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**June 2003**

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**Program - June 11, 2003**

*Swap Meet*

After the business meeting we will have our annual swap meet. Bring your excess gear and barter with friends for theirs. Newcomers, this is a great way to acquire gear and meet people.

**We need your correct email address!**

Please send your current email address to Marilyn Peery now.

Email address: [mpeery@ev1.net](mailto:mpeery@ev1.net).

The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit trip reports, news worthy items and any literary musings you wish to inflict on your paddling buddies to the Editor at the following address.

[sherrib57@hotmail.com](mailto:sherrib57@hotmail.com)

Where was the river?

by Bob Arthur

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Burnam's Crossing Search Group

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

We went looking for the Burnam's Ferry crossing, but did we actually find it? In 1824 when the area was surveyed, the field notes stated that the northernmost point was located on the Colorado River. From that point, 2210 varas to the southwest was a post located in the prairie. That post point still exists per current day appraisal district maps. A vara (barr, per the surveyor) at the time was about 33" in length. At that point, it appears that the river has moved east roughly 700 feet. An employee at the Fayette County appraisal District told of a situation of one piece of property that was originally 100 acres but which is now only 28 acres because of the changes over the years. All of this is to say that we may have located where the crossing would be on today's river. We had a GPS machine. We had a real life aerospace engineer and a real life Ph.D. researcher operating the machine. We did determine that the trip was 10 miles long with put in and take out on private property. But not another point was recorded, or they were recorded but not saved, or they were recorded and saved but not able to be retrieved. Or something.



Searching for the crossing

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

At any rate, we think we know where the crossing might be on today's river. Per one of the histories, the road from the crossing ran East to the current location of Fayetteville and then went on to the community of San Felipe. Per Gideon Lincecum in "Adventures

of a Frontier Naturalist", he could see the Jesse Burnam house off in the distance "on the edge of the river bottom".

Doesn't it make sense that Burnam's house would have been near any road leading to the crossing from the west side of the river? But where was Burnam's house, where was the crossing and where was the river? Future research and trips will be to try to determine where his house was in 1835, where the road from the west side was and where the river actually was at the time. Local rumor says that a cannon was lost in the river at the crossing. Is it still there?



Bob Arthur and Grandson  
Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

The water level was good which made for a fairly quick trip, with stops to locate various landmarks and dutifully record them on the GPS unit. We had some excitement at the put-in when one of the members of the party decided, against advice, to drive down to the edge of the river. With some difficulty (and much help), he was able to extricate his vehicle.

The primitive campsite was extremely nice. There was absolutely no "foreign" noise and no light wash at all and the night temperatures were cool enough to be inside of a good sleeping bag

One of the members of the party reported that a coyote came right up into the site very early in the morning. We don't think that that report was induced by over indulgence of any kind, but we really don't know.

To top the trip off, the trip coordinator's son, daughter in law and baby grandson invaded the campsite late in the afternoon, bringing firewood and a cold watermelon.

We'll do it again after some further research into local landmarks.....and we'll try to get those GPS points.

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Officers for 2003

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Waterline Submissions

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Submit content to the Newsletter Editor,  
Sherri Blifford, by the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Send electronic submissions to  
[sblifford@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sblifford@sbcglobal.net).

Send snail mail submissions to  
Sherri Blifford  
8233 Kingsbrook Rd., #134  
Houston, TX 77024

General Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2003

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These minutes have not been approved. Any changes or amendments will be posted in next month's issue of the Waterline.

Commodore John Ohrt presided at the meeting.

In honor of safe boating week, Chet Tigard presented a brief talk on various styles of pfd's.

John introduced the officers and guests, who were encouraged to get involved and join the club.

Last month's minutes were read and accepted.

The purser's report was given and accepted. We spent \$550 and took in no new money.

Fraser Baker gave the fleet captain's report. Members told about trips taken and upcoming trips were discussed. Fraser has updated the mileage taken by members.

Free t-shirts will be given to trip participants.

We announced that the list bot is available for anyone to view, and there is good information available.

John announced that the REI Adventure Fair will take place May 17-18 and the roster will be emailed to members in June.

Mary Z introduced Grady Hicks who gave a presentation on canoe racing and the Safari.

The meeting was adjourned.

## Change of Address

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Submit change of address to Marilyn Peery.

Email address:

[mpeery@ev1.net](mailto:mpeery@ev1.net).

