



DEADLANDS

THE WEIRD WEST

River o' Blood



River o' Blood

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Dedicated to:
Mischa and Chris, for all the foot-sloggin'
through the bayous on behalf of the *Epitaph*.

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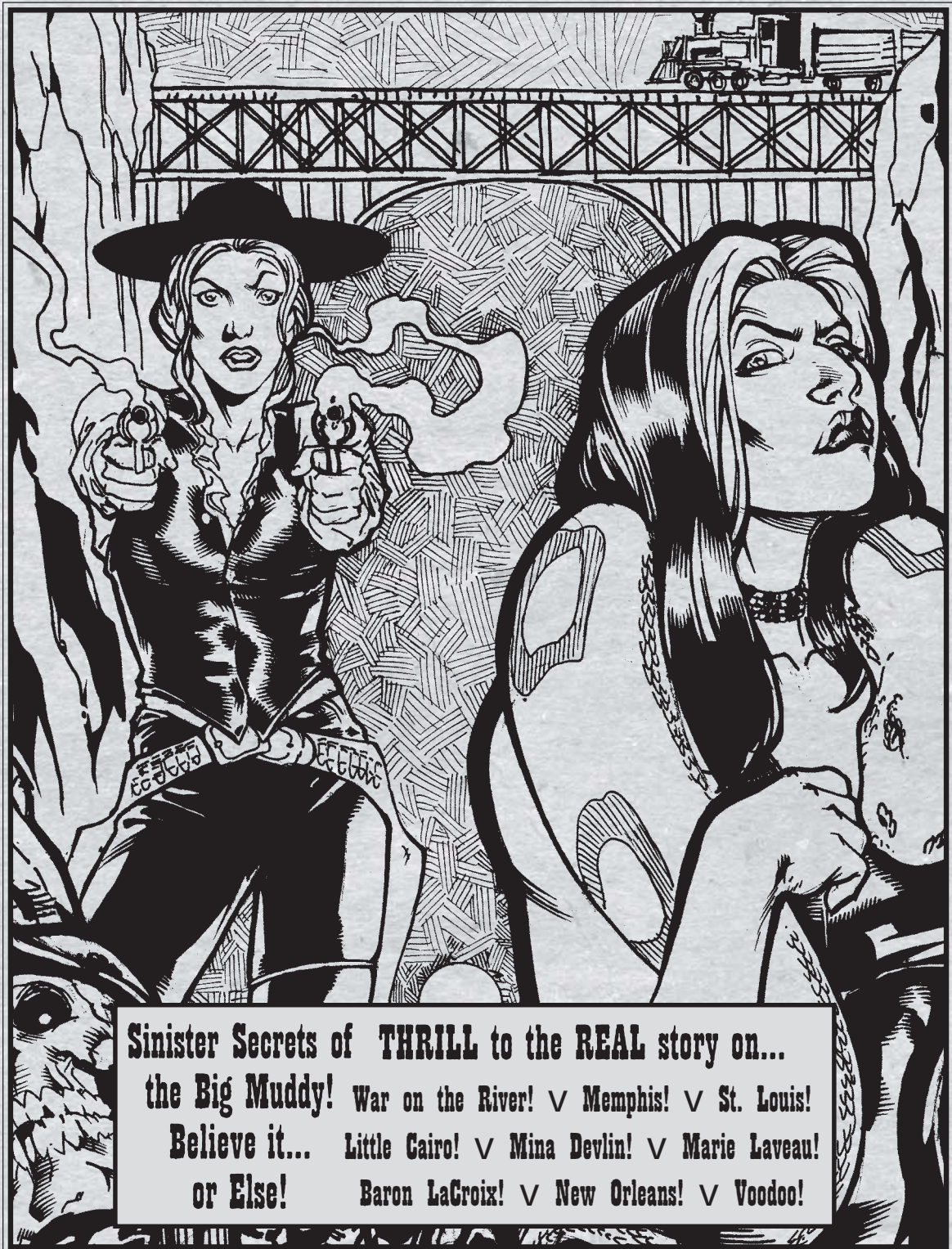
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The Tombstone Epitaph's Guide to the Mighty Mississippi



Sinister Secrets of THRILL to the REAL story on...
the Big Muddy! War on the River! ∨ Memphis! ∨ St. Louis!
Believe it... Little Cairo! ∨ Mina Devlin! ∨ Marie Laveau!
or Else! Baron LaCroix! ∨ New Orleans! ∨ Voodoo!

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Introduction by the Author

Before I begin this guidebook to the lower Mississippi River, I feel I should take a moment to introduce myself to the readership. My name is Daniel Clark, and unless you're a personal acquaintance, you've probably never heard my name prior to this introduction.

When Lacey O'Malley first approached me to write the *Epitaph Guide* to the lower Mississippi River, I asked the obvious question. It was no doubt the same question many of my readers are asking right now.

"Why me?"

"Because you're cheaper than Clemens, and we couldn't get Stanley," Lacey replied with his usual, brutal honesty.

All joking aside, I readily confess that I lack the turn of phrase and biting wit of Samuel Clemens. Likewise, I'm not the world traveler Henry Stanley is. However, I doubt the accuracy of this guide suffers for it. I am only attempting to acquaint my readers with a small portion of the globe. And let me assure you, I do know that portion well.

I've spent a good 40 of my 42 years in sight of the Mississippi. Born and raised in the town of Natchez, Mississippi, I watched the town grow as a steamboat port. The decks of those same riverboats provided me with years of gainful employment as I scraped together the funds to pay for higher education in New Orleans.

Like most other able-bodied men in the South, I've served my time in the army—but don't think for a moment that makes me a government mouthpiece! I've always been outspoken in my opinions, and free thinking isn't a quality often encouraged in the military. Although a bullet wound at Chickamauga brought my

army career to an early end, the Union sharpshooter barely defeated court-martial proceedings by my superiors in an extremely close-run race.

Now, I'm as loyal to the Confederacy as any, but in my opinion, loyalty doesn't dictate

stupidity. While it's difficult to be truly objective on a subject as volatile as the War Between the States, I do promise the readership of this guide that I intend to do all within my power to remain so. I may stray on occasion and show a bias, but fortunately, I'm too clumsy a writer to hide it in clever subtleties and innuendoes.

Anyhow, after my mercifully short tour of duty, I returned to the banks of the Mississippi and the steamboats of my earlier years. It's at the helm of those vessels that I've spent the last seven years. During that time I've met a number of interesting folks and heard some strange and unusual

stories as well.

I've always loved a good tale, and the river has more than its share. I've traded them up and down the Mississippi and collected quite a hoard of them over the years. Lacey's asked me to share a few of the choicest pearls in my collection.

Hopefully, you'll find a few to your liking!



Daniel Clark, esteemed riverboat pilot and the author of this *Epitaph Guide*.

Daniel Clark

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Chapter One: The Mighty Mississippi

From its headwaters in Lake Itasca in Minnesota, the Mississippi flows over 2,300 miles across the heartland of North America to empty into the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi River Valley alone drains over a third of the river systems in the Union and Confederacy. And if you count its main tributary, the Missouri, the Mississippi is one of the longest rivers on Earth.

What that boils down to is that the Mississippi is a very big river—the largest on the entire continent. Indians called it the "Father of Waters," and the name is certainly apt.

The Mississippi has served as a watery highway through the center of the continent for centuries. With the coming of the steamboat, it's become much more important to trade and travel.

The Scope of This Guide

I have no intention to try to cover the full length of the Mississippi. A task of that scale would daunt even Hercules. As I am a mere mortal, I have instead chosen to attempt to do justice to one central part of the river.

Starting at the headwaters of the Missouri, I intend to follow the course of the Mississippi down past St. Louis, through the middle of the Confederacy, to where it finally ends its journey in the Gulf of Mexico.

Along the way, I hope to provide not only an interesting travel guide for my readers, but also to provide a little insight and history on some of the more important points along the river. And, of course, it wouldn't be an *Epitaph Guide* if I were to neglect addressing the startling rumors and legends a traveler is likely to encounter on the river.

North and South

Astute readers may have already noticed that by beginning at the Missouri river, I am neglecting the northern portion of the river. Or to put it another way, I am not providing any information on the Union half of the Mississippi. There are a few reasons for this.

First, I am a citizen of the Confederacy. Experience tells me that an information-gathering expedition into the heart of the Union would likely lead to me being

charged and hung as a spy. Although I have traveled extensively on the river prior to the outbreak of hostilities, I fear to rely on my memory in this matter. So, rather than provide out-of-date, or just downright incorrect, information, I have chosen to omit it.

Furthermore, while the Mississippi River is a vital artery to the Confederacy, it is losing its importance in the Union. Northern riverboats can no longer ferry their goods downstream to the ocean via the river. The War Between the States has made it a dead-end voyage terminating at the Missouri border. Railroads and the Great Lakes provide the only route to the sea for Union goods now.

In the Confederacy, however, the Mississippi continues to provide the primary means to transport goods to New Orleans and out to the international market. So, while Union river towns are slowly declining in importance, Confederate ones continue to grow. In short, most of the excitement on the Mississippi is now south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Riding the River

The Mississippi River is a stretch of water nearly a mile wide, neatly dividing the Confederacy in half. If considered by itself, that fact makes the river merely an enormous obstacle to travel. However, what the Mississippi truly represents is the largest trade route on the North American continent.

Over the past century or so, folks on the river have devised a number of ingenious craft to ply the waters. It seems downright criminal to proceed any further in writing this *Guide* without providing my readers with a brief introduction to some of these vessels that sail the river.

Steamboats

The most common boats on the river are the twin-stacked paddle-wheeled steamboats, or packets as they're often called. These vessels are the workhorses of the river, serving as passenger boats, freighters, and even floating casinos. Close to 5,000 steamboats of all types now float the river.

Mississippi River steamboats are built with shallow drafts, meaning they float high in the water. Few steamboats ever have more than nine feet of their hull underwater, and the average is below five feet. This helps prevent the craft from running aground or ripping their hulls on submerged trees.

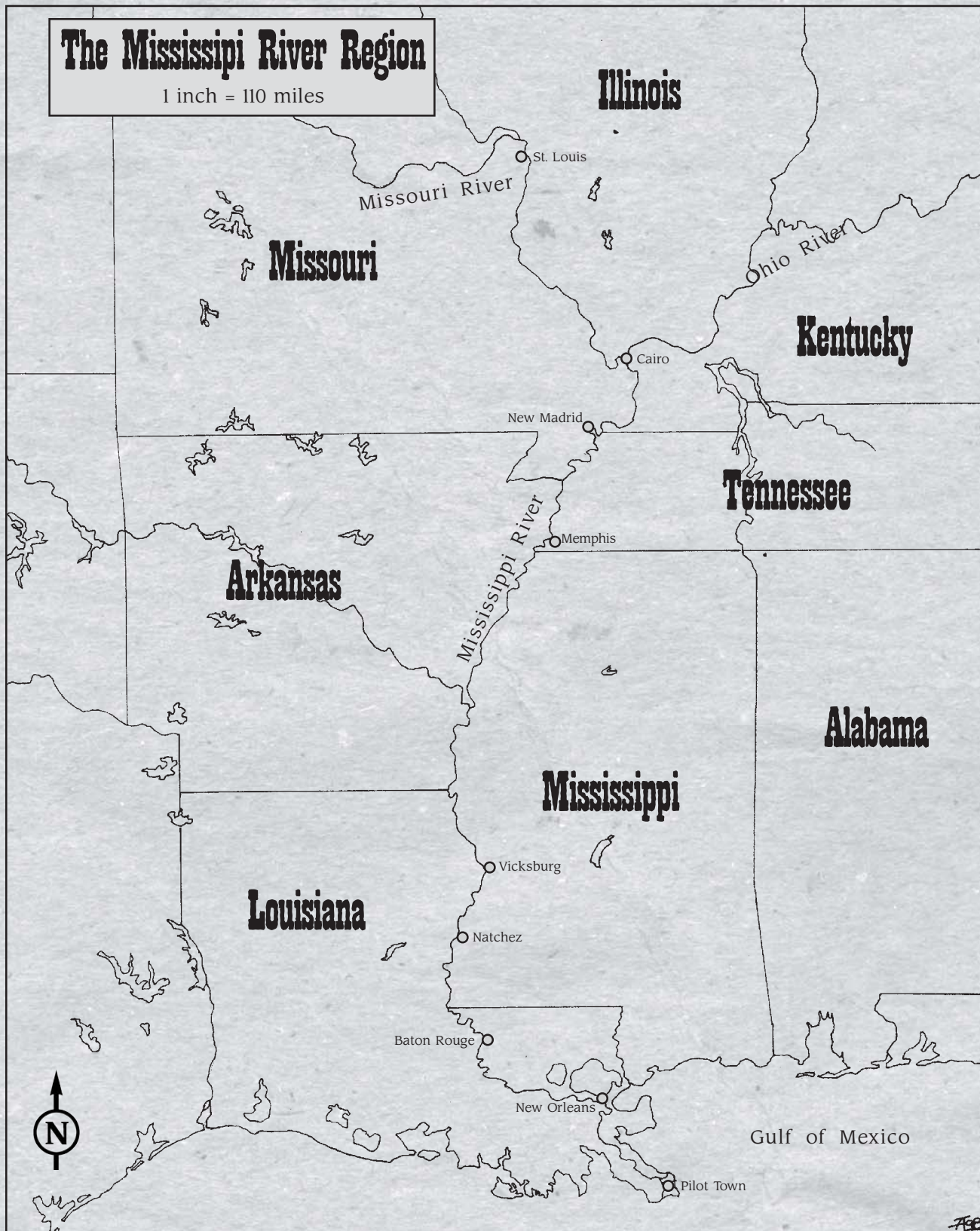


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Stern or Side

There are two distinct types of steamboats, sidewheelers and sternwheelers. Both use steam boilers to power the enormous paddlewheels that propel the boat through the water. The real difference lies in where the paddlewheel is placed.

Sidewheelers have dual paddlewheels mounted near the middle of the boat, one on each side. This distributes the weight of the boilers and paddlewheels along the hull better.

Sternwheelers have the paddlewheel mounted on the rear, or stern, of the boat. They make more effective use of the boilers' output and are usually faster and more powerful than a comparable sidewheeler. The design also allows more efficient use of deck space. However, the distribution of weight on a sternwheeler requires a reinforced hull which makes the boat more expensive.

On Board a Steamboat

Since most travelers on the Mississippi are likely to make use of a steamboat, a short tour of one should help our readers avoid the appearance of tin horns during their first voyage. It's important to remember, river steamboats, whether they're sternwheelers or sidewheelers, have pretty much the same deck layouts.

The Main Deck

Just above waterline is the main deck. The main deck is open except for the boiler room near the paddlewheels. Cargo, such as cotton bales, is stacked on the main deck. Also, passengers can book space on the deck for a fairly low price. Before doing so, be advised a deck passenger ticket only purchases deck space—no cabin, no meals, literally nothing but the privilege of riding the boat.

The main deck also houses the landing stage. This is the steamboat's portable "dock" for lack of a better term. Because the river depth varies greatly over the course of the year, few places have permanent dock facilities. The landing stage swings freely until positioned and allows the boat to stop nearly anywhere along the river.

Passenger Decks

Above the main deck is the boiler deck—which, despite its name, has no boilers on it. Toward the bow is the main saloon, which serves as a dining room and bar. The main saloon is lined with private cabins, and an open promenade surrounds the deck.

On top of the boiler deck rests the smaller hurricane deck. Here are a few more private cabins for officers and VIPs, surrounding a central area, called the Texas room.

The Pilothouse

Finally, above the hurricane deck is the glass-enclosed pilothouse. From here, the pilot has a clear view of the river—a necessity for detecting new or hidden hazards ahead. Also on this level is the steamboat's whistle. Each boat has a distinctive sound to its whistle, and often it's used it to identify itself to towns and other boats.

Entertainment Afloat

Travelers on steamboats should bring their own entertainment with them. The crew is kept quite busy just keeping the boat moving and away from hazards, and have little time to spend amusing the passengers.

The saloon is a popular place for many steamboat passengers, at least those without strong, religious compunctions against gambling or drinking. Back before the war, I saw games of cards last the entire trip from New Orleans to St. Louis. That's nearly four straight days of gambling. This is certainly an exceptional example, but with little to distract a group of card players, games tend to drag on a bit longer than in solid-ground saloons.

A word of advice: Take care when entering games of chance while traveling by steamboat. There are a few individuals of low morals who make their living plying the waters of the Mississippi, preying on unsuspecting passengers. If I had a nickel for every person who'd lost a purse to these scoundrels, I wouldn't need to write this *Guide*.

For those who find gambling or drinking objectionable, I recommend bringing a book or other form of amusement to occupy the time. While walking the promenade and enjoying the passing scenery can be entertaining, after a while one mile of river bank begins to look surprisingly similar to the last.

River Hazards

At first glance, it seems no river should be easier to navigate than the wide Mississippi. Let me assure you, nothing could be farther from the truth. Beneath its brown waters hide untold dangers for the riverboat pilots.

To begin with, the Mississippi, while broad and long, is very shallow. The difference of a few feet of water during a dry season often



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Train ferries are one way the various railroads manage to cross the rivers that divide up the countryside.

make a channel impassable. Sandbars lie just below the surface of the water, marked only by a slight disturbance on river's top. A pilot without the knowledge and skills to read the signs of the river isn't likely to be a pilot too long.

If you count the length of its primary tributary, the Missouri, the Mississippi is the longest river in the world. It's also the crookedest. At one place along its course, the river flows nearly 1,300 miles to cover a mere 600 miles as the crow flies. Each flood changes this course as well. New cutoffs in the river appear, and old ones disappear. Literally overnight, a town that was a river port may find itself landlocked.

The Mississippi is constantly pulling soil from its banks. Often, the river undermines trees on the banks, which break free and fall. Some pilots say the falling of trees at times becomes so constant it sounds like faraway artillery. These submerged trees create new snags to threaten river craft. Once again, the only thing that protects the boat's crew, passengers, and cargo is the skill of the pilot.

Wrecks of other vessels complicate navigation as well. These not only pose a

threat in and of themselves, but they may also lead to the development of new sandbars as silt piles up against them.

All things considered, it's little wonder riverboat pilots are as valued as they are. While a riverboat has a captain, short of a few commands when approaching or leaving shore, it's the pilot who actually runs the boat.

The Great River Race

With all the steamboats plying the river, it was only a matter of time before a couple of boat captains had to prove who was the fastest. That time came in 1870. The two men who butted heads were John Cannon, captain of the *Robert E. Lee*, and Thomas Leathers, captain of the *Natchez*. Both men were Kentuckians, and oddly mirroring our current diplomatic situation, Leathers is a staunch Confederate, while Cannon's sympathies are rumored to lie with the Union, despite the name his boat bears.

The race was heavily promoted in the papers, and even folks up North had heard of it by the time the boats steamed out of New Orleans.

The two sidewheelers were nearly evenly matched, with boilers and engines of equal

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size. The fact that the last leg of the race would be played out under the guns of Union artillery made it even more spectacular to the public. It was proclaimed to be the maritime event of the century.

The race began on June 30, 1870. The boats left the Crescent City for St. Louis nearly 1,200 miles away. In all honesty, it's hard for me to imagine a more unexciting event to observe than a steamboat race—unless it's that peculiar Scottish game, golf. Regardless of my personal opinion, the banks of the river were thronged with people waiting to watch one steamboat pass and then the other a few minutes later. The *Lee* got off to an early lead and increased it steadily to finish nearly four hours ahead of the *Natchez*.

Of course, once the race was finished it was time for excuses. Hoping to play on nationalism, Leathers claimed he had suffered heavy fire from the Union guns once he'd passed the mouth of the Ohio, while Cannon had continued unmolested. Most folks saw through that claim pretty quickly, as Leather's vessel was already behind by over almost two hours by the time he reached the Ohio.

In the end, the *Robert E. Lee* was named the fastest steamboat on the river, making the trip in three days, 18 hours, and 14 minutes. To this day the record remains unbroken, although I credit that as much to the fact that few sensible boats risk the river above the mouth of the Ohio as to the speed of the *Lee*.

Showboats

Using steamboats and barges as floating theaters and circuses was taking root back in the 1850s, but the onset of the war put a temporary halt to the practice. Now, with the war ground nearly to a halt, a few of the floating palaces are once again rolling on the Mississippi. The largest of these is the *Floating Circus Palace*, out of New Orleans.

The *Floating Circus Palace* was a showboat back before the war, converted from a barge and pushed from city to city on the Mississippi by a steamboat. The Confederacy confiscated the boat early in the war and used it as a hospital. As the fighting stalled, the government no longer required the *Palace*, and the boat was sold at public auction.

The *Palace* is enormous, twice the size of any land-built theater in the region. It seats an audience of over 3,400 and offers a variety of entertainments. The acts run from dancing horses to wire-walking to dramatic

performances. Also on board the vessel is a pipe organ, a twelve-piece band, and the "Museum of Curiosities and Wonders." All of this and more is available for the paltry sum of 50¢, or \$3 for private box seats.

With the waters of the lower river fairly safe from the dangers of Union raiders, the showboat is back in business. Its route runs from New Orleans to lower Tennessee, including some of the larger tributaries. It makes a single round trip each year during the summer months. Needless to say, the boat's arrival in any river town is cause for excitement.

Riding on the River

Getting around on the Mississippi is relatively easy these days. Just about every town on the river has a cleared bank for boats to stop for passengers or freight. There are scheduled steamboat runs from New Orleans all the way to the upper part of Tennessee now that the river is secured.

To make sure you get a fair price on a river ticket, here's a sampling of going rates. These can vary but should be fairly accurate for most of the river.

River Travel Costs

Accommodations	Fare
Steamboat Deck	1¢ a mile
Steamboat Cabin	5¢ a mile
Shore-to-shore Ferry	1¢ a person/2¢ a horse

Charters

There may be times when the scheduled steamboat times or destinations just don't fit with your needs. Never fear, the river has no shortage of vessels—and even companies—that make their living hiring out for special charters. These charters aren't cheap by any means, but the cost a lot less than buying a boat outright.

