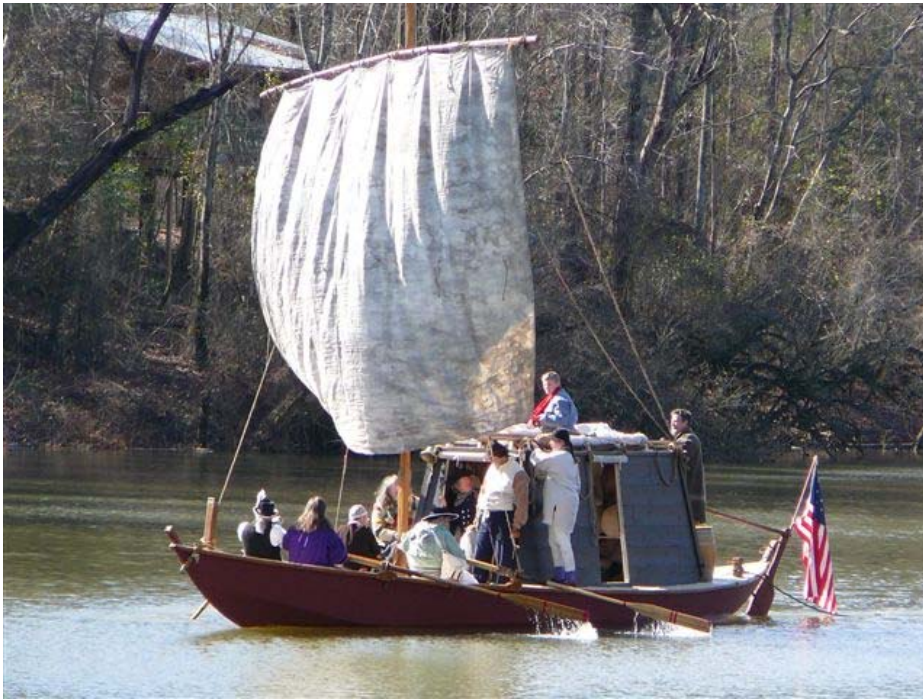


## Ouachita River Float: Moro Bay State Park to Finch Bayou Park, December 26-29, 2006

Photos provided by Camp Worth (#1), Harvey & Mary Alexander (#2 & #4), Ed Williams #3, 4, 5, & 6)

### Day One, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006



Left Moro Bay at 11:50 AM on Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> river mile marker 270 1/2. (Robert Carroll, Mary Alexander, Earl Harrell, Ed Williams, Bob Rogers, Robert Rogers, Larry Layne, Tim Richardson, Jimmy Pitre, and Harvey Alexander) The driver's side rear axle on the trailer threw its "bearing buddy." Plans are to have Mark and another person drive the trailer and another truck to Finch Bayou on Friday. We had a crowd of about a dozen to see us off. Bob Rogers brought his pirogue and rowed with us for about a mile before we took him onboard and tied off the pirogue. We broke into two teams to row. Team 1: Larry Layne, Tim

Richardson, Jimmy Pitre, and Harvey Alexander. Team 2: Ed Williams, Earl Harrell, Mary Alexander, and Bob Rogers or Robert Carroll. Team 1 rowed for an hour, then team 2 for an hour, and broke for cookies. When we left the wind was brisk from the north. Once the sail was up the wind died to infrequent burst from the north. However, it was a help. Team 1 rowed again to oars stop for the night, river mile marker 260. (Traveled 10 1/2 miles. At 6 PM air temperature was 33 degrees, water temperature 51 degrees.) We had a short bank to climb and as a team we moved three tents and personal gear up to high ground. We pitched tents as Bob Rogers fixed supper. We had a combo of sausage, cabbage, rice, and onions, with cornbread for dessert. Ed had brought some powdered egg nogg mix for use instead of eggs and it worked very well in the corn bread. One package of corn bread meal was enough, as the double batch was too much. The afternoon row was quiet. Lots of houses along the way, some were deer camps, but most people lived in year round. Some of the trailer houses were on metal posts about 6 to 8 feet off the ground. We sat around a campfire until about 8 PM and all went to bed. Tim, Bob & Robert Rogers slept in the keelboat. The Alexanders, Ed & Earl, and Larry, Jim, and Robert Carroll in tents. At 4 AM someone let their packs of dogs or coyotes. We got up at daybreak. (Air temp. at 7 AM 33 degrees, water 53 degrees).

### Day Two, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006

We left at 8:10 AM with team 2 at the oars. It was a cold oar to grab and took many a minute to warm up hands and body. Bob Rogers cooked coffee and oatmeal in the bow area and we rowed until 9 AM, had breakfast and began rowing, team 1 at 9:50 AM. Breakfast was gruel and coffee. South wind but able to





row steady at 3 mph. The second day would be arduous as we had to travel 25 miles to get to Crossett Harbor. We again rowed in one hour shifts starting and ending with team 2. There was much frost on the tents, oars, and keelboat. Saw a herd or family of wild hogs, black with white forequarters. After the short afternoon travel the day before, the two teams were better acquainted enough to determine who should be in the stroke position (Jimmy in team 1 and Earl in team 2). The stoke position sets the pace. Bob Rogers of team 2 has quite a musical repertoire and his singing with the team following along helped the hourly turn at the oars go quickly. We ate lunch on the row, with Bob Rogers cutting up sausage,

