at the close of the French and Indian War, is crossed at this point. The line ran from the junction of the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers to the Chattahoochee, part of the current boundary between Alabama and Georgia. **122.0 Cypress Swamp** nature trail, an elevated walkway, takes you through the plant communities typical of a southern swamp. The walk takes about 15 minutes. **122.6 River Bend** picnic area and restrooms. **128.4 The Upper Choctaw Boundary** is marked here by a line of trees. A nature trail, which takes 5 to 10 minutes to walk, features several species of southern pines and other native plants. **130.9 Yockanookany** picnic area. **135.5 Robinson Road** picnic area. This road, dating from 1821, connected Jackson and Columbus, Miss. **140.0 Red Dog Road**, opened in 1834, was named after a Choctaw chief. **145.1 Beaver Dam** nature trail, a 5- to 10-minute walk, tells the beavers' story. **154.3 Holly Hill** picnic area and restrooms. **159.7 Kosciusko** ranger station. **164. Hurricane Creek** nature trail identifies the types of plants found in different soil conditions. The walk takes 15 minutes. **175.6 Cole Creek** nature trail, a 5-minute walk,

leads through a Tupelo-bald cypress swamp that is in the process of changing to a mixed hardwood bottom-land forest. **176.3 Bethel Mission** picnic area. Site of one of 13 missions to the Choctaws. **180.7 French Camp**, established as a stand in 1812 by Louis LeFleur, became a school in 1822 and has remained one to this day. Sorghum is made here in the fall. **184.8 Yowani** picnic area and restrooms. **193.9 Jeff Busby** picnic area, campground, gas station, store, and restrooms. The overlook is on one of the highest points (603 feet) in Mississippi. A 20-minute walk on the nature trail identifies native plants and describes their use by pioneers. **198.6 Old Trace**. A portion of the original roadway leads into the woods here. **201.3 Ballard Creek** picnic area. **203.5 Folsom's** trading post and stand run by Nathaniel and David Folsom, once stood at this site. Millions of passenger pigeons, now extinct, once roosted here. **213.3 Line Creek** picnic area is on a former boundary between the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes. **214.5 Dancy** ranger station. **221.4 Old Trace**. A portion of the original road crosses the parkway here. **232.4 Bynum Mounds** were built about 700 A.D. by prehistoric Indians. An exhibit describes their daily life. **233.2 Witch Dance** pic-

nic area and restrooms. A legend states that witches once gathered here to dance. Horseback riders can get to a 9- and 15-mile trail on Forest Service land from the picnic area. **235.0 Fossil Display**. An inland sea covered this area in the dim past. All that remains of that era are fossils of the marine animals on display here. **241.4 Chickasaw Agency** picnic area. From 1801 to 1825 the agency for the Chickasaws was located here. **243.3 Hernando De Soto**, Spanish explorer and discoverer of the Mississippi, spent the winter of 1540-41 near here. **245.6 Monroe Mission** picnic area. **249.6 Tockshish** picnic area. This area was settled originally in 1770 by John McIntosh. **251.1 Chickasaw** council house picnic area. Pontatoc, the capital of the Chickasaw nation in the 1820s, stood nearby. **251.9 Black Belt** Overlook. **259.7 Tupelo National Battlefield Site** is 1 mile east on Miss. 6. **261.8 Chickasaw Village**. Chickasaw Indians' daily life is described in exhibits at the nearby site of one of their villages. **264.0 Old Town Overlook**. **266.0 The Tupelo Visitor Center** and parkway headquarters have restrooms, rangers who can answer your questions, exhibits, and an orientation program, that tells about the modern parkway and the people and events along the Trace. Sorghum is made here the last weekend in



September and every weekend in October. A nature trail leads through an area of forest regrowth.

320.3 Cherokee ranger station. Buzzard Roost, nearby, has exhibits that tell the story of Levi Colbert, a Chickasaw chief who owned a stand near here. **323.8 Sink Hole** nature trail takes 5 minutes. **327.3 Colbert Ferry** has restrooms, picnicking, swimming, fishing, and boat launching facilities. Colbert Stand and ferry and a section of the Old Trace are also here. George Colbert is reported to have charged Andrew Jackson \$75,000 to ferry his army across the river here. **327.8-328.6 The Tennessee River Bridge** spans Pickwick Lake formed by Pickwick Landing Dam. **328.7 Lauderdale Park** picnic area and restrooms. **330.2 Rock Spring** nature trail is a leisurely 20-minute walk. **341.8 Alabama-Tennessee** State line.

350.5 Old Trace. Three sections of the original road can be seen here. The Trace changed directions to avoid mudholes. **352.9 McGlamey Stand** has long since disappeared but the nearby village yet bears its name. **363.0 Sweetwater Branch** nature trail is a 20-minute walk. Wildflowers are brilliant in season. **364.5 & 365.1 Glenrock Branch** picnic area in a wooded area along a stream is reached by trail from either milepost. **367.3 Dogwood Mudhole**, 1 mile to the south, became impassable during rains. **375.8 The Old Trace Drive**, a 2.5-mile, one-way road, follows the route of the original Trace. Several overlooks from the ridge provide views of the countryside. NOT for travel trailers. **377.8 Jacks Branch** picnic area and restrooms. **381.8 Napier Mine**, an open pit, was worked in the 19th century. Exhibits explain the operation and processing of iron ore. **382.8 Metal Ford** was used by travelers crossing the Buffalo River. This is the site of early iron industry and McLish's Stand. **385.9 Meriwether Lewis** campground, picnic area, restrooms, and ranger station. Lewis, of Lewis and Clark fame, is buried here. **390.7 Phosphate mines** were the center of a short-lived local industry in the late 19th century. **404.7 Terminus.** Current northern end of parkway and junction with Tenn. 50 at Shady Grove.