Charters for any type of riverboat usually run about 1% of the vessel's value per day, plus fuel costs. For example, a flatboat costs \$1.25 a day to charter, while a steamfloat will run \$17.50, plus the cost of any fuel used. A riverboat with an experienced crew can run twice as much as this, but there are always less-reliable folks willing to work for less as well.

One last thing. Those prices are rules of thumb only. Depending on the charter, prices may run quite a bit higher. Also, military vessels like ironclads or mud boats are seldom, if ever, available for charter work.



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Chapter Two: Troubled Waters

The Mississippi has always been the dividing line between "Out West" and "Back East." The Father of Waters is a mile-wide path right through the heart of both the Union and the Confederacy.

Even though their armies might be just a tad bit tuckered right now, the governments are still going for each other's throats. Neither North or South is fond of the idea of a flotilla of steam-powered ironclads sneaking into its countryside, so the border along this part of the Mississippi is heavily guarded.

The War on the River

The Mississippi divides the Union and Confederacy for hundreds of miles. The mile-wide strip of no man's land stretches the length of the border between Missouri and Illinois. Granted, north of the Missouri river the Confederates pretty much lay low, but once you pass the mouth of that river, things get a little hot.

The river is closely guarded in this region, and sensible captains stay a good piece up- or downriver from it. Both nations have laid underwater mines in the area to "discourage" unauthorized border crossings. Each also has a sizeable force assigned to guarding the waterway.

The Union relies primarily on massive shore batteries placed at regular intervals to protect its bank of the Mississippi. There are vapor cannons along the Illinois border that rival any found on forts Back East. These monsters are easily capable of lobbing a shell the size of an anvil to the far shore of the river.

The 10 Boats

The Confederate forces are a little more limited in the resource department than their Northern opponents. Instead of stationary garrisons, the Confederate Navy has a small flotilla based in St. Louis, that is responsible for defending the Missouri side of the river. This pocket-sized fleet is commanded by Commodore Gustavas Alexander, a former riverboat pilot himself.

His force is equipped with 10 armored sidewheelers, which I understand are quite

similar to those used in the Great Maze. The boats pack enough armament to square off against all but a full ironclad warship—which can't negotiate the underwater minefields of the northern Mississippi. However, the vessels' greatest asset is their maneuverability, which allows them to weave between sandbars, sunken trees, underwater mines, and Union cannon fire.

Commodore Alexander has taken to calling his flotilla "the 10 Boats" after a fleet of 10 armed boats sent from New Orleans in 1788 to clear out pirates on the Mississippi. The original squadron wiped the river clean in less than a year, and the good Commodore hopes his vessels prove as successful.

Waterborne Assaults

In spite of all the reasons to stay on the proper side of the river, occasionally some military genius decides to stage a raid or if he's feeling cocky, an "invasion" on the other bank.

The Union has tried a few times in the past decade to retake St. Louis. The enormous guns on the opposite bank allowed the Yankees to force a foothold into the city. The Rebs simply don't have the firepower in Missouri to compete with those enormous vapor cannons. Each time the Union has used this tactic, its troops, combined with the devastating artillery, have been able to force the defenders back from the beachhead.

However, a foothold in Missouri is about as far as they ever get. The Confederate Army pulls back out of range of the artillery on the other shore and digs in. Believe me, from what I've seen, house-to-house fighting in the city more than favors the defender. The Rebel army then uses its smaller, but no less deadly, guns to pound the Union troopers into the muddy banks of the river until somebody wises up and orders a retreat.

The Confederates take a less blatant approach to their incursions. Occasionally, a small force of cavalry raiders are ferried across to Illinois. These troopers wreak havoc on supply trains and communication lines for about a week or so and then try to make it back across to the CAS. While these raids are an inconvenience to the Union garrisons, they're really just more of an annoyance than anything else.

It's been years since any real military advances have been made in this region by either side. Soldiers on both sides spend most of their time hunkered down, staring at the other shore. Like Back East, the war along the Mississippi has wound down to a game of waiting and watching.



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City under siege: A group of beleaguered Confederates prepare to beat back an amphibious Union assault on St. Louis.

State of Misery



83

Back in 1820, Missouri was admitted into the United States. Even back then, folks weren't sure how they stood on the whole issue of owning another human being, but politics Back East decided for them. To offset the admittance of Maine as a free state, Missouri was named a slave state.

While the average citizen of the state was indifferent or even opposed to the practice, the leadership of Missouri was decidedly pro-slavery. Abolitionists and their opponents both saw the state's status as a point of contention. Tempers seemed to be constantly flaring over the slavery issue, and blood was shed many times in Missouri, long before the Confederacy seceded from the Union.

When hostilities broke out in 1861, Union forces quickly seized control of the state. Although a few Confederate diehards continued to fight against the North, the general populace, long tired of fighting, submitted to Union leadership peacefully.

That is, until General John Schofield took charge.

Schofield's Follies

Schofield was placed in charge of the Union forces occupying Missouri. Schofield, a talented mathematician and West Point instructor, was an unfortunate selection for a military governor. He ran roughshod over the rights and liberties of the citizens of Missouri.

He also seemed powerless against the large bands of raiders victimizing the civilians. Eventually, the situation in Missouri degenerated to the point where its citizens appealed directly to Washington. The President himself directly asked Schofield to alter his course of action and deal fairly with the populace.

It was about this time that folks found out Schofield was supporting the raiders with Union materials and supplies. General John Pope was sent across the Mississippi to seize Schofield and the marauders, but both eluded him.

Back to the Fold

By this time, the majority of Missouri decided they'd had enough of Union leadership.

When General Sterling Price entered the state in the summer of 1864, he found

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A bounty hunter, one of many hot on the trail of General John Schofield

literally thousands of able and armed volunteers ready to help throw the Yankees back across the river.

The renegade General Schofield continues to plague northern Missouri to this day, in spite of rewards offered by both governments for his capture. Price had no more luck running down Schofield than Pope, but at least they weren't wearing the same color of uniform. Since 1864, Missouri has remained a Confederate state—for the most part.

Soon after recapturing the state, the Confederate strategists realized the Missouri river made a much more defensible boundary than some imaginary line on a map. A series of forts were built along the river, and now only routine patrols cross into the northern part of the state. In the meantime, a combination of Schofield's marauders and Union raiding parties have turned the area north of the Missouri River into a no man's land. Travelers there are advised to know how to sing both "Dixie" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Although the South still draws the Missouri state line where it always was, nowadays the Confederacy really ends on the north bank of the Missouri.

The KC & LR

Missouri juts up from the rest of the Confederacy like an overgrown knot on a log. As a result, it cuts right across the most direct rail routes from the eastern industrial centers to the Great Maze. Its position forces the three northernmost rail barons (Union Blue, Wasatch, and Iron Dragon) to take a more northern route west.

However, its isolated position also means no Southern rail baron is likely to build a line through it either. That really doesn't matter much, since a rather profitable railroad was already in service in Missouri and the rest of the Mississippi valley long before the race for the Great Maze was even a twinkle in Jeff Davis' eye.

Richard Barney

The KC & LR was founded in 1869 by Richard Barney under the premise of providing an alternate route of transport to the Mississippi. While it is true hostile Union ironclads were still a threat to shipping on the river at that time, the real reason for the railroad was probably just a little less honorable.

Barney had been a successful merchant in St. Louis in the years before the outbreak of the war, but once the borders closed and trade with the North virtually ceased, his profits began to sink like a stone. The demand for Northern industrial goods was just as high as ever in the South, but the problem was how to get the product across the border. Barney realized he'd have to find another, more creative way to maintain his income.

Smugglers were able to earn a large return on their illegal cargoes, but the risk was simply too great to stake much capital on the practice. Trade restrictions were more relaxed along the border with the Disputed Territories, but Union forces made travel down the Missouri River almost as risky as running the North-South border.

Barney decided to take a gamble and put the rest of his assets into an overland route linking St. Louis with Kansas City, the largest Southern city on the disputed border. There he was able to conduct business with Northern merchants much more freely.

The "gray market" trade paid off, and in just a couple of years, the Kansas City Railroad grew to become the Kansas City & Little Rock. By 1875, the railroad reached from Kansas City all the way to New Orleans.



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The Rise of the Rail Barons

The rise of the rail barons has actually aided the KC & LR. All three Southern rail barons had to petition Barney for right-of-way across KC & LR routes, and he negotiated lucrative settlements with each.

Additionally, the KC & LR freely transfers cargo to the trains of the rail barons and vice-versa. Now, thanks to the extensive rail lines of Bayou Vermillion, Black River, and Dixie Rails, the KC & LR has access to even more of the Confederacy than before.

Currently, the KC & LR is the main competition for steamboats shipping on the Mississippi. Even though the conditions on the river continue to stabilize and become more favorable for traffic, many businesses have become accustomed to trading with the railroad. It may take years for the steamboats to recover the lost business—if they ever do.

The James Gang



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No discussion of Missouri would be complete without at least a mention of the James boys. Some folks in these parts seem to look at the James gang as a daring group of patriots taking the fight to the Yankees. Others are of the opinion they're nothing but a bunch of bandits hiding behind the Confederate flag.

The James Gang conducts its raids in Kansas, which is Disputed Territory—not Union. I would think they would turn their sights more to the north if they were as patriotic as some believe.

Of more concern is the fact the gang never menaces trains north or east of Kansas City—which is especially odd when one considers Union Blue actually cuts the corner of the northwestern Missouri border. Certainly, Schofield's marauders and Union troops in that area make it a risky proposition, but no more so than it already is in Kansas.

Rumors are beginning to surface that Richard Barney is paying "protection" money to the James boys. This would explain the geographic blind spot in the gang's raids. By avoiding trains north and east of Kansas City, Barney's gray-market trading is not affected. I imagine a businessman would find such an arrangement to be a sound investment, especially if his competitors further west were to suffer as well.

While I have no hard information to back up this assertion, it certainly seems to fit with circumstantial evidence.

St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis once held great promise of growth and development. It was the gateway to the frontier, serving as the last bastion of civilization for settlers heading for the open territory of the West. It was also an important river port, located near the mouth of the Missouri and at the midpoint of the long voyage along the Mississippi.

Yes sir, St. Louis used to have a very bright future indeed. During the past few years, the city has seen the slow death of its dreams at the hands of the long War Between the States. But before we get too far into the St. Louis of today, let me take a moment to expound on the history of this once dynamic community.

Early Turmoil

Back in 1763, a French fur trader named Pierre Liguist up from New Orleans founded a small trading post at the mouth of the Missouri. The next year, the village of St. Louis was founded just a stone's throw south of the trading post.

That very same year, the French lost the Seven Years War to the English and had to turn over all their holdings in Canada and west of the Appalachian Mountains to the British. Well, France wasn't too happy about giving the majority of the New World to the English, so they signed a secret agreement which gave Spain all lands west of the Mississippi. French rule of St. Louis lasted all of about half a year. The majority of the inhabitants remained French, though—either down from Canada or up from New Orleans.

The British made an effort to seize the city from the Spanish during the American Revolution. A force of 1,200 Canadian traders and Indians moved on St. Louis in 1780, but they were frightened off by the town's defenders—a total of 50 soldiers and 280 townspeople!

The Louisiana Purchase

Thanks to the river trade, St. Louis slowly grew into a genuine city. Log cabins were replaced with more-permanent stone houses and no longer did merchants deal only in furs. By the turn of the century, St. Louis had a population of over 1,000.

In 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte retook control of region from Spain. However, he soon found managing the New World colony more trouble than it was worth. The little military



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People have been living and trading in St. Louis since the middle 1700s!

mastermind was also running a little short on funds for his own war in Europe. So the very next year he sold the entire Mississippi valley to the young United States of America for a total of only \$15 million.

Almost before the citizens of St. Louis knew it, their city changed nationalities twice. On March 9, 1804, the Spanish flag was lowered and replaced by the French one. Just over 24 hours later, the French flag was in turn lowered to be replaced by that of the USA.

Westward Expansion

Beginning with the Lewis and Clark expedition that very year, St. Louis became the central point of departure for trips into the western frontier. The fur trade continued to boom and fill the coffers of St. Louis merchants. A flood of immigrants poured into the city from the east.

By 1841, St. Louis was second only to New Orleans in the amount of river traffic into the town. Merchants began turning their attention from the fur trade to supplying pioneers headed west, and a small manufacturing industry took root.

The Ravages of War

The future was wide open for the city, right up to 1861. Union and secessionist troops occupied the city side-by-side until May of that year. Then 10,000 Union troops rounded up the much smaller Confederate garrison stationed at Camp Jackson just outside of the city. The North held control of the city, using it as a supply base, up until General Price chased them north of the Missouri in 1864.

Getting the Yankees out of St. Louis did nothing to help the merchants of the town. If anything, it made conditions worse. While under Union control, the city had been able to maintain trade with the prosperous northeastern US. Once under Confederate control, that freedom was lost. In fact, Union control of the eastern bank of the Mississippi made even steamboat trade with the South a risky proposition.

A Garrison Town

Since General Price secured control of Missouri for the Confederacy, St. Louis has served as the headquarters of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Department under the command of General Edmund Kirby-Smith. A large contingent of troops is permanently stationed in St. Louis, along with the riverine flotilla assigned to guard the northern Mississippi. At times, it seems like the gray-clad soldiers garrisoned there outnumber the St. Louis civilian population.

Just across the river in the burg of East St. Louis, the Union maintains a sizable force as well. About once a week, the bluecoats lob a few rounds of artillery toward the city, just so the Confederates don't forget about them.

Other than that, things stay pretty peaceable most of the time. Having almost a mile of open water to cross every time some officer wants to start a ruckus tends to put a damper on aggressive tendencies.

Fortress on the River

The buildings around St. Louis' docks are little more than small piles of rubble. Years of shelling has that effect on architecture. The Confederate Army likes it that way. In fact, rowdy soldiers often get assigned "rock detail" instead of other menial tasks. Rock detail entails manually clearing the first 100 yards or so back from the riverfront of any sort of large debris.

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The open area serves as a killing ground that an attacking force must cross immediately upon landing. It also reduces the chance that fires are started by the occasional artillery shell that lands on the west bank of the river. Finally, the soldiers use the debris to build defensive positions further back in the city.

The warehouses on the first few blocks west of the open ground are heavily reinforced and connected by tunnels and catwalks. Word among the few civilian workers still in that part of the city is a number of the buildings are also wired with explosives. I pity any Union troops that make it into that slaughterhouse.

The Confederate artillery is placed about a half mile back from the river. A friend of mine stationed in the city tells me many of the guns aren't even sighted at the river. Instead, they're trained on the St. Louis riverbank.

You see, the Confederates have absolutely no intention of trying to stop the Yankees from landing on the western shore of the river. They just plan to make the bluebellies regret it once they do!

Life in St. Louis

As you may have guessed, St. Louis is no longer a busy city of merchants, riverboats, and westward-bound pioneers. Only a few legitimate businesses and stores remain. Most establishments cater to the wants and desires of the military—both on and off duty.

Nearest the barracks, the town is overrun by saloons, cheap hotels, brothels, and pawn shops. Unlike in many boomtowns, however, this red light district is remarkably well-behaved. Perhaps the fact that the city is under martial law has something to do with that. The St. Louis lawmen do little more than maintain the local jail these days.

Smithies and stables provide service to the cavalry units responsible for patrolling the region. A few former general stores have secured commissary privileges from the garrison. On the western edge of the city, a small manufacturing base has sprung up. The new factories primarily produce weapons and munitions for the troops and flotilla.

While a few daring riverboats ferry in supplies and raw materials, the Mississippi in this region is almost useless for legitimate trade. Instead, the bulk of St. Louis' supplies are brought in by Richard Barney's KC & LR railroad. Barney's contract with the Confederate government is nearly exclusive as long as he can maintain the flow of goods.

The Mound City

The area around the city is so peppered with ancient earthen mounds that settlers used to call St. Louis "the mound city." You'll notice I said, "used to call it." Over the years, folks have dug up or torn down most of the mounds on the western side of the river. That's a real shame, because these mounds were constructed hundreds of years ago.

The few researchers looking into the history of the area aren't quite sure who built the mounds. With almost all of them gone now, it's unlikely they'll find out anytime soon either.

Smugglers

You'll notice I said earlier the river was nearly useless to "legitimate" trade. There's still quite a lucrative opportunity for those river rats unscrupulous enough to deal with the enemy—whether he be Johnny Reb or Billy Yank.

Northern smugglers carrying industrial goods can turn quite a profit selling them in the Confederacy. And Southern cotton still finds a ready market up North. The trick is to make it across the watery border with their cargo—and their skins—intact.



Smuggling is a popular and lucrative career—if you've got the guts for it.

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The USA and CSA maintain a bit of a double standard as far as smuggling goes. Get caught smuggling *from* the enemy, and you're welcomed as a hero. Get caught smuggling *to* the enemy, and your boat ends up at the bottom of the river.

The smugglers have gotten pretty clever about stealing past the border forts in the last 10 years or so. Some river smugglers camouflage their vessels against the wooded shorelines during the day and make a dash across the mile or so of open water well after dark.

This appears to be a fairly successful tactic, more so for trips from North to South than the other way around. While the Confederates rely on patrol craft for much of their defense this far north, the Union side of the river bristles with many shore batteries.

A few of the more adventurous (and well-funded) smugglers have even tried using submersibles to run the border. However, the shallow and unpredictable nature of the river makes this more dangerous than profitable. Submersibles just can't carry enough cargo to make the risk worthwhile.

The Burning Man

Towns up and down the Mississippi River have more than their share of ghost stories. To hear the local raconteurs tell it, every old, creepy house in the region is haunted, every dark patch of woods was the scene of a horrible murder, and every remote cave has a monster dwelling within.

St. Louis is no exception. One of the more popular stories circulating in town is that of the Burning Man. According to the legend, a group of riverboat men wandering the streets drunk and surly came upon a lonely bum in an alleyway. The man had drank himself almost unconscious by the time the rowdies found him.

Seeing an easy target for robbery, the men searched his pockets for money. When they found none, they became angry and began to beat the poor man. During the course of the beating, the drunk was knocked into a street lamp. The man had drank so much, the alcohol on his breath caught fire, and he burned up from the inside out.

Now, many regulars claim to have seen the ghost of the drunk, who they call the Burning Man, searching for his murderers. The local lawmen would likely be interested in interviewing the "ghost" because recently a number of burned bodies have turned up in the rubble-filled alleys of the city.

Points of Interest

A. Arsenal

Down near the riverfront is a thick-walled, stout circular building behind a high brick wall. This is the largest arsenal for the Confederate military on the Mississippi. In fact, only the ones in Richmond, Atlanta, and Augusta are larger.

Stern-faced Confederate soldiers guard the gate to the building at all hours, and others patrol inside. The arsenal has not been opened for tours for nearly five years—a fact that has spawned all sorts of rumors.

One of the more fanciful tales is that the building isn't an arsenal at all, but really a prison for some terrible creature the government captured in the swamps. Proponents of this particular theory base their assumption on the surreptitious arrival of heavily guarded covered wagons and unexplained howls from time to time.

Personally, I believe it to be exactly what the government claims: a storehouse for weapons of war. There are plenty of places that make a whole lot more sense for some sort of animal pen than the middle of St. Louis!

B. Dr. Coleman's Clinic

Few communities are lucky to have as talented a physician as Dr. Peter Coleman. Dr. Coleman is a man of rare skill, able to treat a case of the common cold side by side with a shrapnel wound from a Union artillery shell. If you find yourself in need of medical attention while in the city, his clinic is the best place.

Dr. Coleman learned his trade Back East and spent several years as a regimental surgeon in the Confederate Army. According to folks in the know, he was even with General Lee at Gettysburg. However, the good doctor remains silent on his past. Whatever his prior experience, he provides some of the best medical care available, not only in St. Louis, but along the entire Mississippi River valley.

His skills have reached nearly legendary status among the residents of the city. Dr. Coleman is said to have a "sixth sense" about a person's ailment. His advocates even claim he's appeared on the doorstep of a deathly ill patient just in time to stave off the Grim Reaper!

Regardless of what you think about that, Dr. Coleman is a top-notch sawbones—and that's a fact.



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C. Freemantle Hotel

If you're in need of a place to rest your head while visiting St. Louis, you could do a lot worse than the Freemantle Hotel. While not the largest hotel in the city, it is neatly kept and well furnished. The establishment provides a refuge from the rigors of the battered, border city. The owner, Mary Freemantle, is not only a gracious host, but prepares dinner and lunch for her guests, all included in the \$1.25 a night rate.

D. Lemp Brewery

There is one industry that's still going strong in St. Louis in spite of the war—or some might claim because of it—and that's brewing. The city drew a large number of German and other European immigrants back in the 1840s and 1850s, and many of these came from families with centuries of brewing experience back in the Old Country. St. Louis' central location on the great river made it ideal as a brewing capital.

The largest and most notable brewery in the city is the Lemp family brewery. Founded in the early 1850s, Lemp beers are famous throughout the Midwest, both Union and Confederate.

The Lemps have taken advantage of a little-known fact of St. Louis geography in the construction of their main brewery. Underneath the city is a vast networks of caves, many of which are to this day unexplored. The Lemp brewery conducts much of its production in the cool temperatures of a portion of this network.

Lately, however, brewery workers have begun to disappear from the underground areas. No evidence has been found to provide clues for the local authorities. From all appearances, the missing workers have simply vanished into thin air!

As one might expect, the Lemps are very interested in finding a solution to their dilemma. The company has offered a reward of \$1,000 to anyone who can solve their problem. To date, a number of bounty hunters have tried to collect the money, but none have been successful. In fact, a number of them have vanished themselves!