hard cheese, and having crackers with cream cheese. Along the way we met up with a “river rat” and his boat named “Miss Boogie Bare.” The boat was outfitted with a window cabin with air conditioning and generator. The “river rat” also had two terrier type dogs that loved the water and boats. The fellow’s boat had a 115 hp outboard on a boat made at F & F Boats in Monticello, AR. We came into Crossett Harbor at 6:15 PM. The sun set a 5 PM, so the last hour or so was in the dark. A candle lantern was place forward to help warn folks of our coming. The Crossett Harbor rescue boat, with Ovid Switzer at the helm, came out to help use with a spot lite. There was a crowd of six or so folks waiting for us. Bruce and Ovid Switzer, plus Johnny Creach, and Richard Welch had a large pot of chili and beer waiting for us. Not sure who the cook was, but I think it was Ovid. They also had a campfire going. We all went to bed around 9 PM. Ed and Earl setup their tent. Tim, Robert Carroll, and Larry Layne slept in the keelboat cabin, and the rest slept under a pavilion in the park. Michael Bethea and Chuck Martin came by at 10 PM but nobody was awake. These two spent the night at the Crossett Hilton.

### Day Three, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006

At about 4:30 AM the duck hunters came and soon after sunrise the shooting began. The same folks who met us the night before came by in the morning with doughnuts and sausage & egg biscuits. Michael and Chuck showed up around 7:30 AM. Bruce Switzer and Michael drove to Felsenthal Lock & Dam to leave Michael’s truck. The folks at Crossett really showed and gave us a great time. We left around 8:50 AM (air temp. 41 degrees, water temp. 50 degrees) and had ten miles to Felsenthal Lock & Dam. We first dropped off Michael and Chuck and then went thru the Lock. Once thru we found that the Dam spillway was creating about a 2 mph current. As a result, we were able to row at a steady 4 ½ to 5 mph. We crossed into Louisiana at about 2 PM, rowed until 4 PM, river mile marker 217 and found a great camping spot. Had traveled 18 ½ miles this day.

The lay of the land changes from steep banks to sloping and even an occasional sand bar. Lots of Spanish moss in the trees. Deer camps, trailers, and regular houses switch over to “river camps” which are basically Styrofoam blocks with a floor attached and a cabin built. Some camps were a single building and others had three or four tied together. The camps were tied by cable to the bank, both up and down river, plus, as I was told, drums of concrete were thrown into the water out from the camps and cabled to the camps, again both up and down stream. Some camps had eloquent names like “Ouachita Hilton” and some camps were fancy, others in disrepair, and a few upside down in the





water. Most were only accessible by water as we saw no trails or foot boards to the bank and most had foam blocks covered with wood planks in which to drive a jon boat up and onto the bunk. Ed dropped the lid to the #14 camp Dutch oven into the river and proceeded to strip down to socks and underclothes, jumped in after the lid, and fished it out. Had a great supper of steak, boiled potatoes, fried onions, and biscuits. We found several deep holes dug in the ground and at first thought it was the work of bears, then deer, and finally it was decided it was hogs. Also, found some abandoned beaver lodges. There was one lonely beaver who kept us awake off and on during the night. The beaver was across the river and kept jumping in

and out of the water and in general, making a terrible racket. It was a warm night compared to the previous two. A north wind blew moderately all night long. We dreamed of sailing into Finch Bayou. It was not to be as the wind died off, and then came again from the south.

#### Day Four, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006



At about 6:30 AM we had a brief rain shower. Up for breakfast of oatmeal and sausages, coffee, and hot cocoa. We packed up the keelboat and were underway by 8:15 AM (air temp. 58 degrees, water temp. 52 degrees). We still had the 2 mph current and were thus able to row again at a steady 4 ½ mph. We made Finch Bayou by 10:15 AM, a distant of 9 ¾ miles. About four miles from Finch Bayou we called Mark Meyers at Moro Bay to come and get us. Just as we pulled into the ramp at Finch Bayou, also, did Mark and another truck. We pulled the *Aux Arc* out at once, unloaded her, and departed Finch Bayou about 11:45 AM. Jimmy Pitre stayed at Finch Bayou as his brother was to pick him up.

However, the last we heard as we pulled away was that the brother was lost! We first stopped in Dean, Louisiana to get a cap for the rear axle hub and then later stopped for gas in Strong, AR, and got into Moro Bay at 1:30 PM. We sorted out the gear with Earl, the Alexander's, and I heading for Chuck's house. The original plan was to go to a Dunbar & Hunter Event at Hot Springs National Park. However, there was heavy rain forecasted, which did occur. We decided to cancel the Saturday event. We took the keelboat to Chuck's and arrived at Ed's house around 5:30 PM. Things that worked: cookies, using the coffee pots to cook oatmeal and rice in, tin squares in place of a brazier (one with dirt, the other with charcoal), tin lined wash pots to cook with also. Things that did not work: need only cast iron for cooking bread in. Need a speaking trumpet and a blowing trumpet. Total distance was about 65 miles.