Physical address:

Marilyn Peery  
4119 Mischire Rd.  
Houston, TX 77025

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## Annual Women's Trip

by Mary Carter

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The annual women only trip took place at Village Creek State Park May 17-18. If you weren't there, plan to come next year. It is a great fun event.

Seven hale and hearty women (Anne Olden, Donna Grimes, Lilia Deschamps, Ann Derby, Mimi, Cindy Bartos and Mary Carter) met at our luxurious accommodations at 10:00 am Saturday morning, dropping off food and beverages, and sleeping stuff at the cabin. We scouted the creek and decided that we would paddle upstream from the cabin and then leisurely float back down stream when we felt like it.

First we launched our crafts down a steep slope to the creek. Thanks especially to the muscle power of Donna and Cindy we all made the put-in safely and gracefully.

We paddled upstream until lunch called and we stopped on a nice shady sand bar for sandwiches, drinks and other goodies. We paddled on upstream with the wind in our faces getting gradually warmer. And finally decided it was time to go swimming. We floated back downstream and stopped at the sandbar across the creek from our cabin and went swimming. Lovely.

Waiting for us on the cabin side of the creek was the uphill take out. Challenging but not daunting for the intrepid seven!

We solved most of the world's problems over wine, chips and salsa. Then after we figured out that "pine needles rock" to start charcoal, we dined on the patio on hamburgers, rolls, salad, veggie side. Thoroughly delicious.

Dessert was a wonderful birthday cake for me with candles and cards and a T-SHIRT.

Thank you all for making this birthday very special.

Sunday morning was a feast of bagels, cream cheese and fruit. One final question was answered: "How many women does it take to burn a bagel?"

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Anything-That-Floats Winner  
by Paul Woodcock, HCC Governor and Counselor at Eastwood Academy  
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The Yellow Submarine

Click on image to enlarge.

In May one of our outstanding students, Mary Ruiz, participated in a competition. This competition displayed colorful and artful objects that float on water. If you've been to the art car parade then this isn't very different from this one. Mary Ruiz worked hard day after day, spending as much time to work on her design, which was a canoe. And because of her hard work she won 2nd place in this year's parade.



Winning Team

Click on image to enlarge.

**Editor's note:** Paul sponsored this project and posted it on the Eastwood Academy website, where you can see other photos he took as well. The website is at [www.eastwoodacademy.com/news/news\\_links/canoe/index.htm](http://www.eastwoodacademy.com/news/news_links/canoe/index.htm)

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Shepherd's Damn Road  
by Linda C. Gorski and Louis F. Aulbach  
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**The multiple spans of the Shepherd Drive Bridge are visible at the end of a quarter mile straight away.**

The bridge at Shepherd Drive is visible from the bayou several hundred yards upstream since the bayou set its course nearly due east, toward downtown. The bridge marks the location of a manmade feature on the bayou, originally situated far to the west of the city, that was well known as early as the 1880's. A dam was built at a point immediately upstream of the present bridge.

The dam on Buffalo Bayou was the idea of Daniel P. Shepherd. Shepherd, who otherwise is nearly forgotten in the history of Houston, gave his name to the dam on the bayou and, subsequently to the road leading to the dam from the San Felipe Road and the small crossing that passed either near the dam or across the top of the structure. Characterized as a 'get-rich-quick' type of personality, Daniel Shepherd, like many other young Houstonians in the second half of the 19th century, had grand ideas for commerce and enterprise.

Born in Virginia in 1838, Daniel Shepherd came to Houston and, in 1866, was the superintendent at the Southwest Telegraph Company. He and his wife Olivia lived on Main Street between Rusk Avenue and Walker Avenue.

In the late 1870's or early 1880's, Shepherd built a dam on Buffalo Bayou on ten acres which he had acquired some time earlier. His plan was for a sawmill and a flour mill at this location. This design was merely one part of a larger scheme of dams, mill races and navigation locks up and down the bayou.

Shepherd actually organized a company to carry out his ventures. In addition to the dam at the present day Shepherd Drive, he built one other dam on the bayou. The precise location of that dam is not clear, but it may have been upstream of Preston Avenue. His vision for Buffalo Bayou was to create a system of dams and mill races to power flour and grist mills as well as factories using the power of water in a manner similar to what had been successfully accomplished in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

One critical element in his plan was a scheme to divert water from the Brazos River into Buffalo Bayou in order to build up the water supply and to provide a consistent flow. Since such a diversion plan required the approval of the state, the rejection by the legislature of his proposal brought his company to financial ruin.