E. Robertson's Sundries

Fortunately, a local amateur archaeologist, Wade Robertson, had the good sense to keep a number of artifacts found when the railroad tore down the last big mound a few

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years ago. Robertson runs a small general store on the western side of town, and he's set up a display of some of the more exotic items and weapons he recovered. Folks are welcome to view the items during normal business hours for a mere 10¢.

F. The St. Louis Railyard

To ensure he's able to meet the government's needs, Richard Barney has constructed a large depot for the KC & LR on the western side of the city. However, the size of the yard is much greater than needed to support the current populace of the city, including the Confederate garrison. The railroad owner believes St. Louis will again become a pivotal location when the Civil War finally winds down. If his predictions are true, Barney is well-situated to direct the course of the reborn trade center.

However, someone seems to take issue with his plans. There are reports that night watchmen have the disturbing tendency to vanish from the St. Louis railyard. No one has an explanation for the disappearances, but a number of theories abound.

Some folks claim Union infiltrators are responsible, while others point the finger at the steamboat companies. There are even a few hinting that Pinkerton agents from up North are punishing the KC & LR for its reported ties to the James Gang. And, of course, there are a number of people who insist the railyard is haunted.

Any of these are possible, I suppose—although, in all honesty, I doubt the Pinkertons are involved. It's not really their style. As to the claims of ghosts, who knows? I've seen stranger things myself.

G. The Snake's Den

This saloon is on St. Louis' east side, down among the warehouses. It's exactly the type of dive a traveler would expect to find amid the squalor of a dockyard. However, as I mentioned earlier, there really isn't a dockyard left in St. Louis. The Union bombardment has seen to that.

Now the few riverboatmen left in the city congregate in this rundown watering hole and swap stories about "the good old days." Of course, most of the riverboatmen still in St. Louis are pursuing extralegal activities, so a visit to the saloon can be hazardous to your health! But if you're looking for a boat or pilot in the northern edge of the Confederate Mississippi, this is definitely the place to start.

The *Charon*

There's one name that always comes up when someone goes looking for a vessel in the St. Louis area: the *Charon*. The boat is a small, sternwheeler that looks held together with bailing twine and spit.

It's owned and piloted by Levi Ross, a man of questionable ethics. Ross is rumored to be a smuggler as well as a boatman for hire. From what I've heard about the man's skill, he knows the river hazards well enough, and he's got the Devil's own luck, that's for sure. To hear local folks tell it, Ross has sailed the *Charon* under the guns of a squadron of Union ironclads upriver and lived to tell the tale!

If you're looking for a pilot in the St. Louis area, odds are you could do worse. But be ready to part with your wallet. Ross and the *Charon* don't come cheap!

H. Stovington's Warehouse

Located a few blocks north of the waterfront ruins, this used to be a first-class storage building. Only the most expensive cargoes were stored here. No one else could afford its exorbitant fees.

Now, the Confederate government has taken over the warehouse. The place is the most heavily guarded building in the entire city. I don't know what they're doing inside the blacked-out windows, and it's not from lack of trying. No matter what approach I tried, I've been unable to get past the front doors of this place.

As usual, there's no shortage of rumors as to what the military is doing behind those closed doors. Some folks claim it's an interrogation center for Union prisoners, and others say it's a secret weapons lab. I'm more inclined to believe the latter, because while I've never seen Union prisoners in that area, I have seen a couple of naval officers.

Anyone traveling in this area is advised to watch his step. The military tends to bring potential "spies" in for extensive questioning. And, trust me on this, it isn't pleasant. I'm speaking from experience.

Not with a Bang...

St. Louis is a dying city. Even though the Union has made several unsuccessful attempts to retake St. Louis, it's not the ravages of war that spell the end of the once proud community.

Rather, St. Louis has lost its reason to exist.

Where it was once a bustling port on a busy waterway, St. Louis is now merely the



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The mysterious mounds: A Confederate raiding party on the move through the earthen "city" of Cahokia.

last stop on the river for Confederate steamboats. Northern merchants no longer funnel their goods down the river. Settlers headed west now choose routes either further to the north or south, depending on their allegiances.

Smuggling will likely continue along the upper Mississippi until the two warring governments find a way to sort out their differences and deal with each other like civilized folk. A irregular flow of black-market goods won't maintain St. Louis as a trade city, though. Already, many merchants are packing up and moving to more profitable territories.

There are a few diehards that plan on trying to weather the current storm. Foremost among them is Richard Barney, who insists the war can't last forever. And when it ends, he claims, those who have persevered will find enormous opportunities when St. Louis becomes the gateway to the Confederacy on the Mississippi.

High hopes like these keep a few businesses in the city—for now. Still, every week more buildings are emptied as their owners head for greener pastures. Optimistic speeches and opportunistic plans don't put bread on the family table after all.

Cahokia

Back before the war, I recall there was a veritable city of the earthen mounds across the river from St. Louis and a little to the south. Most folks just referred to them by the name of a town over there: Cahokia.

I only saw the place once. The city is probably two to three miles across and nearly as long, but since the area was forested, it was hard to guess to its exact size. Near the center of the city was a mound that rose nearly 100 feet into the air. I'm told it was called Monk's Mound, but I have no idea why.

Since the outbreak of hostilities, I've not been able to get back to Cahokia. However, a young cavalryman who'd been on a couple of cross-river raids assured me the mounds are pretty much intact. Union forces have taken up a position to the north of the ruins, so the area is a favorite landing point for the raiders.

He also said the little village of the same name was deserted. Beyond that, he had few details of the area. It seems the horses get skittish around the mounds, so the troopers tend to move quickly through the ruins.



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Little Egypt



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Between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers there's an area in southern Illinois sometimes referred to as Little Egypt.

Granted, Illinois is a Union state, and this guide is supposed to focus on the

Confederate territory, but there's story or two floating across the river from up North that I know you *Epitaph* readers would hate to miss out on.

Nobody's quite sure how this area got its rather odd name, but most folks seem to think the same fellow who founded the town of Cairo had something to do with it. That seems likely, especially since there's a town called Karnak nearby as well. Unlike the northern part of Illinois, Little Egypt is a hilly region and well forested.

Moundbuilders

Like much of the lower Mississippi River valley, Little Egypt is dotted with man-made mounds of earth. Although they're not quite as impressive as the Pyramids, most of the mounds in this region seem to serve the same purpose

as their northern African counterparts.

Archaeologists who have studied them believe the majority of the earthworks in this region serve as tombs, probably for ancient Indian peoples.

The mounds in the area are slowly being cleared. A few are being studied, but most are removed either for building or simply because the mounds are an easy supply of dirt for the sandbags used to shore up Cairo's levies. (More on that in a moment.) It's unfortunate that a valuable source of historical data is being lost to such ham-handed excavation, but a more disturbing trend has surfaced.

Someone, or something, seems to have taken it upon itself to replace the mounds that have been destroyed. Almost overnight, fresh mounds are springing up in the hills of southern Illinois. And worse yet, whoever is responsible has paid careful attention to historical accuracy. A body has been found in every such mound examined. The corpses in the mounds share one thing in common: each was recently killed—apparently by suffocating in the dirt!

Cairo, Illinois

Down at the very tip of southern Illinois is a spit of land between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers so narrow that a fellow could probably jump across it with a running start. At the very tip of this peninsula is the town of Cairo.

Looking at a map, Cairo is the perfect location for a city, right at the confluence of two major rivers. In truth, it is a good site for river trade—or at least it was before the Civil War turned both rivers into armed borders. Now it is—or rather, was—a Union shipyard and an important link in the Union river defenses guarding both the Mississippi and Ohio.

The Island of Cairo

Being sandwiched between two of the largest rivers on the continent, Cairo is particularly susceptible to flooding. The city's levees wrap completely around it, and with good reason. When either of the two mighty rivers floods, Cairo is often completely surrounded by the raging waters.

Personally, the thought of being trapped out in the middle of a flood like that bothers me more than a little, and I've worked or sailed on riverboats for more than a quarter century. Whether it's because the site was too strategic to give up or the citizens of Cairo were just plain stubborn, I don't know. Whatever the reason, no one on the peninsula had any interest in leaving—until recently.



The Devil's handiwork: Cairo burns at Nathan Bedford Forrest's hand.

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Forrest Fires

In November of last year, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest led a raid from Kentucky, across the Ohio River and into Cairo. General Forrest staged the raid in part as a reprisal for Union General Sherman's sacking of Louisville, Kentucky.

Using an early-morning fog to cover his movements, Forrest and his troops crossed the river and seized the nearby Forts Holt and Jefferson. He forced the civilians to evacuate and burned Cairo to the ground, just as Sherman did in Louisville. Then, the Confederate general upped the ante.

This was an act of barbarism the like of which I have seldom heard. Rather than bother with taking the prisoners from the Union forts he'd captured with him, Forrest had the captives skinned alive and thrown into the Ohio River! The poor soldiers that weren't killed outright by the skinning drowned in the rushing river. Following the sack of Cairo, the Confederate forces retreated back across the river to Kentucky, presumably to prepare for further strikes into Illinois.

Regardless of the motives, such brutality was completely unwarranted. Before, the Confederacy eschewed Sherman's tactics and maintained the moral high ground. But now, I fear, with this recent display of wanton savagery on General Forrest's part, we have relinquished that to our foe.

Violence Begets Violence

As seems all too common these days, there is a rather gruesome coda to Forrest's atrocity. It seems the horrendous acts committed at the Union forts are being perpetuated in the area around Cairo. Murdered bodies are turning up on both sides of the river either completely or partially lacking their skin. Union officials are blaming the Confederacy for continuing the terrible practice, while the South points the finger back, claiming the North is conducting reprisals.

I'm not sure that either answer is correct. According to my sources, the victims seem to be chosen without discrimination between nationalities. Agents of the Pinkerton Detective Agency have been spotted in the area so there must be more going on than meets the eye. All I can say is I can't recommend travelling the region around the Ohio-Mississippi confluence alone—or even in small groups. Word has it even small patrol boats have fallen victim to the vicious fiends responsible.



The unquiet Earth: An artist's rendition of the Quake of 1812.

New Madrid, Missouri

About 80 miles downriver from Cairo is a small Missouri town called New Madrid. On first appearances, it's a pretty unremarkable place—just another river town along thousands of miles of shoreline. But there's a little more to this small port than meets the eye.

Earthquake!

On February 8, 1812, New Madrid was the site of the greatest earthquake to shake North America until California went and dropped off into the Pacific Ocean. People as far away as New Orleans claim they felt the ground shake from it.

Witnesses described 20-foot-tall walls of water, and fissures that sprayed sand and water on land. When all was said and done, nearly 14 miles of land dropped as much as 50 feet, and the Mississippi flowed backward into the depression for two days. It's no wonder folks back then thought they were seeing the end of the world!



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Coincidentally, that was just about the same time the first steamboat, *The Lady New Orleans*, reached the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi River. Whether you want to believe there's any significance to that or not, you can bet the local Indians sure did. And who can really blame them? Imagine their perspective: a smoke-belching monster comes roaring up the river right that's so offensive even the ground shakes at its approach!

Certainly the arrival of the steamboat marked a new era on the Mississippi, but beyond that I'd hesitate to comment.

The Unquiet Earth

Since the Great Quake of '68, folks in New Madrid claim the ground's become unsteady. Rumbblings and roilings in the earth are felt from time to time.

As you might guess, there's a lot of speculation as to what's behind the miniature earthquakes. Some people think another quake, even bigger than the one in '68, is on the way while others blame it on a Union plot to divert the Mississippi. Finally, there are even a few folks who've been out West that claim the shaking is caused by creatures like Mojave rattlers!



The floating dead: The aftermath of the horrible Fort Pillow Massacre.

Chapter Three:

Midriver

Downriver past the juncture of the Ohio, the Mississippi seems to wind back in time to before the war. A few forts do stand along the river, particularly near the Illinois border, but no Yankee guns are lobbing shells into the river here. The river banks are populated with real towns and not military outposts.

Pirates

Unfortunately, even once a Confederate steamboat crosses the mouth of the Ohio, few captains breath a sigh of relief. While there is no longer the worry about Union shore batteries, there is the equal concern about river pirates. Nowhere on the Mississippi is the danger of freshwater bandits greater than between Cairo and Memphis.

River pirates hide their craft in tributaries and cutoffs from the main channel, awaiting a tempting target. Then they rush out like trapdoor spiders, attempting to overwhelm the boat's crew. Once they've taken all the loot they can carry, they sink the riverboat. Don't expect mercy from these scoundrels. They never leave witnesses if possible.

Hairless Pete

The most infamous and ruthless pirate on the river is known only as "Hairless Pete." The stories say the man used to be a buffalo hunter until he lost his hair to Comanches somewhere in west Texas. Whether or not that is true, something's made Hairless Pete as mean as a blind rattlesnake. His raids are particularly brutal, even for river pirates. One of Hairless Pete's favorite pastimes is to sink a boat and then shoot the survivors in the water with a harpoon gun.

Hairless Pete's gang is known to operate in the stretch of river about 50 to 60 miles north of Memphis. Exactly where he ties his boats is unknown, because, so far, no one has seen his hideout and lived to tell about it. His crimes have even drawn the attention of the Confederate government and resulted in a \$5,000 bounty on his head and an additional \$100 for each member of his gang, dead or alive. So far no one's even come close to collecting.



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Fort Pillow Massacre



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Twenty-five miles or so north of Memphis, on the Mississippi, a small post by the name of Fort Pillow guarded the northern approach to the city. On April 12, 1864, CSA General Nathan Bedford Forrest seized Fort Pillow. The Union troops, in spite of the support of a gunboat on the river, were defeated in a few short hours. Inside the fort, the victorious Confederates found, among other items, a large stock of whiskey and ale.

The troopers claimed the fort was manned by Confederate deserters and escaped slaves, but this has never been proven to my satisfaction. More likely, the troops were Union loyalists from east Tennessee, and free soldiers of color. Nevertheless, mixing bad blood, a little prejudice, battle fever, and alcohol was bound to lead to trouble.

A short time after the fort surrendered, many of the prisoners were executed. All told, more than half the 576 Union defenders were mortally wounded, drowned, or outright killed in the battle and following slaughter. Even the Union commander, Major Bradford, was killed while "trying to escape."

Although General Forrest's role in the massacre has never been clear, many folks, particularly those in the North, hold him responsible. The Union government charged General Sherman with investigating the incident, but events in his failed Atlanta campaign conspired to prevent him from ever following that order.

The incident at Fort Pillow, as terrible as it was, marked the end of any real Union influence on the lower Mississippi. Six weeks after Fort Pillow's fall, General Forrest rode into Memphis. The Union defenders deserted rather than face the wrath of "the Devil Forrest," as General Sherman had named him.

Aftermath

It's said the river for 200 yards around Fort Pillow ran red with the blood of those slain in the massacre. Folks in the area say the ghosts of Forrest's victims haunt the area and seek to revenge themselves on any Southerner who spends the night there.

As always, such rumors must be taken with a grain of salt, but I can tell you no Confederate garrison has been stationed at the fort. Instead, the army chose to build another defensive site a few miles upriver.

Memphis, Tennessee



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It seems like folks near the Mississippi are always drawing on ancient Egypt for place names. The founders of Memphis took the name of the capital of that former empire for their city. Supposedly, it means "place of good abode."

Memphis rests on top of the Fourth Chickasaw Bluffs, a site that's been home to civilizations for hundreds, maybe even thousands, of years.

Hernando de Soto

Back in 1541, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto passed through this area looking for the fabled city of gold, El Dorado. Very possibly, he was the first European to lay eyes on the Mississippi River.

De Soto was ruthless in his treatment of the native peoples he encountered. His expedition perpetrated acts so heinous, in fact, that most of the Indian tribes they dealt with ended up trying to kill them. Only the Indians' belief that de Soto was a god stood between his men and death. This belief sprang from his iron breastplate. The natives had no weapon capable of puncturing the metal armor, so they believed de Soto to be invincible.

Shortly after crossing the Mississippi, de Soto caught a fever and died. His men, fearing the reprisals of the Indians once they learned the "god" was dead, held a secret mass on the river and dropped his body overboard. Although the exact site is unknown, it's believed to be somewhere near present-day Memphis.

The Jackson Purchase

In the late 18th century, several attempts were made at founding a community on the bluffs. However, the Chickasaw Indians claimed the area and resisted any attempts to expand into their territory. It wasn't until President Andrew Jackson "negotiated" a settlement with the Indians that the lands of western Tennessee opened to the expanding United States.

In 1819, Jackson and two other land speculators—one a judge and the other a general—founded the town of Memphis. The town soon became a favorite stopping place for flatboatmen headed downstream. In no time, the city began to attract trade of all sorts, and its population grew in leaps and bounds. By the start of the Civil War, Memphis boasted a population of nearly 35,000 people.

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Union Occupation

Early on Memphis was isolated from the rest of the Confederacy by Union troops. A short battle between Union and Confederate gunboats ended with the Confederate flotilla in ruins and a Union flag over the city. General Ulysses Grant even made the city his base of operations for a short while.

The poor showing of the Confederate military early in the war may have spared Memphis the damage suffered by other Southern cities. It escaped siege, unlike Vicksburg, and Memphis was never subjected to shelling or burning of the sort that Louisville has suffered.

Memphis Today

A look at Memphis now might make a visitor think the city has suffered terribly from the war. It's not unusual to see dead bodies lying in the street or hear the peal of gunfire. Deserted buildings can be found on almost every street. Looting seems to be a favorite pastime among the less savory inhabitants of the city. Things have sunk to such a level there was even talk going around for a short while among the city aldermen about declaring bankruptcy and giving up the city's charter.

The casual observer might assume that all damage, disorder and lawlessness is the fault of Union aggression. Unfortunately, that's far from the truth.

Boomtown

A big part of the cause for all this anarchy derives from the fact Memphis has become the Confederacy's main point of embarkation for points west. It used to be that St. Louis held that responsibility, but due to the eccentricities of wartime geography (and the Union army), such is no longer the case.

Now most settlers heading into the Great Frontier pass through Memphis. This surge of people has made Memphis the second-largest port on the river. The city simply wasn't prepared for this rapid growth.

At any given time, as much as one third of the city's population is composed of settlers heading out west or travelers merely passing through. Invariably, a number of these transients are less than scrupulous and participate in criminal activity of all sorts. This causes the local constabulary no end of problems. Often by the time they've identified a criminal they find he's moved out of the city!

Disease

There is another contributor to the lawlessness and degradation evident in the once-proud river port. While Memphis was fortunate enough to survive occupation and liberation unscathed, another, more insidious foe has taken hold of the city.

Over the last 10 years, Memphis has suffered three waves of pestilence. In 1867, cholera swept through its populace, followed closely by an epidemic of yellow fever. The yellow fever returned in 1872 and again, but far worse, in the summer of 1876. The latest plague to sweep the city has cost the lives of thousands.

Death from disease has been so rampant the city has commissioned "dead wagons" to collect the bodies. The drivers of these wagons are among the most unsavory characters I've ever had the misfortune to meet. I imagine it takes a certain type of individual to drive a wagonload of corpses around all day.

Citizens pile the dead on the street to await the wagons' arrival. Often, the speed with which a charnel mound appears is truly astounding! The bodies are picked up by the dead wagons and carted outside Memphis for internment.

Land Speculation

Not too many legitimate businessmen are rushing to buy land in a city described in a recent competitor's publication as "a pesthole," despite the current influx of settlers. And with almost one fifth of the population dying from disease and an equal amount leaving in a rush, property values in Memphis have plummeted. At first glance, the situation may appear similar, although for different reasons, to that in St. Louis to the north.

However, unlike the Missouri border town, there are many investors who believe Memphis' woes to be only a passing phase. These businessmen are giving life to the old adage that one man's poison is another man's spice. The most successful and ambitious of these speculators is Robert Church.

Robert Church

Robert Church is an example of a Confederate success story. A former slave, Church worked his way up through Memphis society until he was able to purchase his own business. When disease began to scare folks away from the city, Church was the first to see the opportunity the mass exodus provided.



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Pooling his resources, Church has purchased a fair amount of property in and around Memphis. Other ambitious businessmen followed his lead and began buying up land and homes from the departing citizens. Although many of the buildings in Memphis are deserted, not many are truly abandoned. Rather, their new owners consider them merely "temporarily vacant."

The MHC

Church isn't blindly optimistic. For Memphis to recover from its current difficulties, he believes he must defeat the plagues that sweep the city. To that end, he's organized the Memphis Health Committee, or MHC.

This group is composed of local businessmen, town leaders, and a few advising physicians. It's responsible for making sure the city will never again suffer an epidemic like the one this summer. Building a better sewage system, finding clean water, and draining stagnant ditches are all projects currently under review by the MHC.

Regardless of Church's original motivation, the MHC's cause is just, and its aims are basically humanitarian. However, whether or not it will be successful in its endeavor remains to be seen.

Black River

Another prominent figure in Memphis is Mina Devlin. Most of our readers probably know her better as the owner of the Black River Railroad. Mina's influence is felt throughout the city for a number of reasons.

Memphis is the headquarters of her railroad. Black River is one of the few consistent sources of income the city currently has. So, as the owner of that enterprise, Mina's opinion and desire hold a lot of sway in the city.

Company Town

The fact Mrs. Devlin is a rail baron, or rather rail baroness, means her company employs a large number of workers. Many of these are stationed at the company headquarters. That means a lot of money being spent in local businesses comes from Black River's coffers.

Also, as a rail baroness, she maintains a veritable standing army of hired guns. At any given time, there are over a hundred Black River mercenaries in town. On several occasions, Mrs. Devlin has "volunteered" the services of her gunmen to the local police to assist in law enforcement. It wouldn't do for me to mention that most of the time her thugs are causing much of the trouble in town in the first place.



The devastatingly beautiful—and rather dangerous—Mrs. Mina Devlin.

Hired Guns

Most readers of the *Epitaph* are familiar with Black River's Wichita Witches. These women gunslingers are as tough and skilled as any man in the West. And if the rumors are to be believed, they're not called witches just because they're unsociable, either! The Witches are an vital part of Black River's "security force" guarding the railroad's interests farther west.

