

Nature's process of building land in the Delta can be studied on Lake Beulah, and the observer may learn how the Delta was made. The foundation is the sand carried in the currents of the muddy Mississippi River, on which the willows soon appear; then through their limbs and leaves the silt is caught and deposited on the sand, creating the rich alluvial lands. In the course of time, the cottonwood and other trees crowd out the willows, and so the great forests form and grow, to be mowed down by man.

ORIGINAL VEGETATION, BIRDS AND ANIMALS

The surface of the Delta is flat and was covered with great forest trees and a growth of evergreen cane and bamboo, through which no rider could pass, and only with difficulty could a man work his way through on foot.

This necessitated the cutting of trails and roads with cane knives and axes before travel could be carried on. Great clinging vines of wild grape and muscadine, climbing to the tops of tall trees, festooned the forests, which, with the giant trees and the undergrowth of cane, created a jungle equal to any in Africa. It was a land of ridges, flats, sloughs, bayous, lakes, and rivers, with millions of acres covered with evergreen cane from ten to twenty feet high under the giant forests trees.

The rivers, bayous, and lakes were filled with fish of many kinds, from the six inch jack fish to the eight foot alligator gar. Alligators were also seen in the streams and lakes. There were three varieties of the gar—the small gar, the pike gar, and the alligator gar. The edible fish were the perch, of many varieties; the red and blue perch, the chinquapin perch, the white or silver perch, and the bream were the most prized.

The game fish were the jack fish; trout, or black bass; and striped bass, or bar fish. There were many varieties of catfish—the yellow, the mud, the black, the blue; the white, or channel; the willow; the big river catfish that attained the weight of two hundred pounds; and the spoonbill. (The spoonbill catfish is canned and sold in the market as salmon.) There were three kinds of buffalo fish—the black and the white small-mouthed fish, (the best table variety), and the big-mouthed coarse variety. All these fish filled the streams in great abundance and are plentiful at the present day. There were many varieties of turtles, among them the loggerhead, sometimes weighing two hundred pounds and over; and the soft shell turtle, very numerous on the river sandbars and the most prized. Sturgeon were found in the Mississippi River.

In the forests were great cypress trees, ash, gum, cottonwood, white oak, red oak, overcup oak, water oak, willow oak, yellow and

red maple, hickory, pecan, persimmon, wild plum, mulberry, and many other trees; in these wonderful forests wild turkeys, wild-cats, panthers, wolves, bears, deer, and other wild things hid away.

Here, too, millions of wild pigeons, whose flights darkened the earth, roosted in thousands on the trees, breaking down limbs and killing many pigeons below; millions of wild ducks of every description—the little green and blue wing teal, mallards, red heads, and canvas-backs—fed in the lakes and bayous; brant of several varieties, in thousands, and wild geese, innumerable, rested on the sand-bars of the rivers and the shores of the lakes from their flight south. In these woods lived the whooping crane—a great grey crane that gave a guttural cry, or whoop, and was always losing its way and always circling to find it—and the trumpet crane with its note sharper and clearer than the trumpet's call. These cranes were not fish eaters; they fed on grains and other things, and the flesh was of the flavor of wild goose and equally as good. They have entirely disappeared and possibly are extinct. Flocks of great white swans would fly over, seeking the lakes. There were wild turkeys in droves of fifty or sixty, some quail and woodcock, many jacksnipe, plover of many varieties, and a few Virginia rails. There were millions of birds; among the song-birds were the mockingbird, cardinal, thrush, oriole, and others too numerous to mention.

Among the fowl and birds present in great numbers, were the cranes, white, blue, and white and black; there were the pink spoonbill crane, cormorants, white plumed fish ducks, the greyheaded fish-duck, owls of many kinds, blue jays and the ivory-billed woodpecker, whose bill was used by hunters for the sights of the old-fashioned squirrel rifles. There were green parrots, or parakeets, the males having yellow heads. When winged and taken captive, these birds would sit on a perch and make themselves perfectly at home, would take nuts from anyone's hand and conduct themselves as to the manner born. The osprey, the grey eagle and the great bald eagle are still to be seen on the lakes.

Once, while hunting on Lake Beulah, I shot a red-headed duck that fell near the opposite shore of the lake. A grey eagle swooped down and picked it up, flying straight towards the point of the shore on which I stood, as if retrieving the duck for me. When it was within a hundred yards of the shore, a noise came from the clouds like a roar; and looking upwards, I saw a bald eagle with wings crimped or cupped, coming with the velocity of a cannon ball, swoop down on the grey eagle. He struck the grey eagle, which dropped the duck and fled; the great white-headed eagle swooped and caught the duck in its talons and flew back with it to the western shore.

The pigeons, parrots, whooping and trumpet cranes, swans and

brant that used to be as numerous as the Canada goose, have disappeared.

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RIVERS, LAKES, AND BAYOUS

The principal lakes of the county are Lake Bolivar in the southern part, Lake Vermillion and Swan Lake on Indian Point, Lake Beulah in the central part, and Lake Concordia to the north. These lakes, all originally a part of the Mississippi River, were made into lakes by cut-offs and changes in the channel of the river prior to the survey of the county; Lake Beulah was formed by the cut-off of 1863. The interior lakes are Alligator Lake in the north, Holmes Lake in the eastern part, Lake Porter and Six Mile Lake in the central part, Christmas Lake, east of Lake Beulah; and Huspuckena Bayou in the north. Jones' Bayou in the central portion and Porter's Bayou in the southern portion, flow into the Sunflower River on the eastern boundary of the county. Lake Porter and Eagle Nest Lake drain into the northeast fork of the Bogue Phalia. Bogue Phalia is a beautiful little river running through Bolivar County and down through Washington County into the Sunflower River. Laban's Bayou and Stokes' Bayou drain into Bogue Phalia on the west. Pace's Bayou, Snake Creek, and Bogue Hasty drain into Bogue Phalia from the east. The Bogue Phalia is a navigable stream from its mouth to what is known as "The Narrows." There it appears to have filled in, and for several miles is a narrow bayou. North of the Narrows it widens out again into a river for about twenty miles to its forks, known as the Forks of the Bogue, one of the branches going northeast and the other, northwest. Clear Creek runs from Lake Beulah to Shell Lake in Washington County. Deer Creek, a noted stream, flows southeast through Bolivar, down through Washington County. Williams' Bayou flows from the Mississippi River southeast into Washington County, emptying into Deer Creek. Black Bayou flows from Tupelo Gum Swamp, at Kimball Lake place, southeast into Fish Lake in Washington County. In the county are large swamps of low flat lands, such as Gibson Swamp, near Rosedale; Clear Creek Swamp, between Egypt Ridge and Bogue Phalia; and others upon which fine cypress timber grew.

The only open lands in the county were the great flat stretches of lands known as "open woods," where there was no cane or undergrowth; where deer, bear, and other animals fed upon the acorns and persimmons which grew on these lands. In rainy seasons these lands were covered with water, upon which were thousands of ducks.