Although the financial problems wrecked the plan, the dam became known as Shepherd's Dam and the impounded water became a popular swimming hole. The failure of his plan did not escape local ridicule, either. The 1913 J. M. Kelsen Map of Houston cleverly labeled the road to the dam as "Shepherd's Damn Road."

In time, floods washed away his dams, although a remnant of the one could be seen from the Shepherd Drive bridge as late as 1938. The name of the street and the bridge crossing near the site of his dam remains the sole legacy of Daniel Shepherd and his

grandiose scheme.

Yet, before we dismiss Daniel Shepherd's dreams as a far-fetched delusion, we should recall that by 1927, the Brazos Valley Irrigation Company had obtained a permit to take 99,000 acre feet of water annually from the Brazos River to irrigate the rice crops north of Sugar Land. This system then merged with the Briscoe Irrigation Company which had developed a network of canals to provide Brazos River water for irrigation and industrial uses to Fort Bend, Brazoria and Galveston Counties. In the 1930's, the entire system was sold to the American Rice Growers Association. The Briscoe Canal, which draws water from the Brazos below Sugar Land, and the American Canal, which taps the water from Oyster Creek in Sugar Land, became part of the American Canal Company of Texas. The company was acquired by the Brazos River Authority in 1967, and the canals continue to be major components in the management of the Brazos watershed in this area.

You can canoe past the large pumping station on the Brazos River for the Briscoe Canal opposite the town of Thompsons, a few miles below Sugar Land, and the pumping facility for the South Texas Water Company Canal a couple miles farther downstream, near the community of Juliff.

Near Fulshear, the Brazos River is less than ten miles from the upper reaches of Buffalo Bayou. It makes you realize that Shepherd's idea was, perhaps, only a little ahead of its time.

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Devil's River Trip Report  
by Anne and John Olden  
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Click on image to enlarge.

The Devil's River is one of the places you read and hear about, but a trip which we believed - and still do - that should be done the first time with someone who's been there. This applies not only to the river trip but to arrangements for the shuttles. Over the Memorial Day weekend, Sandy and Jeannette Truxillo, of Explorer Pack and Paddle, led a trip to Devil's River State Natural Area (SNA). They have made this trip a number of times, so we were in good hands.

Seven people caravanned from Houston to Del Rio on Friday. Stopping at Sammy's in Castroville for lunch, we met our three additional trip members. The group visited the 100 year old Val Verde Winery in Del Rio for a brief tour and tasting. Then parking on the US side, we walk to Ciudad Acuna over a flowing Rio Grande, and supper at Crosby's. This restaurant looks really elegant inside, but accepts very casually dressed tourists. Cash only, please, and be sure to bring your driver's license for crossing back into the US.

An hour's drive brought us to turnoff at Dolan Creek Road. The 22 mile dirt road into the SNA was dusty but well graded. We spotted quail and deer in the dusk. Sandy had reserved the bunkhouse (five bedrooms and three full bathrooms) for the group, along with the nearby dining hall. Some of us decided sleeping outside in the cool breeze was better than being indoors.



Click on image to enlarge.

Saturday morning one of the SNA rangers took us to two of the many rock overhangs in this area. The first has red pictographs of the shaman figures like those seen along the Pecos; the walls of the second clearly show evidence of fires and a deep layer of

charcoal dust. Our guide's great grandfather homesteaded this land beginning in the 1860's, eventually acquiring over 60,000 acres on which he raised sheep. It is unimaginable how people survived in this dry, hot climate when supplies (or help) were days away over the rocky, cactus-strewn low mountains. The river must have been the reason they could stay.

About two years ago the family sold 27,000 acres to the state to prevent its being divided and developed. The Nature Conservancy owns land on the west bank of the river. I hope these two properties remain as wild as they are now.



Sandy and Jeanette Truxillo

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Saturday afternoon we drove toward the river, then hiked the last two miles (accessible by vehicle only with ranger permission). It's difficult to believe beautiful rivers exist as you drive through the mesquite and catsclaw southwest of San Antonio, but there are several, including the Frio and Nueces. Unlike those two, which are often dry, the lower section of the Devil's is unique because it isn't rain dependent. Springs feed this section, assuring adequate flow. The section above the SNA is often too low to paddle. At the river we turned upstream and were met with an amazing sight - an oasis of cold springs and lush greenery, from grasses to trees. The river was very refreshing on this hot day, feeling noticeably cooler where the springs flow into it. We walked a ways along the base of the mountain, crossing more springs flowing into the river, taking a second dip before we headed back.