Memphis, while not on the front lines of the Rail Wars, is home to the railroad's headquarters. As I just mentioned, Mrs. Devlin is not shy about protecting her property. Old soldiers, gunslingers, and even bounty hunters down on their luck can always find employment in Black River's armed gang. After swindling homesteaders, gun-for-hire is probably the second-best-paying line of work in the city.

Memphis Belles

There's one group of gunslingers in Memphis even the most hardened shootists avoid: the Belles. While the Witches ride herd on Black River's gangs west of the Mississippi, the Belles run the show in Memphis.

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The Belles are Mina Devlin's personal guard while she's in town. They're not as well known as Black River's other group of lady gunslingers, but that doesn't mean they're second-rate. The very fact Mina Devlin trusts them with her own well-being speaks for their ability.

These ladies are usually seen around Mina's headquarters at the Hunt-Phelan House, but they may show up anywhere in Memphis. They're instantly recognizable by their solid-black clothing and shiny, silver Peacemaker revolvers when they're on duty.

One or more of the Belles is always with Mrs. Devlin, even attending local social functions with her. In those instances, the Belles dress appropriately, and even an old, society grand dame couldn't pick out the lady gunslinger from a room of debutantes. I hear Mrs. Devlin hires tutors to drill the women in polite behavior when such manners are appropriate.

Those readers taken to womanizing should watch their step in Memphis. The Belles recruit only from the most attractive gunslingers in Black River's service. Many a forward gentleman has found himself staring down the barrel of one of their fancy Colts after taking one too many liberties with one of Mrs. Devlin's Belles!

Mina Devlin

If only Mina Devlin's appearance were a mirror to her soul, she'd have the kindest heart on the entire Mississippi. Unfortunately, only her midnight-black hair gives any insight to her heart. Many a man blinded by her beauty has stumbled into an early grave.

Had the owners of the Tennessee Central railroad left Miles Devlin well enough alone back in 1867, it's doubtful Black River would have grown from a secondary transport company to one of the three largest in the Confederacy. I had the misfortune to meet Miles Devlin before his murder, and I can testify to my readers that while Miles was certainly an unpleasant character, I doubt he had the mental faculties to comprehend, much less accomplish, the feats his widow has committed since his demise.

The Death of a Devlin

Ten years ago, Black River was a little railroad connecting a few outlying towns to Memphis. The company was so small, in fact, it almost escaped the notice of the Tennessee Central railroad, the largest such in the state at the time. When negotiators approached Miles Devlin with an offer they were certain he'd accept, he was insulted that the owners of the Tennessee Central presumed "to be better than he."

Not only did Miles refuse, but the hothead actually beat one of the railroad's representatives within an inch of his life.

Thinking Miles to be using a clever, if unorthodox, bargaining tactic, the railroad made another offer. When it met with a similar response, they decided the man wasn't cunning, he was just nuts, and they thought shooting him might not be as much a crime as a civil service. So, on the night of June 18, 1867, an assassin named Kent Belfore gunned Miles down in the streets of Memphis. Although Miles was clearly shot in the back, a number of witnesses, newly rich with Tennessee Central money, testified Belfore shot in self-defense. He was acquitted.

A Dish Served Hot

What the Tennessee Central didn't count on was Mina Devlin. She proved more than equal to rising to the task of running Black River, quickly expanding the operation into a profitable enterprise, using means both fair and foul. Soon the asking price for her company surpassed the resources of the Tennessee Central.

Oddly enough, all the primary stockholders in the Tennessee Central and the witnesses in the Belfore trial began to meet sudden, and often inexplicable, deaths. No one has ever been able to legally prove Mina Devlin was behind this rash of untimely demises, but enough circumstantial evidence exists to make it the common belief. Only Belfore himself may have escaped Devlin's revenge, disappearing early in the purge.

Tennessee Central stock prices plummeted—no one wanted to risk becoming a victim by buying shares in the railroad—and Mina herself picked up the company for a song. Absorbing Tennessee Central's assets and track, Black River became the largest railroad in the central Confederacy.

The Rail Wars

When Jefferson Davis declared the race to the Maze open, Mina Devlin dove in head first. Her tactics in the early years of the race lent credence to the rumors about the deaths of her husband's killers. Black River destroyed and absorbed the Southern Atlantic Railroad in 1874.

Mina continued to use any and all means available to improve the position of her railroad. While other rail barons tapped into their coffers to purchase legitimate right-of-ways, Mina Devlin used seduction, intimidation, and—when those failed—violence to secure her route.

Presumably, the money she saved by not bargaining allowed her to hire more thugs for her gangs.



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With the field trimmed to only the six strongest competitors, Black River suddenly found itself in a new game altogether. The "Great Rail Wars" began to live up to the name and truly became open conflict. Rival rail gangs fought openly over right-of-ways, and the death toll was starting to mount. The battle with Union Blue across Kansas put a near fatal drain on Mina's resources. It began to look as though Black River might be crushed under the wheels of the other, larger railroads.

Rebuilding

Mina Devlin once again proved her savvy by saving her railroad from financial ruin. Somehow, she was able to raise the funds to rebuild. She's also changed tactics lately, seeking to build alliances with Union Blue. In light of the vicious battle the two companies just fought to reach Kansas City, I can't help but question her goals and motivation.

Recent gossip has even begun to hint at an improper relationship between Mina Devlin and the owner of Union Blue, Joshua Chamberlain. Chamberlain is said to have been fiercely loyal to his wife in the past, so it's very possible this is part of a squalid scheme on Black River's part to slander the man.

Points of Interest

A. Black River Railway

On the eastern edge of the city, a short distance south of Tent City, sits Black River's main railway. Dozens of trains are constantly passing through the yard, either for repairs or routine maintenance. All permutations of the iron horse can be viewed here, from simple cargo carriers to lavish passenger trains to the occasional war train bristling with all manner of weaponry.

Aside from actual rail facilities, the yard also holds Black River's lavish main administrative offices. The entire day-to-day operation of the railroad is handled from this building, and as one might expect, security here is tighter than a drum.

Gunmen patrol the railway 24 hours a day, and about a year ago, a good deal of heavier ordnance was installed. These days, Gatling guns and a six-pound cannon stand in watchtowers around the yard. I'm sure the fact that this followed the mysterious explosions at Black River's Des Moines facilities is a complete coincidence.



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This isn't really a point of interest to Memphis visitors. In fact, I advise keeping a good distance from the Black River facility unless you have legitimate business there. The Great Rail Wars have made Mrs. Devlin's bunch of shootists even more trigger-happy than normal. One misstep near the railyard might result in a fellow being force-fed a lead breakfast.

B. Gateway Station

Folks interested in getting a look at Black River rolling stock are better advised to take a short hike down to the riverfront depot. Mina Devlin spared no expense on her showcase Gateway Station, so named because it proclaims itself "the Gateway West." There is some truth to the sobriquet, since rail travelers can purchase a ticket from here all the way to Virginia City, Nevada, thanks to the present agreement with the Denver-Pacific railroad.

The architecture of the station is reminiscent of ancient Greece, with large Ionic columns and more pieces of marble than can be found in a schoolboy's pockets. Observing the elaborate decoration of the depot, I must conclude that Black River's finances are in better condition than is commonly believed.

C. Hunt-Phelan House

Located on the eastern end of the city, this grand mansion was built over three decades ago and has running water and interior gas lights. It even has a forced-air heating system. The Hunt-Phelan house once served as General Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters while he planned his Vicksburg campaign. Now the mansion serves as Mrs. Devlin's Memphis home and her personal office.

When Mrs. Devlin took over her dead husband's business in 1867, she moved to Memphis and purchased the house from its former owner. It had fared poorly during the occupation. The Union had even converted it to a hospital at one point. Mina spent several years and a wagonload of money to refurbish the battered mansion.

Now the Hunt-Phelan house is said to be one of the most elegant mansions in Memphis—not that many people get to see the house. Mrs. Devlin apparently places great value on her privacy. She only allows visitors for formal gatherings or special appointments. Mrs. Devlin hosts at least three gala parties at the house every year. You might have heard about her famous (or rather infamous) Halloween Masquerade. The masquerade has quite a

reputation for—well, let's be discreet and just say that devout churchgoers usually aren't invited. Nevertheless the cream of Memphis society spends a good portion of the autumn angling for an invitation to the event.

At all other times, the gates are locked and guarded. Even if someone managed to slip past the gate guards, be warned: The premises are patrolled by heavily armed men with some of the largest guard dogs I've ever seen.

D. The Memphis Trestle

Thanks to Black River, Memphis is the site of one of only three bridges reaching across the Mississippi in the Confederacy. Dixie Rails owns one in Greenville, Mississippi, and the KC & LR owns the other such bridge. The huge rail trestle crossing the river makes Memphis a gateway to the West for the South.

The trestle, like the others on the river, is an engineering marvel. It required over a year to complete, and it spans over a mile from end to end. The center span of the bridge reaches a height of more than 150 feet above the river to allow free passage to steamboats.

Black River guards the trestle carefully—and with good reason. Damage to the bridge represents a costly break in operations for the railroad—not to mention the expense of repairs!

The trestle is a tempting target for sabotage, and Black River security has foiled at least three attempts to blow up the bridge in just the last year! As a result, no one is allowed on the bridge without prior authorization, and riverine vessels are likewise restricted to one of three marked channels under the bridge.

De Soto's Ghost?

Travelers on the river around Memphis should beware night voyages. According to talk in the waterfront saloons, something is preying on small boats in the waters of the Mississippi nearby.

In recent months, a number deserted crafts have been found floating on the river in this area. The only sign of the missing crew is an occasional ominous blood stain or a torn article of clothing.

As always, rumors abound as to the cause of the disappearances, none more credible than the others. Certainly the most creative explanation for the crimes is that de Soto's ghost is haunting the river, still seeking El Dorado. The proponents of this view cite as proof the fact that no trace of gold has been found on any of the deserted vessels.



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For those readers that accept that logic, I have in my possession a ring that keeps away elephants that I'd be willing to part with for a paltry sum.

E. Newcomb Pharmaceuticals

One of the few companies to move to Memphis in the past year, Newcomb Pharmaceuticals is a rising star among city businesses. The company was founded by Ronald Newcomb, a chemist from North Carolina. Newcomb reportedly uses the newest and most advanced techniques in the production of its medicines.

One small mystery about the company is who's providing the financing? It certainly isn't Newcomb himself. He was a pauper when he first arrived in town. Within a year, his company was up and running.

Although it's only been operating for six months, hospitals as far away as Savannah and New Orleans are using curatives and other products of the small plant. I wouldn't be surprised to see Newcomb Pharmaceuticals become one of the primary medical supply houses in the Confederacy in a few years.

F. Ogilvie's Outfitters

This good-sized establishment on the eastern edge of Memphis caters to the needs of settlers headed west. Unlike its competitors further out in Tent City, Ogilvie's Outfitters is located in a permanent structure. Granted, it's a refurbished barn, but at least it's not covered in canvas.

The store carries virtually everything a pioneer might need on a journey, and then some. Everything from rope to rubber slickers line the walls of the building. Clayton Ogilvie, the owner, charges fair prices for his goods, which combined with his location has run more than a few of the price gougers in Tent City out of business. That's just as well, if you ask me. For more information on Tent City, see my entry on that squalid mess of a place below.

Of more interest to curiosity seekers is the small selection of specialty items straight out of Smith & Robards' newest catalog. Ogilvie also stocks a few made by local inventors. Pieces from this second group of items are sold on a consignment basis, and Ogilvie offers no guarantee as to their efficacy. All these items are kept behind the counter during the day and under lock and key at night. Ogilvie's stock of gizmos seems somewhat haphazard, but that makes each visit to the store that much more interesting.



Does the ghost of Hernando de Soto haunt the river near Memphis?

G. Tent City

On the northeastern outskirts of Memphis is a veritable sea of canvas called Tent City. Here, most settlers heading for points west set camp for the week or so they're in town. There's a complete miniature community made of cloth out there, complete with stores, saloons, and even a church or two. Not many folks stay for very long in the area, except for the business owners.

There's a killing to be made supplying the westward tide of immigrants, and the tent businesses are the first to make a grab for the settlers' money. Prices here tend to be higher than in the city proper, but convenience causes most of the travelers to do their shopping in this area.

Because almost none of the inhabitants are citizens, Memphis officials do little to enforce the law in Tent City. Also, few people staying in the area care much for the health codes passed by the MHC, so conditions out here are pretty deplorable. As a result, Tent City has twice the incidence of disease and crime that the rest of Memphis suffers.

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Tent City, Memphis. It's hard to find a more squalid hive of villainy and human wretchedness anywhere on the mighty Mississippi.

H. Thayer Shipping Company

This small, wood-frame building marks the northernmost outpost of this New Orleans-based riverboat company. Owned by Solomon Thayer, the Thayer Shipping Company is one of the most successful of its kind on the lower Mississippi. However, north of Memphis, the profit-to-danger margin must be too high for Thayer to risk, for few boats under his charter depart in that direction.

In fact, Thayer Shipping does little exporting from Memphis itself. The company doesn't even own a full warehouse in the city. Cargoes brought upriver—consisting mainly of sugarcane, rum, and occasionally cotton—are off-loaded and quickly moved off to resalers in the city. Only rarely are a few kegs left near the building or riverfront.

Travelers down on their luck in Memphis may be able to find employment—and passage—on one of Thayer's riverboats. The current rash of pirate activity, even below the city, has led to increased security on most river vessels. The shipping company is always on the lookout for individuals who can handle a gun to help guard its riverboats.

I. The Whiskey Chute

Down near the riverfront is a row of saloons and hotels frequented by riverboat crews and passengers. I recommend anyone passing through Memphis make use of one of the businesses in this area if they feel the need for a little bit of the sauce. These establishments are cleaner than those dives in Tent City, and travelers are the usual customers, so the owners go out of their way to make sure that strangers don't feel out of place.

Of all the saloons, I have to say the Whiskey Chute is the most popular, and with good reason. While by no means elegant, the Chute is clean and kept in good repair. Its prices are perhaps a little higher than in other nearby saloons, but at the Chute you're paying for liquor, not thinly colored water—if you know what I mean.

The proprietor of the establishment, Owen Ross, keeps abreast of the events on the river and is a good source of gossip. Ross can usually be counted on to know a little about local boat schedules, so if you're searching for passage in the Memphis area, check with him. Just be sure to buy a drink while you're there.

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The Lost Packet



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Around five years ago, a steamboat disappeared just about 50 miles or so north of Vicksburg, Mississippi. The boat was an older-model sternwheeler named the *Demeter* and her captain was Jack MacGowran, a man I've personally known for years.

The ship had embarked from Natchez, Mississippi, steaming up the river toward St. Louis. The weather that day was beautiful, and the river clear and calm. Put simply, the *Demeter* simply disappeared. No explosion was ever heard, no wreckage or survivors were ever found. It's as if the boat had sailed right off the face of the Earth!

Captain MacGowran was an old hand on the river and knew the Mississippi's channels and cutoffs better than the back of his hand, so I doubt the *Demeter* ran afoul of any natural hazard. It's also unlikely that the ship fell prey to a Union raiding vessel. They seldom penetrate the river defenses further north, and if they do, they never get that far south unchallenged. Even if that had been the case, wreckage would surely have turned up.

Whatever befell the boat must have been completely unexpected, because Jack was one of the best pilots on the river and could handle almost any normal situation, I am sure. He was also one of my oldest and dearest friends, so I am personally offering a reward of \$250 to any of our readers who can determine the fate of the *Demeter* and her crew.

A Strange Coincidence

A final note of interest. Shortly after the steamboat's disappearance, a small town near the river in northern Louisiana was found deserted. The name of the place escapes me, although I recall it was supposed to have been located about 40 or 50 miles north of Vicksburg as well.

It appears the townsfolk were taken unawares by whatever event occurred, as investigators say dinner plates still had food on them and beds were turned down as if in preparation for sleep. The incident brings to mind the lost colony of Roanoke Island and similar unexplained incidents in history.

To date, no one has been able to explain how an entire town's population could vanish. I for one am sure it is related in some way to the *Demeter's* fate.

Vicksburg, Mississippi



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The War Between the States has touched every inch of this fair land of ours, in one way or another, but nowhere on the southern Mississippi are the wounds of the war more evident than in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The remains of this once proud and prosperous community lie at the mouth of the Yazoo River.

The Siege

Early in the war, Vicksburg blocked the Union advance upriver from the Gulf of Mexico. As long as the city remained in Confederate hands, the Union could not hold a complete stranglehold on the Mississippi River.

In early 1863, General Ulysses Grant moved downriver from Memphis and laid siege to Vicksburg. Until that time, Confederate General John Pemberton had successfully thwarted several attempts by the Union to seize the city. Grant's arrival heralded the fall of the last Confederate river bastion. Pemberton, outnumbered and outmaneuvered, was soon surrounded by Union forces and cut off from reinforcements.

After more than 60 days of siege, General Pemberton negotiated a surrender to the Union forces on July 3, 1863. He had no hope of relief, and the inhabitants of Vicksburg, both military and civilian, were literally starving to death. However, under cover of night, Pemberton and his army slipped out of the city and escaped.

Over a decade later, the North still claims Pemberton feigned the surrender to cover his retreat. Pemberton, on the other hand, accuses the Union troops of slaughtering the civilians and troops after the surrender was announced and that his army was forced to flee to avoid a massacre. A source of mine who was present on that fateful night says that neither story is true. Instead, I've been told that darker forces were at work on the night of July 3.

The Victor's Spoils

Whatever the cause of Pemberton's retreat, once the Union troops entered Vicksburg, they found the city virtually uninhabitable. Elegant buildings and homes had been reduced to splinters and rubble by the shelling from the Union guns.

The citizens were little more than skin and bones, having subsisted on any food they could scrounge or catch for over a

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month. Worse yet, corpses literally stripped of flesh to the very bone were uncovered in basements and underground shelters of many of the remaining structures.

It was obvious that even though the defending army had managed to escape, the town of Vicksburg was unlikely to threaten Union plans for the Mississippi any time soon.

The Wasting

Union troops didn't occupy the city of Vicksburg for very long. According to reports, shortly after Pemberton's retreat, a new disease spread among the remaining civilians and troops in Vicksburg like wildfire. More than 10,000 people died from the effects of the disease before the city was evacuated.

The illness, called "the Wasting" by survivors, causes its victims to starve to death regardless of how much they eat. At first, the Union blamed the Wasting on the Confederates, claiming Pemberton had ordered the city's water supplies poisoned before retreating. However, similar outbreaks in other cities, both Union and Confederate, have proven that to be merely propaganda.

Ghost Town

For the last 12 years or so, Vicksburg has stood nearly empty. Fear of contracting the Wasting kept most folks from returning there, even years after the last outbreak. Since no one knows exactly how the disease is spread, this is probably a sound practice.

Only a few dozen or so people still choose to make their home near the remains of the city. Those who remain stick to the banks of the Mississippi, living in makeshift cabins or shacks. Even though these folks don't seem concerned about contracting the Wasting, they avoid the old town at all costs.

Rumors abound of survivors of the siege who've turned to cannibalism. These feral hunters are said to hunt down anyone foolish enough to wander into the city alone. Supposedly, these wild men use an underground tunnel network, built to connect the city's shelters and bunkers, to move around unseen. These claims may be true, but as yet no one's been able to provide proof of any such cannibalistic tunnel dwellers.

One claim about Vicksburg I can confirm is the ghost town does serve as a hideout for outlaws and river pirates from time to time. These villains rely on the area's reputation to thwart any pursuers, and it seems to work. Only the most dedicated bounty hunters enter Vicksburg to track down wanted criminals.

Haven

In spite of all the reasons to not settle in the Vicksburg area, there are a few who do live there by choice—at least temporarily. A mile or so downriver from the mouth of the Yazoo is a sanitarium for sufferers of incurable diseases ranging from leprosy to tuberculosis. The institution is named merely "Haven" and is funded almost entirely by a single benefactor, Mr. Solomon Thayer, a New Orleans importer.

Thayer himself suffered the loss of a loved one to such a disease. As a result, he's devoted a portion of his fortune to aiding others so afflicted. Thanks to his contributions, Haven cares for its residents free of charge. At least once a week, a supply boat stops at the sanitarium to restock the residents. Other than that vessel, no other vessel has made regular stops at or around Vicksburg for over a decade.

I must say that it's an odd location for the facility. Although I applaud Mr. Thayer's humanitarian gestures, I question the wisdom of placing the institution so near Vicksburg.



Haven's doctors at work. The Epitaph wishes them the best of luck!

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The Sultana



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In mid-May, 1865, the commanding general of Union forces resumed the prisoner exchange program with the Confederacy. The infamous Andersonville prison in Georgia was closed, and its prisoners were moved to a point on the river near the shattered remains of Vicksburg, Mississippi. There they were to be placed on steamboats and transported back to the Union. The *Sultana* was one of the riverboats chosen for the task.

Before she arrived, two other steamboats, the *Henry Ames* and the *Olive Branch*, had already departed with nearly 2,000 men on board. A rumor had begun to spread among the soldiers that a Union officer in charge of the transportation operation was accepting money to favor the boats of a certain river company. When word of this reached the officer's ear, he ordered the rest of the awaiting prisoners put aboard the *Sultana*, even though two vessels of the suspected company arrived during the loading.