Wind is common here, and often welcome, because it provides some relief from the heat, but it can make paddling difficult. All of us were paddling tandem in case of wind, but Sunday turned out to be perfect - warm, with just a slight breeze. From the put-in, a short paddle through reeds brought us to small rapids. Why was Sandy getting out to walk? They looked runnable. Here's where his experience saved us. The horizon line was not obvious, and we'd quickly reached the unrunnable Dolan Falls, where we portaged left. Looking back up at the Falls, you can see that they are two small, deep U's, which would grab boats and pitch paddlers onto rocks. Beautiful but dangerous.



Pictograph

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

The river varies from narrow to wide, with the occasional short trip through reeds, a fun challenge to find the way to open water. There are also a few rapids, some of which aren't easy to spot, another reason to have a guide. Just below Three Tier Rapid is a large rock shelf that is perfect for lunch and swimming. Several people also lined their boats half-way back up and re-ran the three tiers.

Arriving too soon at the takeout, we prepared our gear and boats for the shuttle. The takeout is on private property; the shuttle must be arranged in advance with the man who handles this service. It's a long and rocky ride to the highway, not one to be made with your own vehicle even if you had access. We snoozed to Loma Alta, a small store and gas station, where people piled out, ready for chips, beer and ice cream. Back at the SNA we enjoyed another good meal and thought about our day on the river.

Even for non-paddlers, this is a relaxing place: cell phones don't work here. There are birds galore - we spotted turkeys, a roadrunner coming for a drink in the yard, scaled quail, and a hooded oriole. The tentative "bob white" was often heard. Cottontails and jackrabbits passed through, and a skunk ambled by early one morning. We saw fish in the river, reputed to be popular for fishing.

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## Trip Participants Responsibilities

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The following information is reprinted with permission from the Carolina Canoe Club.

1. Don't attend a trip beyond your ability.
2. Call the trip coordinator at least 3 days before the trip. Call if you decide not to go.
3. Find out all information about the trip.
4. Be on time at the meeting place.
5. Bring safety equipment and be prepared for bad weather.
6. Provide your own food, transportation and equipment (life jacket required).
7. Follow instructions and commands of the trip coordinator.
8. Keep the boat (or shuttle) behind you in sight at all times. If you lose sight, stop, wait, then search.
9. Know and abide by the AWA Safety Code.
10. Leave the river and environs cleaner than you found them.

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## Memorial Day Buddy Paddle

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Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

Fraser's annual "Buddy Paddle" was the best yet, according to participants. Forty of them enjoyed the Columbus Loop paddle, a picnic, and cake. For more photos, click on the "more ...." under the photos on our website, then select the Memorial Day Album. Join us in Huntsville State Park on Saturday, June 21st for a paddle and picnic. All skill levels welcome. Bring something to share at the picnic. Some really great paddlers will demonstrate their skill for us. For details, see the trip list or contact the coordinator, Commodore John Ohrt by phone (713) 877-1504, or by email [jcohtjr@aol.com](mailto:jcohtjr@aol.com).

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For Sale

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Mad River Canoe

Intrigue, 15'9", three seats, Solo/Tandem, Roylex \$700

Call Mary Zaborowski at 713-884-1925

or 832-215-4551 or email [maryzabo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maryzabo@sbcglobal.net)

or call Bob Scheffler, 713-692-7494

15-ft sailboat (Sunfish)

Mask, sail, rigging, drp wooden eel, wooden rudder, \$600.

[maryzabo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maryzabo@sbcglobal.net)

or Bob Scheffler, 713-692-7494

Mad River Canoe

Freedom, Roylex \$700

Call Mary Zaborowski at 713-884-1925

or 832-215-4551 or email [maryzabo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maryzabo@sbcglobal.net)

or call Bob Scheffler, 713-692-7494

Mad River Freedom,

Friend in Kuwait needs to sell his canoe

Spruce colored, wood trim. It was only paddled on one fishing trip, like new condition.