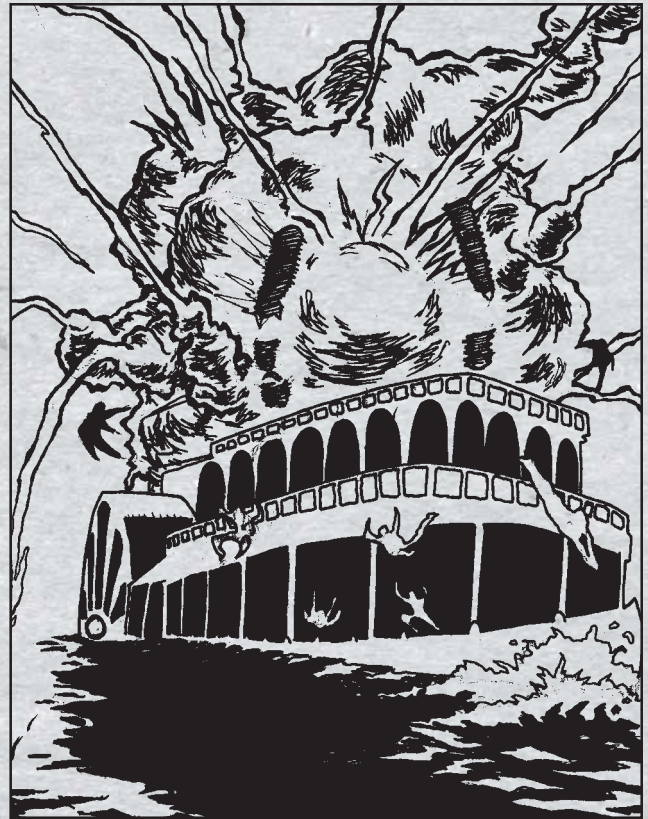
Low in the Water

The *Sultana* was rated to carry around 375 passengers. Although the Confederacy didn't keep an accounting of what was basically a Union operation, estimates put the number of former prisoners placed on the steamboat at around 2,400—nearly six times its rated capacity. When the passengers on board the *Sultana* rushed to the rails to wave at photographer on the riverbank, their weight almost capsized the vessel!

Disaster!

About 20 hours after embarking from the camp near Vicksburg, the *Sultana* was churning against the spring floods of the Mississippi less than 20 miles north of Memphis. There, amid a group of islands known as the Hen and Chickens, one of the ship's boilers overheated and exploded.

The blast sprayed the passengers packed on the main deck with chunks of wood and hot iron shards. Those above the boiler were blasted high into the air by the explosion. Hundreds of men were thrown into the roiling waters of the swollen Mississippi. As the shattered *Sultana* began to sink, the forward decks of the boat collapsed, trapping even more men in the burning wreck.



The commandeered riverboat *Sultana* meets a fiery end.

All told, less than 800 men were saved from being blasted into tiny pieces, burning to death in the fire, or drowning in the flooded river. The death toll of the disaster was estimated at between 1,200 and 1,700 souls, depending on who's doing the talking. Regardless, the *Sultana* was, and remains, the greatest maritime disaster in fresh or salt water.

Laying the Blame

In the aftermath of the disaster, accusations were quick to fly. The Confederacy claimed the Union had acted irresponsibly in overcrowding the boat by so much. The Union accused the Confederacy of providing substandard equipment. Some Northern hotheads even accused Southern agents of deliberately sabotaging the vessel!

The disaster put a temporary halt to the prisoner exchange program. A joint investigation group was formed, and it ended up placing the blame squarely on the head of one of the *Sultana's* boiler operators. Conveniently enough, the man died in the boiler blast and was unable to defend himself against the accusation.

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Natchez, Mississippi



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Natchez is one of the oldest settlements on the river. Founded near the remains of an earlier colony, Natchez can trace its history back over 150 years. The town is named for the now-extinct Natchez Indians, one of the most advanced of all the native tribes on the continent.

Fort Rosalie

Back in 1716, the French built a small settlement named Fort Rosalie, near the Natchez Indian village of White Apple. Initially, relations were quite friendly with the natives, but the dictatorial practices of the commandant of the fort began to test the patience of the Indians after several years.

The Natchez worshipped the sun, and their chief was referred to as the Great Sun. When the French commander ordered the Natchez to vacate White Apple, the Great Sun attempted to negotiate with the man. However, the chief's pleas fell on deaf ears, and the commandant insisted the tribe move from its ancestral home.

The Massacre

On November 29, 1729, the Great Sun, along with a few chosen warriors, paid a visit to Fort Rosalie. Claiming they needed to trade for powder for a hunting expedition, the Indians gained entrance to the fort. Once inside, the Natchez drew their weapons and began a slaughter of the unsuspecting troops.

The Great Sun took a seat in the fort's warehouse and smoked his pipe while his warriors built a pyramid of the soldiers' heads at his feet. All told, more than 200 men were slain that day.

Reprisal

Word soon reached New Orleans, and the French began a war with the Natchez that resulted in the extinction of the tribe. Captured Natchez were submitted to horrible treatment. Six captives were even publicly burned. The Great Sun and his council were seized and sold into slavery.

A few members of the Natchez Indians escaped to live among the Chickasaws, but the tribe ceased to exist by the late 1700s. Today, the city of Natchez, built near the site of Fort Rosalie, is probably the only reminder the tribe every lived.

Natchez Today

Natchez is one of the largest river ports in the Confederacy, with only Memphis and New Orleans being larger. The port is truly a two-level city. Natchez proper, or Natchez-On-The-Hill, rests atop 150-foot bluffs on the east bank of the Mississippi.

If you're seeking examples of the famed lifestyles of the Southern aristocracy, Natchez is the place to look. The city has some of the oldest and most beautiful antebellum homes in the Confederacy. Like Memphis, Natchez came through Union occupation almost unscathed, and many of the mansions are preserved in the state they've been in for the past century.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, there were more millionaires per capita in Natchez than anywhere else in the United States. Although the war changed the economies in both the Union and the Confederacy, I feel fairly secure in asserting Natchez remains the richest city in the South, even today.

Natchez-Under-the-Hill.

On the banks of the Mississippi beneath the Natchez cliffs sprawls Natchez-Under-The-Hill. Here the steamboats and other rivercraft dock to load and unload cargo. This part of the town is also home to the one of the seediest red-light districts on the continent, if not in the world.

Called "the Sodom and Gomorrah of the West" or "the Barbary Coast of the Mississippi," Natchez-Under-the-Hill is filled with saloons, gambling halls, brothels, and worse. Chances are if you can't find it there, it isn't a sin.

Knife fights and muggings are a standard occurrence on any given night, and even shootings or murder don't raise too many eyebrows in Under-the-Hill. On top of the intentional violence, overloaded steamboats, drunken captains, and inept pilots have caused many deaths in the crowded waters offshore.

Anyone passing through Under-the-Hill after dark is strongly advised to watch her step or carry a gun—or, better yet, both!

Closed on Sundays

Unlike most other river towns, Natchez is strict in its observance of Sunday as a day of religious rest. All business, even those at the bottom of the bluffs, close on Sundays. This surprises many first-time visitors to the town, especially with the reputation Under-the-Hill enjoys on the river.



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A town divided: The radically different worlds of the quiet Natchez-On-the Hill and the rowdy Natchez-Under the Hill.

Missing Children

One of the more disturbing trends in Natchez of late is a rash of kidnappings. The kidnappers take only the youngest infants, and to date, not a single ransom note has been issued for any of the victims. They have simply disappeared. This fact has led Natchez Marshal Peyton Butler to believe the villainous acts may actually be the work of a slavery ring.

Bluff City Railroad

No, this isn't a new threat to the rail barons. This tiny operation is a railroad only in the strictest sense of the word. The tracks of the Bluff City Railroad start at the bottom of the Natchez bluffs and end a little distance from the top. The rails transport freight from the docks at the bottom of the bluffs to the top, and vice-versa.

Bluff City's only competitors are a few one-man operations that offer to haul a mule cart full of goods up the incline for half a dollar. If you're daunted by the walk up the 150-foot cliffs, you can always catch a ride on one of the freight trains for a mere 10¢.

Also not to be missed is the lovely park Natchez On-the-Hill has established atop the bluffs. Along the edge of the cliffs, the town has preserved a small line of trees. A walkway follows this line along the top of the bluff, providing an excellent view of the river. A sunset viewed from there is really something to behold.

Dead Man's Bend

Downriver from Natchez-Under-the-Hill is a curve in the Mississippi known as Dead Man's Bend. The crook in the river gets its name from the number of dead bodies that have washed up on the bank there. These corpses originate as victims of shootouts, murders, and other violence in Natchez-Under-the-Hill. Over the course of a year, as many as 50 or more bodies may be deposited on the shore at Dead Man's Bend.

Not surprisingly, this part of the river has its share of ghost stories to go along with the many cadavers. Mr. O'Malley tells me I don't have the space to do justice to the local legends in this *Guide*—but let me say there's been many a time I have heard a strange, unearthly moaning while passing that particular stretch of riverbank.

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Emerald Mound

Emerald Mound is the largest Indian mound in the Confederacy, second only to Monk's Mound in Cahokia on the whole continent. Prior to the war, the mound was a popular site for amateur historians and archaeologists.

Lately it appears somebody may have taken an interest in rekindling the old Indian practices. There are a number of reports of lights being seen on Emerald Mound after nightfall. Folks who've gone to investigate have found nothing at all except signs of small bonfire. I have no hint as to the motivation or identity of whoever is behind the Emerald Mound mystery, and I caution anyone looking into the occurrences to take utmost care in this matter.

Longwood Plantation

Natchez is home to the largest octagonal house in the Confederacy. Including the onion-shaped, oriental-style dome on top, Longwood stands six stories tall. Commissioned by James Nutt (and often referred as "Nutt's Folly") in 1860, the house is a marvel of architecture and engineering.

Having met Mr. Nutt and actually seen the plans, I'm sad to say Longwood was never completed. The war brought construction on the mansion to a halt. The Pennsylvanian construction company hurried back north before the closing of the borders. If that weren't enough, the Union blockade confiscated much of the stonework which was ordered abroad.

Pneumonia, or some claim a broken heart over his failed dream, took Nutt's life shortly after the onset of hostilities. His widow remained in the house until recently, selling the property to a local attorney and war hero, Mr. Dennis Thornsby. Thornsby's announcement that he intends to complete construction on the house has met with nearly universal approval.

Many citizens believe Longwood is haunted by Nutt's ghost. They cite strange sounds or lights from the house at odd hours as proof. Mr. Thornsby, however, claims to have never once seen evidence of any haunting at Longwood.

The Natchez Trace

Following the old Indian trails, this 450-mile-long overland route links Natchez to Nashville. After dropping their cargoes in New Orleans, flatboatmen with pockets filled with money would walk this route back into the north. The Trace was thick with bandits, but

believe me, even then it was better than poling one of those barges upstream! A trip from New Orleans back upriver to Nashville could take as long as six months.

With the advent of steamboats and railroads, the Trace is nothing more than an overgrown footpath. Union troops planning to use the Trace to travel as far south as New Orleans couldn't even find it for the underbrush. A determined traveler may find the remains of the once-famous trail to the northeast of town. There's even the ruins of an old stand, or inn, on the outskirts of the city.

O'Neil & Company Coal Yard

When fuel's running low, a steamboat crew can always pull up to a forested river bank, cut some logs, stoke up the boiler and head on upriver. Your average riverboat crew has enough work to do on a daily basis to keep this from becoming too popular a practice. Most river towns of any consequence have a coaling company or two to supply the steamers with fuel on regular stops.

As you're approaching Natchez, you can easily spot the coal bins of O'Neil & Company. The large mounds of black rock are piled nearly three stories high in some places. For those captains who are a little more finicky about what goes in their vessel's boiler, O'Neil also supplies ghost-rock cores, both refined and raw nuggets. The cost of this exotic fuel limits most standard steams to coal however.

Steamboat Hotel

The Steamboat Hotel isn't just a fancy name, this establishment is actually built on the hull of a barge and floats in the river. The owner, Josephine Ratliff, watched many a business in Natchez Under-the-Hill be destroyed by flooding. She decided to play it safe when it came to her own livelihood.

A plank walkway connects the hotel to the riverbank. The interior is lit with oil lamps, which I think add nicely to the atmosphere. There are three floors, or decks, to the hotel, with over 250 rooms available. Each room runs \$2 a night, and meals aren't available onboard, so travelers on a budget may wish to seek accommodations elsewhere.

The Steamboat offers one thing above all the other hotels in Under-the-Hill: a small amount of security. It's unlikely a drunken rogue will break into a room when there are other targets that don't require him to swim a few yards!



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Chapter Four: From Bayou to Delta

Right around Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Mississippi valley changes from wide-open river to swampy morass. That's because most of the land in this area was deposited here by the river itself over the years. This is the land of vast swamps, sprawling river deltas, and Cajun hunters.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

A French explorer by the name of Pierre le Moyne, known as Sieur d'Iberville, reached the future site of the city in early 1699. The area was marked on his map as Baton Rouge, or "Red Stick," because of a large, crimson pole he found on the bank of the river here.

The city of Baton Rouge was officially incorporated in 1817 and is now the second-largest city in the state of Louisiana, after New Orleans. It was made the state capital in 1849.

As the state capital, Baton Rouge is an important city. It's the seat of state government, an important trade center on the Mississippi, and a vital supply point for the Confederacy.

Even though the city is deep behind the Southern lines, Baton Rouge would be the second line of defense against a Union invasion up the Mississippi. To that end, the CSA Navy has stationed five gunboats and one ironclad here. In case of a land attack, a standing garrison of about 5,000 men under General Lawrence Bivens is stationed in the city.

There are also several batteries of guns emplaced on the shore, and I've heard rumors about the CSA War Department sending some "special weapons" to Baton Rouge for testing.

Personally, I think it's all a bit futile. Any Union force capable of making it past New Orleans' coastal defenses will make short work of any other force on the river.

The Red Stick

The famous Red Stick from which Baton Rouge takes its name was a 30-foot-high pole covered in dripping blood, with the heads of fish and bears hanging from it. Most likely it was used as a boundary marker between two Indian tribes in the area, as well as for ceremonial purposes.

The Red Stick came to be recognized as a permanent landmark. Although several attempts were made to change the name of the settlement, Baton Rouge stuck. There is still a large pole in Baton Rouge that the locals claim is the original Red Stick, but almost 200 years is a long time for a wooden pole to stand.

Lately it seems the stick has begun to ooze blood. After nights of the full moon, the pole is found covered in drying blood. The authorities have no explanation for the strange phenomena, but they fear it may be somehow related to a recent string of violent murders in the area.

River Road Plantations

Heading south out of Baton Rouge heading to New Orleans is a route known as the River Road. So called because it follows the course of the Mississippi fairly closely, this road passes some of the most impressive examples of plantation mansions in the Confederacy.

The owners of these homes made their fortunes not only in cotton but other cash crops like indigo or sugarcane. These plantations are usually groups of several buildings, including the main manor, servants' quarters, and other smaller structures. Some even house their own chapels, cemeteries, and jails!



An artist's impression of history: Pierre le Moyne discovers the "red stick."

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Bon Sejour

Bon Sejour is one of the prettiest and most famous plantations on the lower river. It's on the west bank of the Mississippi but still visible from River Road. The plantation is often called Oak Alley for the two rows of 14 oaks that stretch nearly a quarter-mile from the river to the house. It's one of the most impressive views to be had anywhere on the Mississippi. It's currently owned by the Renault family, but I've heard they've fallen on hard times and may have to sell the place soon.

Nottoway

Also of note is Nottoway plantation, which claims to be the largest in the South, with 64 rooms. Nottoway escaped burning during the Federal occupation when a Union gunboat commander remembered staying at the plantation. He was so taken with the hospitality he received, he ordered it to be spared. It was built by and is still owned by John Hampden Randolph, a transplanted Virginian.

Butler's Legacy

Unfortunately, not all the plantations were as lucky as these. The Union blockade brought ruin to many a wealthy planter, and the Yankee occupation resulted in many mansions being burnt to the ground. As you travel the area, either by river or road, you see many deserted or ruined plantations. I would advise staying away from such places. One never knows what kind of brigands or ruffians (or perhaps even less savory occupants) may have taken up residence within.

The Haunted Bayou

Across the river from Baton Rouge, there's a place on the western bank of the Mississippi that locals claim is haunted. I've been in the area myself, and I can tell you there is definitely something unnerving about the place.

It was late evening, and I hired a local guide to take me a little way into the watercourse. The trees constantly rustled during my visit, although I never felt the slightest breeze. I also couldn't get over the feeling we were being watched the entire time.

Unlike many hauntings, there's not one story of what or who is responsible for the goings-on back in the woods. Before any of my intrepid readers mount expeditions into the area, be warned: according to locals, many a curious person has disappeared into the bayou never to return.

Cajuns

No discussion of the lower Mississippi would be complete without mention of the inhabitants of southwestern Louisiana known as the Cajuns. They have a unique culture and history that sets them apart from the other inhabitants of southern Louisiana, even the other descendants of French settlers.



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Acadia

Way back in the early 1700s, France ceded Acadia, its land in eastern Canada, to the British. The French settlers there, the Acadians, were mostly poor and illiterate farmers with strong ties to the Catholic Church. When they refused to pledge allegiance to the British Crown, the Acadians were scattered throughout the British colonies.

Fifty years later, once France and Britain had buried the hatchet, the Acadians sought to reestablish their communities. The largest group found its way to southern Louisiana. Unfortunately, they arrived just as France gave that area to Spain. The Spanish offered the Acadians the land west of the Mississippi to settle.

Although they've had their share of statesmen, heroes, and the like, for the most part the Acadians have kept themselves separate from the rest of the settlers. Over the years of isolation in the swamps and prairies of western Louisiana, the people began to develop their own unique culture and customs. Finally, even the term Acadian gradually evolved into simply "Cajun."

Language

Anyone traveling in Cajun country quickly learns those folks don't speak English among themselves. A sharp-eared listener may identify the language as a form of French. Cajun French (or Acadian French, if you're a linguist) is quite a bit different from what most people think of as French.

Cajun French is strictly a spoken language. It doesn't have a written form. The language is pretty close to what the Acadians used back in the 1600s up in Canada, but it has borrowed words from other languages as well. A traveler in Cajun country who speaks French can get by well enough, as long as he doesn't try to have any in-depth philosophical discussions with the locals.



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Cajun Living

Cajuns stick mainly to their small farms and homesteads. They're spread out from the western bank of the lower Mississippi to almost all the way to east Texas. In fact, there are nearly as many Cajuns living on the western Louisiana prairie as there are in the swamps and bayous near the Mississippi. These folks are usually a little standoffish with outsiders, and with their history, I really can't blame them.

Most Cajuns are still devout Catholics. Although many folks in southern Louisiana are also of that faith, most of the citizens of the Confederacy aren't. The years of bad blood between Catholics and Protestants are past, but old suspicions die hard—on both sides.

Trapping and hunting are popular pursuits among the swamp-dwelling Cajuns. Some of these folk are woodsmen of a caliber that would make old Davy Crockett jealous! Using a canoe-like craft called a "pirogue," the average Cajun trapper can negotiate the tangled waters of the backwater faster than just about anyone else alive today.

If you're looking for a guide to the twisted labyrinth of the bayous, you'll likely not find better than a Cajun—provided you can understand him, that is.

Pass a Good Time

Few people enjoy a good time as much as Cajuns do. All you have to do is spend a little while in the area to realize this. How you live is just as important to a Cajun as how he makes his living.

A good example can be found in Cajun cooking. These folks can do things with spices you won't believe! A word of warning to the culinary explorer: as with their French ancestors, very little is considered inedible by Cajuns. One of the more popular dishes is boiled crayfish, or "mud bugs" as they call it. (For those of you who've never seen them, the critters look like tiny lobsters.) Just remember, if you're served a plate of grilled alligator, there's nothing like a good cup of black Cajun coffee to wash it down.

Card games are quite popular in Cajun country, and most settlements have at least one "card bar" where the locals sit and enjoy a few hands of bourre, a popular local card game sure to test any card sharp's mettle.

Another popular pastime in the region is cockfighting. This isn't as gory a sport as some folks think, but nonetheless, I wouldn't recommend it for the squeamish.



One of Baron LaCroix's men clears out a nest of fever spiders.

Cajuns and Bayou Vermillion

Lately, reports of Cajun trackers and hunters in LaCroix's rail gangs have reached the *Epitaph*. This struck me a little odd, as the Cajuns are usually a fairly provincial bunch and not given to involving themselves with the business of others. Also, most Cajuns I've met are basically good-natured folk who'd like nothing better than to "pass a good time," as they say. It seems out of character for any of these people to volunteer to participate in Baron LaCroix's bloody race to the Maze.

There was an even more compelling reason for them to not cooperate with Bayou Vermillion. When LaCroix first began laying his tracks west across Louisiana, he pushed his right-of-ways straight through the heart of Cajun country. A number of families were forcibly displaced, and in some places, fierce fighting between Bayou Vermillion enforcers and Cajuns broke out.

When all of that is considered, it just didn't make sense to me that Cajuns would now tote guns for the Baron. Not being one to pass up a potential story, I did a little investigating and discovered an interesting fact. It seems the Cajuns owe a debt to LaCroix.

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Fever Spiders

These creatures are large spiders just about the size of a man's palm. They hide in the brush and vines of the bayous, attacking anyone unfortunate enough to stumble into their nests. I understand their bite is painful, but not deadly. A victim of a fever-spider bite suffers a high fever for a few days and then recovers.

Shortly thereafter, the fever returns, and the victim goes into a killing rage. The only effective treatment found for this homicidal mania is death. Families and even small settlements have been massacred by victims of fever-spider bites.

Here's where LaCroix stepped in. He offered to help the Cajuns in exchange for recruits for his army. He sent some of his own men, who were somehow immune to the venom, into the bayous to clear out the nests and burn any breeding areas.

Although these tactics haven't completely wiped out the spiders, they have greatly reduced the danger. LaCroix still sends patrols into the bayou on a regular basis to keep the spider population down.

In accordance with their part of the bargain, the Cajuns now provide LaCroix with some of their best marksmen.



A venomous cottonmouth snake prepares to strike!

Swamps and Bayous

It's just about impossible to travel the lower Mississippi River without hearing mention of some swamp or such-and-such bayou. Most tinhorns just assume they're just two different names for the same thing. Well, take my word for it, there may not look like there's much of a difference between a swamp and a bayou, but getting them confused could cause a tenderfoot a lot of heartache.

Swamps are pretty common throughout most of the eastern Confederacy. There's the Great Dismal, the Everglades, and the Okefenokee. A swamp, or marsh, is a low area of wetlands. It's often filled with stagnant water.

On the other hand, a bayou is a sluggish channel of water. The important word to remember there is "sluggish." That means the water is moving. These channels are often formed when a river shifts and leaves a little behind. Bayous usually drain into other water courses. Swamps tend to drain other waterways into themselves.

If you sit in a boat in a bayou, it's going to eventually drift somewhere downstream. On the other hand, if you try the same stunt in a swamp, you're just going to watch the grass grow. One way to think about it is a bayou is a corridor and a swamp is a dead-end. Of course, that's a generalization and, as such, not likely to prove true in all cases.

Out in the Bayous

The bayou is an entirely different world than most folks are used to. There's more water in southern Louisiana than land, and most of what little ground there is has the consistency of mashed potatoes and barely qualifies to be called solid. Quicksand is a constant hazard for travelers in the swamps.

The other thing the bayous have in abundance is vegetation. Cypress trees grow throughout the marshlands, supported above the waters in places only by their tangled root system. Together with the cobweblike Spanish moss, the foliage from the trees permanently shades areas of the bayous.

Critters of Swamps and Bayous

As you can imagine, there's quite a variety of creatures in the wetlands of southern Louisiana. Some of it you can see just about anywhere, but others are found only in the murky waters of



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these areas. There are a number of birds, like egrets and pelicans, that adorn the marshes with their plumage. Fisherman can catch bass, catfish, and trout in the waterways.

However, since you've purchased an *Epitaph Guide* to the area, odds are you've got more immediate concerns on your mind than pretty feathers on seabirds—like, for instance, what type of animals are liable to jump up and bite your eyebrows off.

Alligators

This throwback to the dinosaur is certainly fearsome in appearance. Although these beasts may appear to be something from a nightmare, with their fanged mouths and armored skin, they are quite real—and dangerous. Growing up to 20 feet in length, capable of running faster than a man on land, and consummate swimmers, alligators are not to be underestimated.

A few folks make a living from the hides of these monsters, but they're experienced hunters. While the beasts may seem sluggish and slow-witted, these reptiles are capable of incredible speed and are very unpredictable. Should you encounter one of them, don't bother it—and hope it doesn't bother you.

Old Al

There was a story, back when I was working the riverboats, about Old Al. According to the old-timers, Old Al was the largest 'gator to ever have lived, and the king of the Mississippi River.

The legend goes all the way back to the days of the flatboat. Riverboat men used to drop a little tobacco over the side to pacify Old Al. If they didn't, the wily 'gator was likely to move snags into their boat's path, or worse yet, just gobble the crew up!

In my years on the river, I must confess to having never once seen Old Al. But although I may chuckle at the story, late at night out on the Mississippi, I always make sure my tobacco pouch is full before boarding a riverboat. No sense in taking chances, after all.

Snakes

The other real threat to life and limb out in the swamp is also reptilian. Every type of poisonous snake on the North American continent is represented in the wetlands of southern Louisiana. You're liable to encounter cottonmouths, copperheads, coral snakes, and, of course, rattlesnakes.

Now, most of you probably know if you hear a rattler's tail to hightail it away from the sound.

Cottonmouths are nearly as poisonous a rattler and a whole lot quieter to boot. Also, a cottonmouth isn't likely to run from you like other snakes. It just rears back and opens its white mouth to give you a good look at its fangs. That white mouth is why folks call it a cottonmouth, by the way.

Copperheads are hard to pick out in the undergrowth, their mottled scales looking like nothing so much as a pile of dead leaves. Fortunately, these camouflaged vipers are the least poisonous of the lot. Many have been bitten by a copperhead and lived to tell about it.

Finally, there's the coral snake. This small snake is deadly poisonous. Its bright yellow, red, and black bands often cause folks to confuse it with nonpoisonous snakes. An easy rhyme that may save your life in the swamp goes "Red and yellow kill a fellow." If those colors touch, you'd better not!

Finding a Guide

If my brief description of the natural hazards of the swamps and bayous hasn't convinced you, let me be blunt: If you're planning an expedition into the wetlands of southern Louisiana, hire an experienced guide. The swamp is unforgiving, and not a few people have lost their lives to unseen dangers obvious to any competent guide.

Virtually any community along the lower river has someone willing to lead trips into the swamp. However, not all can be trusted, so let me recommend a man I have used on several of my own expeditions into the wilderness.

Bernard Sullerot

Bernard Sullerot makes his home in the community of Welcome, which some folks in these parts call Winchester. Welcome is about halfway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, and as good a place for anyone wishing to head off into the wilderness.

Although Bernard is of Cajun descent, he's fairly outgoing with strangers. This is part of the reason for his success, I suppose, because Bernard is one of the most sought-after guides in the area. Folks claim he knows the twists and turns of the waterways like his own kitchen. Having traveled with him on more than one occasion, I can attest to that.

His prices are fair at \$1.50 a day, and he supplies one pirogue at that price. He can arrange for others if need be.

In spite of his open personality, Bernard retains many of the customs of his ancestors. He's a devout Catholic, so folks

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An artist's rendition of the legendary (and odious) skunk ape.

who have strongly different opinions on the subject of religion had best look elsewhere for a guide. Bernard is also fairly superstitious and believes it bad luck to be in the swamp during nights of the full moon. Be sure to consult your almanacs, because he absolutely won't accept jobs during that time.

Legends of the Swamps

As if all the normal hazards of the swamplands weren't enough, there are numerous legends of the supernatural among the Cajuns and other folks that live back in the Louisiana swamplands. I'll take just a few moments to touch on some of the more interesting of the lot. As is often the case with such tales of local color, I have been unable to produce hard evidence either proving or disproving these tales.

Buried Treasure

Pirates used to operate all along the Gulf Coast back before things got too settled. Occasionally, after plundering a rich merchant ship, the scoundrels would slip away into the bayous to hide their ill-gotten gain. Given the low life-expectancy of the profession,

it's no surprise that some of these treasures were never reclaimed by the thieves who buried them.

One of these treasures is supposed to be buried somewhere near Lake Verret, about 20 miles southwest of Welcome. No one has collected it yet because not only is it hidden, it's also said to be guarded by the ghosts of the pirates who hid it and their captain.

Gaston Martignauc, the one swamp dweller who claimed to know where the treasure chest is, says he was on the verge of uncovering it when the guardians chased him off. He points to his white hair as proof of his story. Folks who know him do say his hair was jet black one day and stark white the next! Gaston isn't telling where the treasure is, although he doesn't mind spinning the tale of his night on the swamp for any visitors who care to listen.

Couchemals

Couchemals, also called feux-follets, are what Cajuns call the strange lights sometimes seen in the marshes. They claim these are "ghost lights" caused by the death of an unbaptized infant.

These spirits are supposed to be malicious in nature and should always be avoided. According to legend, they seek to lead unwary or solitary travelers into dangerous and deadly situations.

Skunk Apes

Late at night in a ramshackle bar somewhere along the lower Mississippi, you might hear the words "skunk ape"—or "peremalfait" if you're in Cajun country—whispered in a low tone. The name refers to a creature supposed to hide back in the darkest parts of the swamps, only rarely sneaking out of the marshes to prey on good, God-fearing folks.

Skunk apes are large, shaggy, manlike creatures standing almost eight feet tall. They exude a stench unlike any living creature on Earth, smelling like a combination of a compost pile and rotting cabbage, hence the name.

By its description, you might be tempted to mistake it for a sasquatch, a creature Lacy O'Malley described in the first *Tombstone Epitaph's Guide*. This is not the case. Make no mistake, the skunk ape is no noble or kind denizen of the wilderness. These abominations are supposed to be monstrous killers, battering through the thin plank walls of a swamp cabin and crushing their victims in a viselike grip.

As always, it's better to be safe than a guest of the undertaker, so should you be in the swamps and catch wind of an odor like I've described, I advise a hasty retreat.



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The Delta



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Unlike most other large rivers, the Mississippi does not empty into a protected bay. Instead, it pours directly into the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. As it reaches the ocean, the Mississippi drops sediment it's been carrying for hundreds of miles. As the sediment settles, it extends the land a little further into the Gulf. Much of southeastern Louisiana below Baton Rouge owes its existence to these mud deposits.

Because of this process, the mouth of the Mississippi is one of the shallowest parts of the river. Where it pours into the Gulf, the river actually resembles a 35-mile-wide marsh more than the entrance to a great waterway.

Navigating the Delta

The shallow depths of the delta make it one of the toughest parts of the river to get a boat of any real size through. Although the entire area is waterlogged, only three routes are navigable. These are the Southwest Pass, the North Pass, and the Main Pass.

Even these frequently become clogged with silt and have to be cleaned out to allow ships to pass. There was talk a few years ago about building jetties to force the river to clear its own channels, but so far nothing's been done. For now, the job of keeping the passes clear falls to the Pilot Town Channel Company.

Pilot Town Channel Company

Pilot Town is the last town on the Mississippi River. It's built so far out in the delta the only way to reach it is by boat. It used to be home to river pilots who'd guide ships through narrow channels into and out of the delta. Now, its main industry is keeping the channels clear.

The Pilot Town Channel Company received the contract for this task from the Louisiana state government. I don't know what the exact details of the deal were, but you can bet they're well reimbursed for their efforts. After all, New Orleans is the largest Confederate port!

The company accomplishes its job with a fleet of five specially modified snagboats. Instead of chainsaw and boom assemblies, the boats carry a high-power spray assembly. The boats use these enormous jets to blast water into the channel to clear the silt.

It's not the most efficient method, but it does work. The boats run the passes about two to three times each week.



One of the Pilot Town Channel Company's special boats clears a channel.

The Delta Pox

Lately, word has come upriver about a new disease plaguing the Pilot Town workers. It seems limited to the area around the mouth of the Mississippi and is being referred to as "the Delta pox."

It acts a lot like smallpox—leaving small oozing pockmarks—but much faster and deadlier. No symptoms are exhibited prior to onset. One minute a victim is alive, and the next, he's on his way to his eternal reward. There has not been a single instance of a victim recovering from the disease.

To date, no one has had the opportunity to observe the pox run its course. Only lone individuals have been afflicted. It appears the onset time is only a few minutes. One of the Pilot Town workers died during a trip to the outhouse!

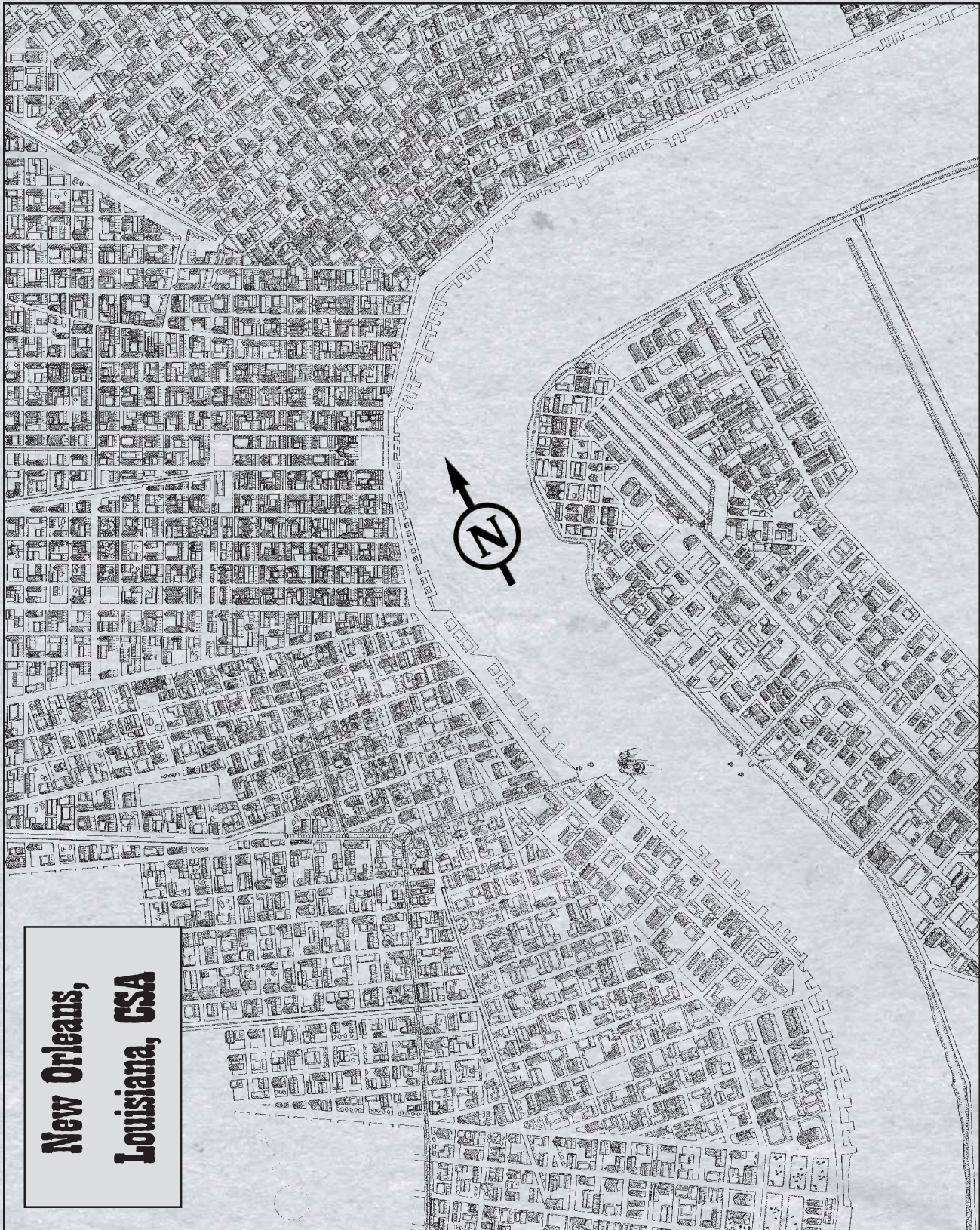
Solomon Thayer has generously pledged to dedicate some of the resources of his medical facility at Haven to discover the cause of this plague. In the meantime, the Pilot Town Channel Company has offered a \$1,000 incentive to anyone who can stop the disease.

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Chapter Five:

The Crescent City: New Orleans

Well, we've surveyed the Mississippi from St. Louis to the Delta, and now we come to the crowning jewel of the river: New Orleans. Due to its importance to the Confederacy, I've decided to devote an entire chapter of this *Guide* to it and its people.

At first glance, the city of New Orleans seems to have gotten the raw end of the deal when it comes to location. Few people would likely consider the middle of a festering swamp prime real estate. Nonetheless, the French did decide to put a city down on a stretch of ground that can only be called "dry land" by someone with a good sense of humor.

Rough Beginnings

New Orleans was founded in 1718 by Jean Baptiste le Moyne, titled Sieur de Bienville. If that name sounds a little familiar to you, it means you've been paying attention. Jean Baptiste was the younger brother of Pierre le Moyne, founder of Baton Rouge. The le Moyne brothers kept themselves pretty busy in the early years of the Louisiana colony.

Jean Baptiste founded the town on behalf of the Company of the Indies, a company holding a monopoly over trade in the French colonies in the New World. Run by a Scotsman, John Law, the Company of the Indies was actually an elaborate get-rich-quick scheme. Once the claims of gold and riches were exposed as a swindle, Law was forced to flee France to avoid angry mobs of investors.

Floods, hurricanes, and Indian uprisings prevented New Orleans from being a cash cow and finally the Company of the Indies was reduced to begging the French crown to take the colony off its hands in 1731.

The Spanish Take a Turn

Well, the French muddled through the next 30 years not really making any great progress here. New Orleans, just like the rest of the Louisiana territory, was secretly given to the Spanish crown in 1762 to keep it out of English hands.

Of course, no one thought to tell the colonists in New Orleans. Several months later, when the newly appointed Spanish governor arrived, folks were a mite

confused. To top it off, their former trading partners in the Caribbean stopped doing business with them, claiming the colony was just too unstable.

All this came to a head in 1768, when rumors began to circulate that the Spanish were planning to sell the Acadians into slavery and default on debts to other immigrants. The colonists revolted against the Spanish, which, as you may have guessed, made the King of Spain none too happy. He responded by sending 2,600 mercenaries to New Orleans—more soldiers than the entire male population of the city. The rebellion was quickly, and violently, put down.

Let's Try the French Again

Just as quietly as it entered Spanish hands New Orleans was ceded back to Napoleon in 1800. The diminutive general had his hands full that year, what with beating the Turks, the Austrians, and the Italians, so he let the Spanish continue to run the colony.

By the time Napoleon got around to thinking about Louisiana again, he decided he really didn't want to bothered with it after all. Thomas Jefferson, then President of the US, wanted Louisiana, and Napoleon wanted money, so the Emperor agreed to sell the entire colony less than 5¢ an acre.

To carry out the transaction, the territory would first have to be returned to France. On November 30, 1803, New Orleans was returned to French hands. Twenty-four hours later, the American flag was raised over the city.

The Stars and Stripes

Things didn't go as smoothly at first as Jefferson had hoped. The French-speaking, Catholic populace of New Orleans was less than enthusiastic about their primarily English-speaking, Protestant countrymen. The nuns of the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans were so afraid of what kind of treatment they'd receive at the hands of the United States that they packed up and fled to Cuba.

In spite of the language and religion barriers, New Orleans began to grow. By 1810, it was the fifth largest city in the United States and the largest city south of Maryland, and west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Louisiana was admitted as the United State's 18th state in 1812. The future seemed to finally beginning to take an upturn for the city. Then, only a few months after Louisiana achieved statehood, the US Congress declared war against Great Britain.

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The British are Coming!

In 1814, rumors began to circulate that Great Britain was planning to attack New Orleans. Through remarkably poor planning and a good measure of bad luck, the young United States was unable to raise an army. It had simply run out of money. Fortunately, the Crescent City had a guardian: Major General Andrew Jackson.

General Jackson imposed martial law on the city and raised troops by conscripting any man who could hold a gun. This still left his ragtag army greatly outnumbered, so he formed an unlikely alliance with the Choctaw Indians and also welcomed free people of color into his army. However, his boldest move was enlisting the aid of Jean Lafitte.

The Pirate Lafitte

Jean Lafitte arrived in New Orleans in 1805 with his brother Pierre. The two set up shop as pirates, attacking and plundering ships along the Gulf coast. The slave trade meant that there were rich pickings in those waters. The Lafitte brothers based their operation in Barataria Bay, just south of New Orleans.

Less than six years after he began, he had raised a fleet of 32 warships—more than the entire US Navy at the time!

Lafitte was as flamboyant as he was successful. When the governor of Louisiana offered a \$500 reward for Lafitte's capture, the pirate, in turn, offered a \$1,500 reward for the governor. While the citizens of New Orleans found this hilarious, the governor, understandably, did not.

When the British prepared to attack New Orleans, the commanding officer, General Pakenham, asked Lafitte to join forces with him. In return, he offered him a commission in the British army and protection for his extralegal operations. Lafitte pretended interest in the offer, but instead forwarded it on to the Louisiana governor.

Some folks today say it wasn't patriotism that guided Lafitte's choice. The British simply didn't offer him enough! Whatever the reason, Lafitte and his men turned out for the battle on General Jackson's side.

As a side note, no one knows what really became of Jean Lafitte in later life. After returning to piracy following the War of 1812, he eventually dropped out of sight. Some say that he decided to tread the straight and narrow, got married, and moved up north. Others say he died at sea or down in Mexico.

The Battle of New Orleans

On January 8, 1815, the British moved against General Jackson's motley crew. Around 8,000 British regulars, including such prominent units as the Duchess of York's Light Dragoons and the 93rd Highlanders, advanced on Jackson's 3,000 militia men. The Americans took cover behind bales of cotton and straw and unloaded volley after volley of gunfire into the advancing Redcoats.

When the smoke cleared, 858 British soldiers lay dead. Another 2,500 were wounded. The Americans, on the other hand, lost only 15 men and 40 wounded. Although the British didn't sail away for another two weeks, the battle was over.

As the citizens were celebrating the resounding defeat of the British, word came that the US and Great Britain had signed a peace treaty on Christmas Eve. The war had ended two weeks before the Battle of New Orleans even took place. As usual, the folks of New Orleans were the last to find out.

Dixieland

Following the War of 1812, New Orleans entered an age of prosperity and growth. In addition to having a war named after it, the year 1812 also marked the arrival of the first steamboat in the city, aptly titled the *New Orleans*. Within a few short years, New Orleans became the bustling port its founders had envisioned.

European markets couldn't seem to buy Southern cotton, sugarcane, and indigo fast enough. The city's economy was booming, and its banks were among the strongest in the country. New Orleans' \$10 notes, also known as "dix" notes for the French term for 10 printed on the opposite side of the bill, were one of the few currencies accepted throughout the early 19th-century United States. Riverboatmen were soon calling New Orleans "Dixieland," a term now lovingly applied to the entire Confederacy.

Still, the division between the old aristocratic European, or Creole, families and the newer, but no less wealthy, American planters remained. The two cultures divided the city neatly in half at Canal Street.

New Orleans continued to grow in wealth and population, at one time becoming the third-largest city in the United States as well as the second-busiest port. By 1860, nearly 170,000 people called the city home.

But the very next year, all this came to an abrupt halt.

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The War

When Louisiana ceded from the Union in 1861, many citizens of New Orleans had mixed feelings. Much of the city's wealth floated downriver on Northern steamboats. Ironically, the first shot of the war was fired on Fort Sumter by forces commanded by General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, himself a Creole native of Louisiana.