He is asking \$600. Thanks! Call Bob 713-6927494 or 713-504-1916

Kayak-like boat for two

Phoenix Vagabond Pokeboat (for 2 people), 40-lb Kevlar, natural Kevlar color, two convertible paddles, two sets of foot braces, two flotation bags, very stable, 16'5"L x 29"W x 15"H. Used once, excellent shape

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Trapped!  
by Paul Woodcock  
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The map showed it as 10 chains which, translated, means one hell of a long portage. The river made a huge horseshoe turn creating a large peninsula. There were elevation lines everywhere and they were close together. The portage was across the peninsula about  $\frac{3}{4}$  a mile from the waterfall. We had trouble finding the trail as it was overgrown and, a short way in, it split into trails going everywhere like fingers on a hand. Others had been looking for a shorter way. We decided to split up and each take a trail and meet back at the junction to discuss what we found. The trail I chose seemed to go on forever but it was in fairly good condition as it wound its way through the forest, up over a ridge, and down to the river. It was a perfect put in as it stopped at a gravel bar. Looking upstream I could see the river come out of a narrow canyon. The rapid looked runnable but I was so far away I could not scout it. I have a fanny pack with water, first aid kit, survival gear and a pair of binoculars. I said a mild curse word as I realized I had left it in the canoe. I returned to the fork in the trail and Dana and Mary were already there. Mary's trail had lead her to a high ridge where she looked down and saw Dana signaling for her to go back. He said he had found a campsite with a short portage trail over the tip of the peninsula. The take out he described sounded a little hairy but he said we should get the boat and he would meet us there.

We rounded the curve of the river and there was Dana sitting at the lip of the falls on a huge granite dome. There was a small cove so we snuck up to him and threw him a line. I unsnapped the York pack and threw it up the solid bank and it came sliding back to the canoe. Mary got out of Bear and held the lines while I threw gear up to Dana. After we dragged Bear up to the top we carried the gear to the campsite while Dana hiked back to get his boat. It was a beautiful camp that night with the roar of the water fall making sleeping very peaceful.

The next morning I scouted the rapid and it looked runnable and there was quiet water to the left of the river. We loaded the gear and ran it with no problem and as we pulled in the small cove I could hear the rapid ahead of us. We had discovered that if it sounded like a freeway at rush hour most rapids had a least chance of being run. The sound of a freight train was assaulting my ears. We scrambled up the rock looked down the canyon and had one of those "OH Sh....." moments. It was a steep-walled canyon no chance to line or portage the canoes. The sides of the canyon closed in forming a narrow passage and the amount of water flowing through it was tremendous. Nothing but solid white, undulating water. Huge waves, but fortunately no visible rocks. If you have ever seen the haystack on the Rio Grande it was like that but on steroids. Down the river I could barely make out the rapid and the beach with portage trail I had looked up river from. We took out the binoculars and tried to see if there were any obstacles. We could not get back up stream so we had no alternative but to run it. I reminded my paddling partners "if we go over, go down the rapids feet first" advice I never seem to be able to manage when caught in rapids. I knew we would take on water the first rapid and was afraid we might not be able to maneuver. If we did tip over we should be dragged through the canyon by the current.

This is exactly the kind of water Dana doesn't like to run in his solo. Our big tandem handles it much better so we sent him off first. He looked like a match stick bobbing through the first rapids we saw line up the boat and disappear between the waves in the second rapid then he was paddling to the beach and bailing water from his boat. I realized that I had been holding my breath while he had made the run.

I tightened my life jacket and took a deep breath and said "let's do it." We paddled up stream as far as the cove allowed us to and then headed into the current. We hit the first wave and I saw the bow of the boat rise up and water splashed over Mary's head, then we raced down the trough between the waves and up again with water coming over the side and landing in my lap. I felt the boat twist and flex in the power of the river and up we went again. I tried a stroke and the stern was either out of the water or there was no

resistance in the foam my paddle sliced through. We came down between two other waves and for some reason I thought we need to move the boat more to the right. I did a draw and nothing happened. The river had us in its power and was taking us where it wanted to go. We got through the first chute and all too soon we were entering the second rapid. Not having scouted I yelled above the roar "are there any rocks and remember being extremely relived when I hearing "All clear" When we joined Dana I was really surprised that we had takn on very little water.

This was the biggest fastest water I have every run and we were very, very fortunate that it was straight and had few rocks. Lady Luck was on our side that morning. As we stood there coming down from the adrenaline high I understood I had learned another lesson. When there is a 10-chain portage and a lot of alternate trails there is a reason.

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# Not Found

The requested URL /hcc\_trips.pl was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request.

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