One of the first actions taken by the US President, the late Abraham Lincoln, was to declare a blockade of Southern ports. Slow-moving at first, the blockade proved dangerously effective once it was in place. In the course of a single year, New Orleans was cutoff from international contact by a Union fleet commanded by Admiral David Farragut.

Occupation!

After a brief naval engagement, New Orleans fell to Union hands on May 1, 1862. The occupying troops were commanded by Major General Benjamin Butler. General Butler took a rather heavy-handed approach to governing the city, a style that didn't sit well with the easygoing attitude of its citizens.

One of Butler's first acts was to carry out the Federal Confiscation Act, which allowed him to seize the property of any individual who didn't immediately swear allegiance to the Union. While under his command, the occupying Union force also proclaimed public gatherings of any size illegal in the city.

Butler's occupation was short lived however. On the night of July 3, 1862, somehow the citizens of New Orleans were able to stage a successful rebellion against the 5,000-man garrison. Some people claim the rebels killed most of the soldiers as they slept, but no one in the city has ever confirmed that claim. Oddly enough, the citizens are very closemouthed about the whole event. Mentioning it in polite company is just not done. I was actually bodily ejected from the house of a man I considered a close friend for even bringing up the massacre.

General Butler had turned over command of the region to General Nathaniel Banks shortly before the massacre. Neither was in the city at the time of the incident. Many folks—both North and South of the Mason-Dixon—were more than a little disappointed to learn that General Butler was not a "participant" in the affair. It seems Butler's soldiering skills are just as lacking as his social ones!



New Orleans residents survey the wreckage of the Union relief flotilla.

A Failed Relief

When the Union sent ironclads and troop ships downriver to recapture the city, nearly the entire flotilla was sunk by hidden mines and obstacles. Here again, I find myself at a loss to explain how the citizens of New Orleans were able to amass the weapons needed to thwart a flotilla larger than the one which had originally defeated the Confederate defenders.

I have spoken to at least one witness to the flotilla's demise who says he heard not a single explosion during the attack. This casts some doubt on the truth behind the "mines" explanation. Unfortunately, he claims to have seen huge, black snakes slithering onto the Union vessels, which causes less-open-minded folks to question whether his version was actually witnessed in the bottom of a whiskey bottle rather than on the Mississippi!

A Hasty Defense

After the sudden defeat of the Union forces, the citizens of the city wasted no time in preparing for further Northern aggression. Within a few short weeks, thanks to Baron

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LaCroix's seemingly tireless workmen, New Orleans was nearly as heavily fortified as Richmond itself.

Walls and trenches are little defense if there are no soldiers behind them, and the Confederacy had few resources to send the Crescent City. A small militia was raised, but it was the continued heroic efforts of Baron LaCroix's employees that truly provided the city with the needed manpower. Day and night, the same workmen that built the breastworks manned them until regular troops could finally be detailed to New Orleans.

Recovery

For some time, the Union blockade continued to isolate New Orleans and the rest of the Confederacy. This didn't keep adventuresome captains from trying to run the blockade—especially since a king's ransom could be made this way.

The Louisiana coast is riddled with inlets and coves, many of which can be navigated far inland by a savvy crew—a fact Jean Lafitte and many other pirates capitalized on earlier in the century. These same cypress-lined mazes served to hide many a smuggler and blockade runner

during the next year or so. Finally, in early 1865, the intervention of England and other European powers brought an end to the Union stranglehold on the seas—much to the dismay of more than one sea captain who'd made his fortune outfoxing the picket ships.

Once free trade was restored, a lot of these "entrepreneurs" found themselves out of work—at least, highly lucrative work, that is. There is still some danger of running into a Yankee raider in the Caribbean, but the odds grow slimmer with each year.

Commerce Today

New Orleans remains the largest city in the Confederacy by a fair piece. Nearly 150,000 people call its streets home. It's also the foremost international port in the South as well, with nearly half the nation's imports and exports passing through its waterfront each year.

Its position on the Mississippi allows it to dominate the river trade. Two large Southern railroads, the KC & LR and the Bayou Vermillion juggernaut, also service the port. Water and rails combine to give ready and easy access to nearly any point in the Confederacy from New Orleans.

Also, unlike many other Confederate population centers, New Orleans suffered very little lasting damage from the war. Even with the blockade effectively broken, Yankee commerce raiders continue to plague the Atlantic coast. This has helped keep other, more easterly port cities, like Norfolk or Charleston, from overtaking New Orleans.

Thayer Shipping

The most prominent shipping company in New Orleans and probably the entire Mississippi River belongs to Solomon Thayer. His interests stretch all the way from the Delta to Memphis and further, if the price is right. There are far too many riverboat companies on the Mississippi for anyone to claim Thayer Shipping holds a monopoly on it, but it by far the best-known on the lower river.

Although some rail barons obviously see riverboats as competition, Thayer Shipping has forged an exclusive alliance with Bayou Vermillion in recent years. While this no doubt worsens relations between Thayer Shipping and the Memphis-based Black River, it has led to financial gains for both Thayer Shipping and Bayou Vermillion. Baron LaCroix is able to provide transport upriver for his freight, and Thayer is able to tap into the markets out West.



The Confederacy's lifeline: Ships sit in port in New Orleans.

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Solomon Thayer



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The owner of Thayer Shipping got his start in the import/export business back before the outbreak of the war. Dealing mainly in sugarcane and cotton, he amassed a small fortune during the heyday of the South. Many transport companies were crippled or destroyed during the Federal occupation, but Solomon Thayer's operation somehow not only weathered it, but emerged as the foremost riverboat company on the river.

Unlike many wealthy tycoons, Thayer has maintained a very favorable image among the common folk. Having lost his own family to the ravages of disease, he is especially sensitive to the plight of those suffering from the ravages of the flesh. The recuperative hospital Haven (see page 32) is but one example of his generosity and concern for his fellow man. Seldom is there an outbreak of yellow fever or cholera in which Thayer doesn't visit the afflicted victims in the city's hospitals.

He also stays out of both politics and the vicious social circles of New Orleans' high society much to the dismay of both groups. Many's the man who'd like to see his daughter married to the great Solomon Thayer, but he seems uninterested in the social games that his fellow tycoons play. While this hasn't endeared him to his fellow New Orleans "aristocrats," it has built him a great deal of good will with the regular folks.

Bayou Vermillion

As New Orleans is the headquarters for Bayou Vermillion, one of the six remaining competitors in the race to the Great Maze, the railroad certainly rates mention in this *Guide*. There can be no doubt the railroad's interests hold considerable sway with the city government—not as much as Mina Devlin and Black River in Memphis (at least not directly), but a fair amount nonetheless.

Currently, Bayou Vermillion appears to be the front-runner of the three Southern rail endeavors. Black River is only now reaching the Rockies, and Robert E. Lee's Dixie Rails is tied up in legal disputes with the Santa Fe & El Paso in New Mexico. In fact, only Iron Dragon to the far north has progressed as far across the continent as Baron LaCroix's railroad has. Unfortunately for Baron LaCroix, a combination of inhospitable terrain and Apaches has stalled his own efforts just west of Tombstone, Arizona.

Now, add to the pride locals hold for the railroad's success a fair amount of understated gratitude for Baron LaCroix's assistance during the overthrow of the Union occupying force. What you end up with is a good deal of support in the area for the oft-maligned rail baron and his company.

My own longtime friend Lacy O'Malley has voiced suspicions of Bayou Vermillion misconduct in other *Epitaph* guides. The local opinion in New Orleans holds Baron LaCroix is simply suffering the effects of prejudice against his religious practices—or at least that's what folks claim in public anyway.

Rumblings of Discontent

However, underneath the surface of the city there runs a wire-tight tension. Rumors abound over the nature of LaCroix's workers and his rather eccentric practices. Unlike Marie Laveau, the other popular voodoo practitioner in New Orleans, LaCroix's ceremonies are private and exclusive—leading to whispers of black rites and worse.

The railroad's supporters claim these accusations are nothing more than propaganda spread by Marie Laveau and her followers, who certainly have no love for the baron. (See page 66 for more details on the rivalry between these two.) These rebuttals are certainly believable, but, having seen LaCroix's glassy-eyed "workers" once or twice myself, I can't help but wonder if there isn't some truth to the claims of dark voodoo magic at work behind the walls of the baron's estate.

Baron LaCroix

Lots of folks wonder about the reclusive owner of Bayou Vermillion, the mysterious man who insists he be referred to as "Baron" LaCroix. Although he assumed the title years before his railroad afforded him the epithet of rail baron, he's never explained the origin of his claim. Very little, in fact, is known of the Baron's history prior to his arrival in New Orleans in 1861.

In preparing this *Guide*, I attempted to gain audience with the secretive rail baron in hopes to enlighten the readership on his rise to power. However, time and time again I was stymied in my efforts to meet the man, never once getting further than the gates of his River Road manor. Finally, my efforts were rewarded with a brief meeting with Damien Brionne, one of Baron LaCroix's closest advisors.

Mr. Brionne was kind enough to provide a brief biography of Baron LaCroix.



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A rare photo of Bayou Vermillion owner Baron Simone LaCroix

Personally, I found the press release to be a bit self-aggrandizing and not too informative. However, I decided to present it in full, in the hopes our readers can glean some information from it:

Baron Simone LaCroix was born the only son of a wealthy European planter in Haiti some 40 years ago. On his father's passing in 1858, the young man assumed his father's estate and business. Through bold maneuvering of the sort which has brought him success in the race to the West, the new Baron LaCroix extended his holdings far beyond his inheritance.

By the beginning of 1860, Baron LaCroix realized the geographic position enjoyed by New Orleans guaranteed it an important place in an emerging nation. Moving his household to the city during the next year, he began to explore potential avenues for business expansion. Unfortunately, a few short months after arriving, he found the city under siege by the Union government.

The Baron's contribution to the overthrow and subsequent defense of the city is well-known and need not be elaborated on again here. Suffice to say his selfless

contributions to the efforts to defend against Northern aggression were instrumental in protecting the interests of all loyal citizens in New Orleans.

Following the defeat of the occupying Union forces, Baron LaCroix found himself suffering persecution because of his own religious practices. These attacks came not from his adopted country (which constitutionally guaranteed his freedoms in this respect), but rather from rivals who saw his success as a threat to their own petty schemes.

Holding himself above such trivial squabbles, the Baron remained steadfast in his support of the citizenry of New Orleans and the Confederacy. His new country eventually provided him an opportunity to challenge his formidable resources and will when President Jefferson Davis initiated the race to the Great Maze.

Since that time, Baron LaCroix has forged ahead of the other competitors and provided New Orleans a vital link to the rich ghost-rock mines of the Confederate Southwest."

Although Brionne's article is liberally spiced with boasting, it does offer an explanation for at least a couple of the mysteries about the baron. For nearly a decade, folks in New Orleans have wondered how the baron obtained his wealth and title. If the release can be believed, at least those two have been answered in part.

The article also touches briefly on the conflict Baron LaCroix faced with other voodooists in New Orleans. In this affair, I can vouch there is some basis in fact. Marie Laveau, the preeminent queen of voodoo in the city, has opposed his interests since the baron began to gain popularity in the city.

Many claim the conflict arises from the baron's refusal to accept Marie as the leader of the practice in New Orleans. There is certainly ample evidence she desires absolute control of the religion and rightly sees the Baron as a threat to her dominance. Others instead point the finger at him, naming him an evil bokkor who seeks to usurp her power.

Sins of Omission?

After reading the release, I can't help but ponder some of the glaring vacancies in the article. Brionne conveniently neglects to address some of the more interesting accusations against Baron LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion.

Notably, nowhere does he mention the claims of drugged workers or dark voodoo magic so often attributed to his employer.

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One must wonder why, when provided such an open forum in which to address damaging rumors of this sort, the writer would choose to simply exclude any reference. Could Baron LaCroix simply consider it beneath him to respond to these claims? Or is it because the truth may prove more damaging to the rail baron than unconfirmed rumors?

Disease



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Pestilence has always had a free hand in New Orleans. From its earliest days, the city has been plagued by wave after wave of outbreaks of one deadly epidemic or another. The months from July to October are feared in the city more for disease than the hurricanes which also arrive during that season.

Yellow Menace

The city's worst enemy hasn't been General Butler, as many would claim, but "Bronze John," also known as "Yellow Jack." Both names refer to yellow fever, a disease which ravaged the city nearly every other year during the four decades preceding the Civil War. The disease is characterized by spontaneous bleeding from the mucous membranes, vomiting of blood, and the pronounced jaundice which gives the disease its name. Nearly 9,000 folks fell victim to the malady in 1853 alone.

Other Maladies

Of course, yellow fever isn't the only disease to plague New Orleans. It also has bouts of cholera. The first one, in 1832, accounted for the deaths of nearly one-seventh of the city's population. Smallpox still lurks in the gutters of New Orleans, claiming a few hundred victims every year in spite of advances in medicine.

Doctors in the Crescent City spend a large amount of their time studying diseases and their causes. The Medical Department of the University of Louisiana has a number of medical practitioners devoted to finding the source of yellow fever. As I mentioned earlier, the doctors at Haven are also on the case, and Solomon Thayer funds the recuperative sanatorium near Vicksburg.

In spite of all the research being done into the epidemics, I fear no solution to the maladies plaguing the city is in sight for the near future. Until such is found, it's best to avoid long stays in New Orleans during the "plague months," as July, August, September, and October are commonly known there.

City Government

Day-to-day affairs in the Crescent City are run by the Mayor and the 15-member New Orleans city council. The current mayor of New Orleans is Dewey Nelson, a prominent supplier of goods to the Confederate military. Nelson was just elected to his third term of office in the November elections.

Truth be known, the city government doesn't do much aside from coordinating garbage removal, taking care of zoning issues, and issuing business permits. Even the law enforcement is taken care of by a private company (see The Law, below).

While I'm not saying that the council is in anyone's pocket, I have noticed that Thayer Shipping and Bayou Vermillion do tend to get their way around here. Perhaps it's just the enormous economic clout that both companies have, but one must wonder.

Military Presence

As the Confederacy's most important port, the Crescent City is understandably well defended. In the wake of the New Orleans Massacre, Baron LaCroix added the Bayou Vermillion workforce to that of the citizenry fortifying the city. Warships are at a premium in the Confederacy, so the decision was made to fortify the area rather than patrol it.

Today a series of five massive river forts control the Mississippi around New Orleans. Forts Lafitte, Phillipe, Bienville, and Monroe and a rebuilt Fort Jackson are manned by a total of 5,000 CSA Army troops under the command of General Gerald Lawler.

There are three full sets comprised of two massive, 100-pound vapor cannons emplaced in each fort. The guns are a marvel of modern military design, capable of accurately hurling a shell five miles!

The Law

A city the size of New Orleans is bound to have more than its fair share of criminal activity. Any large population draws a sizable number of two-legged jackals hoping to snatch a morsel from someone more fortunate than themselves.

There are a few agencies in the city dedicated, at least on paper, to curtailing the criminal element.



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New Orleans Police Department

Unlike many towns west of the Mississippi, New Orleans possesses a standing police department similar to many Eastern cities. Due to the sheer size of the population, a large, organized force is necessary to maintain order.

The force is structured similar to other police departments Back East, with patrolmen, sergeants, and a police captain. Take heed because, if you're more accustomed to the Western style of law enforcement, you'll wait a long time if you send someone for the marshal. The nearest one is about 10 miles upriver!

The police force is owned—that's right, owned—by Alexander Bolles. By some quirk of design, the primary municipal police agency is a privately owned establishment. Ideally, this is supposed to remove the potential for political corruption. In practice, it means law enforcement is largely the whim of Mr. Bolles—who has been known to close down the police department after an argument with Mayor Nelson or the city council.

Worse, Mr. Bolles proves on a daily basis that the scales of Justice can be balanced with money. I deny the claims that the New Orleans

police are on the payroll of Bayou Vermillion. I instead assert they're willing to accept contributions from the highest bidder! Of course, few folks can outbid a rail baron anyway.

Texas Rangers

In spite of the well-known poor relations between the staff of the *Epitaph* and the Texas Rangers, I must grant that they are a stabilizing force in New Orleans. Or at least they were, prior to the recent demise of Lieutenant Jacob McKay.

Lieutenant McKay was in charge of Ranger operations in and around the city. Although some members of the organization tend to think common law enforcement is beneath them, he was never so caught up in bullying honest journalists that he forgot his civil obligations. Unfortunately, like so many other residents of New Orleans, McKay contracted a fatal ailment and died just prior to publication of this *Guide*.

At present, the local garrison has no officer in charge, although a few lower-ranking Rangers are still in the area. Hopefully, they will soon find an officer of Lieutenant McKay's caliber. I fear at times only the constant threat of the Rangers kept Baron LaCroix from blatantly abusing his position and power.



A Silent Necropolis: The soft ground around the Crescent City has led to the use of above-ground graveyards.

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Cities of the Dead



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Travelers accustomed to the simple wooden crosses or tombstones of other cemeteries are often taken aback by those in New Orleans. The dead aren't buried in the Crescent City. Instead they're entombed in above-ground, stone crypts standing on average six feet tall or higher, or in large walls of ovenlike tombs. No formal design was in place for the earlier cemeteries. The tombs are scattered pell-mell throughout the grounds in chaotic and labyrinthine patterns capable of confusing even the legendary Minotaur.

The reason normal graves aren't used in New Orleans is a simple fact of geography. The city's average elevation is about three feet *below* sea level, making it prone to frequent flooding. Early residents did initially bury their dead in the ground, but they found the deceased had a disturbing tendency to return to the surface with the next heavy rain. Eventually, the settlers gave up and left the dear departed above ground, surrounded by stone.

While a New Orleans necropolis is an intriguing place to visit, I recommend arriving early in the day. A visitor can easily lose her way in the mazelike walkways and wander for an hour or more before finding the exit. Given the variety of hazards—human and otherwise—roaming New Orleans after nightfall, it's probably unwise to be caught in one of these cities of the dead after dark.

St. Louis No. 1

The oldest remaining necropolis in New Orleans is also the only one within walking distance of the French Quarter. This sprawling maze of random tombs occupies two entire blocks. Primarily a Catholic cemetery, a small portion near the back was set aside for Protestants, although many of these tombs were moved in the early 1830s to make room for an extension of Tremé Street.

Near the front of the cemetery are excellent examples of the "oven" tombs used for the less-fortunate members of the city. Often two or more bodies are interred in a single "oven." The previous occupant is simply pushed further in to make room for the tombmate. This practice isn't limited to the "ovens." Many of the standing crypts hold as many as 10 or more inhabitants. For the sake of good taste, I won't go into the details of how this many are held in a single tomb.

One of the most visited tombs in the cemetery is also one of the more recent. Marked only as "The Widow of Paris," this tomb bears evidence of many secretive visitors. Melted candles are found nearly every morning at the tomb door, and chalk crosses adorn the walls, but no daytime callers are seen at the grave.

St. Peter Street Cemetery

For a morbid reminder of New Orleans past, one must look no farther than the St. Peter Street Cemetery, which lies in the block formed between Rampart, Toulouse, St. Peter, and Burgundy Streets. Actually, one might have to look farther, because this cemetery no longer exists as such.

This block was designated as a cemetery in the original city layout in 1721, and it served that purpose for the better part of the 18th century. The ground was artificially elevated to allow below-ground burials.

While the cemetery was originally surrounded by a wooden palisade, complaints about the sight and stench of the place led to the construction of a brick wall around the place in 1743. The wall was dedicated on All Saint's Day of that year. This is believed to have been the first of the now traditional "celebrations of the dead" that take place in the New Orleans area every year on All Saint's Day.

Now comes the uncomfortable part of our little story. By 1800, the St. Peter Street Cemetery was, for all intents and purposes, full. The land it was on was now a prime site for building in the expanding city, and the land was subdivided into lots and sold. While it is known that a few of the older monuments and remains were moved to St. Louis No. 1, it seems pretty certain that most of the remains were left where they lay. The buildings in that block were constructed on a bed of corpses!

Strangely for this day and age, I can find no record of any strange activity in these buildings, despite their gruesome foundations.

Metairie Cemetery

This cemetery has perhaps the most colorful history of any within the city. In 1871, the story goes, Charles T. Howard was blackballed from joining the Metairie Jockey Club. Many men in New Orleans would have felt honor-bound to fight a duel over the slight, but not Mr. Howard. Instead, he bought the club's racetrack in 1872 and turned it into the Metairie Cemetery.

Now, Mr. Howard says, members have to die before he'll let them back in!



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City of Masks: Revelers fill the streets during the Mardi Gras carnival.

Mardi Gras

It's a common claim Mardi Gras was invented to keep the citizens of New Orleans from having parties all year long. At that it's only partly successful, since some folks start celebrating as early as November 1 and keep going until late spring. However, the official start of the Mardi Gras Carnival begins on the 12th night after Christmas, or January 6, and continues until Mardi Gras, the Tuesday before the beginning of Lent.

This period is filled with parties, balls, and nighttime parades. During Carnival, the streets are packed with revelers wearing all sorts of outlandish masks and costumes. The festival got so rowdy at one time that city officials outlawed masking, since no one could identify criminals during Carnival, but the law was summarily ignored and eventually rescinded.

Regardless of local opinion, I strongly caution visitors to New Orleans during the Carnival season to travel in groups. Revelers are viewed as easy targets by the local criminal element, and as the early officials feared, a villain is virtually assured anonymity by wearing a costume.



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The French Quarter

This is the oldest section of New Orleans, standing on the very site Sieur de Bienville laid the foundations of the city. While the cobblestoned blocks certainly have the air of an Old World city, the name is somewhat misleading. All of the buildings in the French Quarter were actually built during the period of Spanish rule. Two major fires and three hurricanes swept through the city between 1788 and 1794, laying to rest nearly all the examples of French architecture.

Places of Note

Bourbon Street

To most New Orleans visitors, Bourbon Street is the French Quarter. For travelers wishing to sample the famous earthy pleasures of the district, I do recommend it above the less reputable areas, such as Gallatin Street. Less dangerous than many of the riverfront areas, it has no shortage of saloons, gambling houses, and even, for lack of a better term, roosts for soiled doves.



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For those not interested in such pursuits, Bourbon Street does hold some fine examples of older French Quarter architecture. However, there is no shortage of other, less worldly areas in which to view similar structures in the district.

Confederate Mint

Built back in 1837, this old US mint was taken over for the Confederacy in 1861. It was in service for barely a year when the Union seized it and turned it into a prison for Confederate soldiers. Once the Union forces were defeated, the mint was refurbished and put back into operation. Now, it's one of the largest in the country, and it turns out several hundred thousand dollars a year in coins.

Before any of the more adventurous readers of this *Guide* get any ideas about getting rich quickly and illegally, let me say the mint is built like a fortress and heavily guarded. Anyone planning to rob it should have their grave paid for prior to setting off on the job!

Congo Square

A small picket fence surrounds this large open area encompassing two blocks on North Rampart Street. Other than the grass, only a few scattered sycamore trees dot the square. It would be an unremarkable town park if not for the fact in 1817 the New Orleans municipal council designated it as the area for slaves to meet and hold dances.

Those dances were actually voodoo ceremonies, and the square soon after became one of the primary areas for public practice of the religion. The square takes its current name from the large drums used to keep dancers' rhythm.

Today, Marie Laveau often holds her public Sunday ceremonies in the square. These draw quite a crowd, so if you want to catch a glimpse of the Voodoo Queen in person, you'd better arrive early.

The French Market

If you're looking for fresh food of any variety, the only place really worth going to in New Orleans is the French Market, located on Decatur Street, down by the waterfront. The Market has been the place for Crescent City cooks to shop since the early 1700s. If something can be rendered edible, it's available. Of course, as I mentioned under my entry on the Cajuns, some strange things are considered edible down here.



Two rowdies share a typical social exchange down on Gallatin Street.

Gallatin Street

This stretch of cobblestone street may just be the roughest two blocks in the Confederacy—if not the hemisphere! All manner of thieves and cutthroats populate the short riverfront street, and Gallatin Street at its worst makes Natchez Under-the-Hill look like one of my old schoolrooms. Even the police take care to walk around it, except the Rangers, of course—but then caution has never been a prerequisite for those hard-cases.

Saloons and bawdy houses crowd the short street and about the only vice not readily available to visitors to Gallatin Street is traditional gambling. Cardsharps must look elsewhere. The only type of wagering to be found is betting on animal fights.

Cockfights and badger-baiting are both popular, but the current favorite is ratting. In this particularly vile entertainment, a small terrier is placed in a small pen or box with a horde of rats and a tally is kept of how many vermin the dog can kill in a given time frame. Record-holding canines are often stuffed and put on display by their owners.

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Giannetto's Toys

This tiny shop on Chartres Street is home to some of the most ingenious toys I've ever seen. The owner and resident Santa's apprentice, Mr. Ivo Giannetto, sells only toys he has crafted himself. Amusements of all descriptions abound on the shelves of his store, from intricate puzzle boxes to fascinatingly complex puppets. For those interested in the more customary playthings, he also stocks a large selection of porcelain dolls ranging from infants to toy soldiers.

Jackson Square

Located on the riverfront, Jackson Square sits at the center of the French Quarter. The square was originally named the Place d'Armes and served as a military parade ground. In 1856, it was renamed for the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson, and a statue of the general astride his steed is now the focal point of the park.

General Butler added another black mark to his already ebony page by marring the beloved statue by removing an engraved plaque at the base. The quote—taken quite

out of context, I assure you—read, "The Union must and shall be preserved." The plaque survived the general by less than a week, finding a watery resting place in the Mississippi.

The square is surrounded by some of the most historically significant buildings in the quarter. The most prominent is St. Louis Cathedral. More on that place in a moment.

The Presbytere and the Cabildo

The Presbytere and the Cabildo are the buildings that flank St. Louis Cathedral.

The Presbytere sits just to the right of St. Louis Cathedral. It was originally built as a chapter house for the monks of St. Louis, but fire destroyed much of the structure in 1794. It was rebuilt in 1813, and today it serves as a courthouse.

The Cabildo was built by the Spanish to house their city council. Construction of the building was started in 1795, and the remains of an earlier French building—a prison and courtroom—were used as the foundation. The building wasn't completed until after the Louisiana Purchase was made in 1803. In fact, the actual papers completing the transfer of land from France were signed in one of the rooms of the partially completed structure.

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Today, the Cabildo serves as a station house for the New Orleans Police Department, and officers there put the remains of the French prison in the basement to good use.

Pontalba Buildings

Flanking Jackson Square on either side are the Pontalba Buildings, named for the woman who commissioned their construction, the Baroness Micaela Pontalba. These two buildings each span an entire side of Jackson Square, and are actually each a series of 16 linked rowhouses.

The Pontalba Buildings are named according to their relation to the flow of the Mississippi river. As one faces St. Louis Cathedral, the Upper Pontalba is to the left and the Lower Pontalba to the right.

The buildings were constructed with space for storefronts below each of them, and most of the places host small cafe's or specialty shops. These rowhouses are for rent, but one must be very well connected to have a hope of getting an apartment there.

LaLaurie House

Now a music conservatory, the LaLaurie house on Royal Street has the most notorious history of any in New Orleans.

Its horrific story began in 1834 when a fire started in the mansion. When firefighters broke into a locked attic room, they found a number of mutilated slaves in locked cells, some dead, and some on the verge of death from either their wounds or starvation. Some of the bodies were so terribly disfigured that the men covered them with blankets so the crowd gathered outside wouldn't see them.

It was soon discovered Madame LaLaurie had been subjecting the poor victims to inhuman torture for years. In fact, the fire was started by a cook chained in the kitchen, a servant who preferred burning to death over any further suffering at LaLaurie's hands. A lynch mob was raised and moved to the mansion. However, Madame LaLaurie escaped the city.

Locals are undecided on Madame LaLaurie's final fate. Some folks claim she fled to France, others that she was drowned in Lake Pontchartrain by her husband, and a few even hint she returned to the city under an assumed name and still resides there to this day. All of this is presumption, of course. All that's certain is she was never seen again.

With a history like that, it's no wonder a number of stories of hauntings have arisen around the old LaLaurie mansion. Typical

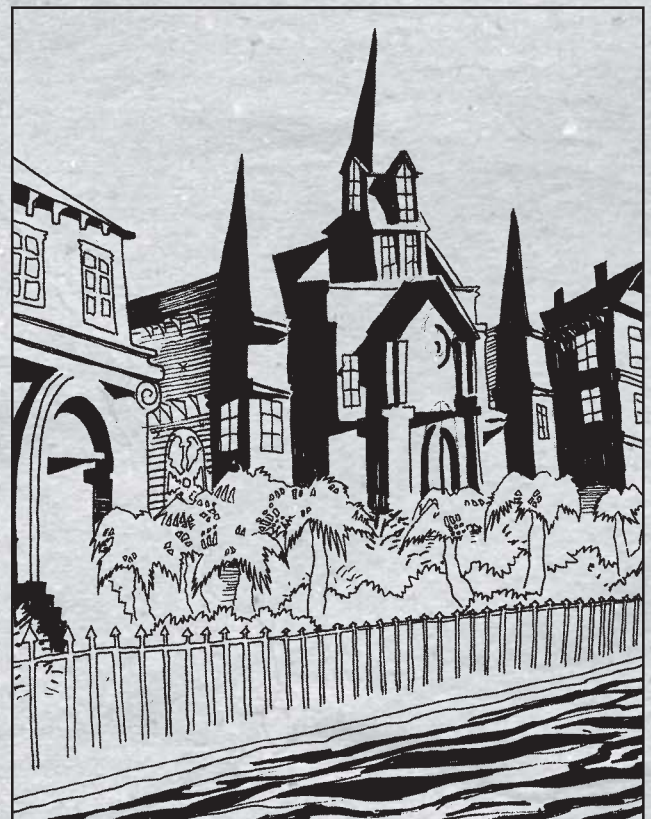
haunting phenomena of chain-rattling, agonized screams, or ghostly specters are commonly heard of in conjunction with the house.

However, its new owner, Marcus Stephens, states he has seen no evidence of hauntings or ghosts. Stephens, himself a composer, recently opened a small music conservatory in the old mansion. His success lends credence to his statements, as his school seems to be doing quite well, and his own compositions have been performed across the Confederacy and even in select venues up North.

St. Louis Cathedral

Unlike the rest of the Confederacy, which is prevalently Protestant, many folks in New Orleans and most of southern Louisiana belong to the Roman Catholic faith. Catholicism took root in this area over a century and a half ago with the original French colonists. Even three-quarters of a century of Protestant government has done little to weaken the strength of the faith here.

The original cathedral, built over 150 years ago, was destroyed in the rash of fires that swept the city at the end of the century. The second cathedral was dedicated on Christmas



The regal St. Louis Cathedral, overlooking Jackson Square.

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Eve in 1794, and according to legend, bricks were taken from abandoned vaults in a nearby cemetery to form the walls of the sanctuary. In 1850, the cathedral was enlarged and virtually rebuilt from the ground up. The three spires form the backdrop for Jackson Square and the centerpiece for the entire Quarter.

Like many of the buildings in the Quarter, the St. Louis Cathedral has its share of ghost stories. At least in this case, I believe these are merely a result of the locals' apparent fascination with the supernatural. It is well known that the forces of evil have no power in the house of God.

St. Louis Hotel

I doubt even New York City has a hotel to rival the St. Louis. Occupying an entire city block by itself, the St. Louis can house a good 1,000 guests comfortably. Accommodations range from simple, one-bed rooms all the way to suites containing private baths and sitting rooms.

Not only can the hotel provide a bed for its guests, it can also feed and entertain them. In addition to simple guest rooms, the hotel holds restaurants, a couple of bars of higher standards than the average French Quarter saloon, and even a small collection of shops.

Saloons

Full House

Located on Bourbon Street, the Full House is one of the nicer drinking establishments open to the public. The bar serves nearly 100 mixed drinks in addition to the standard straight liquors and beers found in saloons out West. The saloon also has a members-only section on the upper floor, which is only open to nonmembers only by invitation.

Locals occasionally venture the Full House may be haunted, citing instances of floating objects or strange sounds. Personally, I've never experienced either during my visits, and I put such stories down to too much rich food and good liquor.

Green Tree

This otherwise unremarkable Gallatin Street saloon is made famous by the legend of a curse dooming its owner to an early grave. So far, two proprietors have fallen to the Green Tree's curse. The first, "One-Legged Duffy" Rice, was beaten to death with her own wooden leg. The second, an Irishman named Paddy Welsh, washed up on the riverbank with a crushed head.



Looking for a Gallatin Street saloon with more than a little personality? Try the Undertaker's Rest for a good "stiff" drink.

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The ill fate promised its owners hasn't put a damper on the business at the Green Tree. In fact, the saloon actually seems more popular because of it. And an obviously profitable, if risky, enterprise like this always seems to find some fool willing to gamble on ownership.

The Old Absinthe House

It's doubtful this saloon really serves absinthe, but on Bourbon Street you never know. It's one of the older saloons in the Quarter. While it lacks special gimmicks, it's typical of the better—and safer—ones that locals choose.

Undertaker's Rest

Another Gallatin Street tribute to liquor and bad taste, the Undertaker's Rest is a saloon with an unusual theme: death. New Orleans seems to have an fascination with death, and I think the Undertaker's Rest takes this a little too far.

The interior of the saloon is a celebration of death. The bartenders dress as undertakers, and the walls are designed to resemble the "oven tombs" found in New Orleans' cemeteries. Even the liquor bottles are shaped like coffins!

Spanish Garrison

This dour corner building resembles a fortified blockhouse more than a festive French Quarter structure. The abandoned building is said to have housed soldiers during the Spanish occupation of New Orleans. There is also a tale of terror tied to this deserted garrison perhaps second only to that of the LaLaurie mansion.

A group of greedy mutinous soldiers seized the garrison to steal the treasures held inside. They tortured the officers of the garrison, hanging them from meat hooks. The villains then put iron kettles filled with rats on their victims' stomachs and began to heat the metal. The rats, seeking to escape the burning metal, had but one way out: through the bellies of the tortured officers. The mutineers then entombed the remains inside the walls of the garrison.

Today, the building stands empty. Visitors speak of screaming ghosts and enormous man-sized rat creatures prowling in the shadows. Locals cross the street to avoid simply walking in front of the garrison.

It certainly is a horrifying story, but a story is all it is. It took only a little research for me to discover the building wasn't even constructed until nearly three decades after the Spanish left New Orleans! Even the name of the structure is false. Even so, some stories seem to take on a life of their own. The old Spanish Garrison appears to have one of those.

Sultan's Retreat

One of the Quarter's tallest buildings, this four-story residence is also home to one of its more unusual characters. A tall, dark-skinned man known only as "the Sultan" has turned the former Creole mansion into an Eastern pleasure dome. The Sultan claims to be a dethroned Turkish noble.

While I've been unable to confirm his assertion, I do know he brought a fortune in gold and gems with him when he arrived a few years ago. Since then, he has spent enormous amounts of money decorating his home-in-exile with exotic tapestries and silk pillows.

It's said he has built a rather substantial harem inside the mansion, but like much of the gossip about the Sultan, I can't confirm this either. It seems he values his privacy above all else. The windows to the building are now shuttered, and heavy, locked gates bar the entrances. As if that weren't protection enough, massive men armed with tulwars—a kind of Middle Eastern sword—constantly patrol his property.

In spite of his obvious love of privacy, the Sultan is a much sought after guest at New Orleans social functions. From time to time, he attends, bringing with him a retinue of dazzling exotic dancers and heavily armed eunuchs.

Ursuline Convent

Built for the Ursuline Sisters, an order of nuns, in 1745, the convent is one of the older structures on the river. Unlike most of the other buildings in the Quarter, the convent survived all the natural disasters that ravaged the city near the turn of the century. The more pious citizens of New Orleans hold this to be a sign of divine providence.

A little over two decades ago, the convent became the seat of the Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans and archive of its records. Rumor among the less godly folk has it the heart of every archbishop of the diocese is buried under its altar. Understandably, the church officials aren't confirming that particular claim.

The other subject the church remains closemouthed on is the third floor of the convent. No one but the archbishop and a few mysterious visitors are allowed onto the floor, and there's talk that it may eventually be completed sealed with blessed—yes, blessed—screws! There's definitely a story there, but at times it's even harder to pry information from a priest than a Ranger.

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The Rest of the City



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While the French Quarter is definitely the heart of the city of New Orleans, it would be remiss of me to neglect those areas outside of it. Here are some of the more interesting places to be found in and around the rest of the city.

Banks' Arcade

Once the center of uptown business and social life, the three-story, block-long Banks' Arcade has seen its influence begin to wane somewhat in recent years. Many companies still maintain offices on the first floor, but as the city grows, its inevitable business began to spread out from one central location as well.

The first floor holds several offices and a few restaurants. A number of exclusive clubs and billiards rooms dominate the second floor, and the third contains a hotel. Atop the Arcade is a large arcade capable of seating several thousand attendees, sheltered from the weather by a glass skylight.

Bayou Vermillion Railway

Across the river, is the railhead of the Bayou Vermillion Railroad. This is the primary link to the rich silver mines of Tombstone and the Ghost Trail to the Maze. Although the railroad does not reach further to the east, Baron LaCroix already gains enough from the transport of those precious minerals to keep him well-funded.

Any cargo that needs to go further than New Orleans is carried across the river on massive ferries operated by the Thayer Shipping Company and transferred to the KC & LR track. This may meet his needs at the moment, but eventually Baron LaCroix may be forced to extend his line east to meet the requirements of the race to the Maze.

The railyard isn't as heavily guarded as Black River's in Memphis. It's unlikely any rail gang, no matter how audacious, would risk its reputation on an attack within the confines of a heavily populated city like New Orleans. Such a callous action would most likely result in both Congresses disqualifying the attacking railroad from the race!

A few guard patrols roam the area, mainly to protect against the recent acts of vandalism. Originally only a nuisance, the perpetrators have begun to actually impede railroad operations to a small degree.

Canal Street

Canal Street takes its name from an ambitious plan to link Lake Pontchartrain with the Mississippi with a canal. The street was designed extra wide to allow for the 50-foot-wide canal to run up its center.

The plan died on the drawing board, making Canal Street one of the widest in the country, but leaving it with an enormous ditch running up the middle. The ditch filled with stagnant water and all manner of garbage, giving the area its own special "air," until it was filled up and lined with trees a few decades ago.

The wide thoroughfare is the traditional dividing line between the French Quarter and "uptown." Relations between the original Creole settlers and the more recent Americans became so tense in the past that the patch of dirt in the middle of the street is still referred to as "neutral ground."

The Garden District

The opulent area known as the Garden District is located about a mile and a half from the French Quarter. It was once the incorporated city of Lafayette, but it was swallowed up by the city of New Orleans in 1852. Businessmen needing to work in the city but longing for a more bucolic setting for their homes found this the perfect area to build, and the district prospered.

During the city's occupation, many of the houses were seized by Federal troops. Take the Payne House for example. This Greek Revival house was constructed in the late 1840s by Jacob U. Payne, a successful cotton planter from Kentucky. The house was seized by Federal troops during the occupation and was commandeered by General Butler himself to serve as his personal residence. The Paynes were exiled to their country estate for the duration. After the massacre, the overenthusiastic citizens looted the structure that had housed the hated Butler. The dismayed Paynes returned home to find the mobs had done more damage to their home than the occupying enemy!

Today the Garden District houses some of the most impressive—not to mention expensive—architecture anywhere in the city. Many of the best Creole families have their town residences here, and the New Orleans police pay special attention to the area. The often corrupt officers are a lot more reluctant to overlook offenses committed here in the shadow of the wealthy.



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Slaughterhouse Row, one of the most unsavory parts of the Big Easy.

The Icehouse Skating Rink

This miracle of modern science allows New Orleans residents to enjoy a pastime usually restricted to the colder Northern climes. Thanks to a particularly clever mix of machinery and chemistry, a local inventor has developed a method to produce ice in large enough quantities to keep a two-acre ice-skating rink open year-round.

The facilities are indoor and quite cool, so dress warmly if you plan to visit the Icehouse. A full day's pass is only a nickel, and skates are available for rental at the same price.

Johnson's Perfume Factory

Normally, a perfume factory wouldn't find a place in an *Epitaph Guide*, but Johnson's has a special qualification. Workers at the factory talk of hearing the sounds of patriotic Union battle hymns from upstairs. One man even reported seeing a pool of blood on the ceiling overhead, although no evidence of this was ever found.

Since the factory opened in 1871, no less than factory five workers have committed suicide or died in suspicious accidents.

This self-inflicted death rate is abnormally high, even for a city on first name basis with the Grim Reaper, like New Orleans is. Some of the factory employees whisper that the men were driven to their deaths by the ghostly singing.

Johnson's Perfume Factory is housed in a converted Garden District Mansion. During the Union occupation, many of the nicer homes in the area were seized by Yankee officers for their own. Perhaps the ghost of a Union soldier slain during the rebellion of 1863 remains to sing the praises of the North and take his revenge on the Confederacy from beyond the grave.

Leeds' Foundry

Leeds' Foundry served as one of the major Confederate arms factories prior to the occupation. Federal troops pretty much ransacked the place, but the plant was rebuilt, and production resumed in 1866. Now Leeds' is second only to the Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond in producing weapons for the Confederate army.

The foundry also does civilian contract work on the side, and Bayou Vermillion purchases some of its "defensive" munitions from Leeds'.

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New Orleans Times

If you're looking for a good resource on the recent history of New Orleans, you could do worse than taking a look through the morgue at the *New Orleans Times*. No, I don't mean a real morgue. That's just journalist talk for the stored back issues of newspaper! Although most records prior to and during the Union occupation were lost, the *Times* has a good deal of all editions since about 1864.

Just be ready to spend a good deal of time turning pages if you don't know the exact date of the information you're seeking.

Slaughterhouse Row

Slaughterhouse Row is a section of the riverfront near Tchaptoulas Street. That's home to a number of particularly messy meat-processing companies. A common practice among most of the slaughterhouses is to drain their offal and remains directly onto the river bank below. As you might imagine, this draws a number of scavengers—so many, in fact, that the local baseball team refers to itself as "The Buzzards."

More disturbing is the occasional human hand or foot that turns up in the river in this area. Although there may be other explanations for the origins of the orphaned appendages, I, for one, caution visitors to be certain of the origins of any meat they may consume in the city!

University of Louisiana

Founded back in 1834 as the Medical College of Louisiana, my alma mater became the University of Louisiana in 1847. It may have diversified its curriculum into history, literature and the other humanities, but medical research and education remains a central part of the school's purpose.

An excellent teaching hospital can be found on the campus. Although the charges for treatment are no cheaper there than elsewhere, the care is the highest quality in the city.

Doctors in the School of Medical Sciences have made tremendous progress in fighting the many diseases troubling the lower Mississippi. Currently, a number of researchers are seeking a vaccination or, better yet, a cure for that unwelcome visitor Bronze John.

A matter of recent concern has been the Delta Pox, but scholars at the university are just as perplexed as the other medical practitioners in the area.

Outskirts

There are a few places worth noting that aren't inside the city limits of New Orleans proper.

Baron LaCroix's Manor

LaCroix's manor is actually about 10 miles to the south of the city, deep in the bayous. He seldom leaves his estate to visit the city, dealing instead through his many agents.

I am unable to provide too many details on the estate, in part due to its inaccessibility. I found the local guides extremely reluctant to even take me near the baron's remote property. Furthermore, it appears the baron seldom, if ever, has visitors to his manor. I failed to locate even one person who could give me more than a cursory description of the estate.

I've been able to piece together the minimal details and tidbits I gathered to at least provide a general description. The manor is on a forested island reachable only by boat.

A high, stone wall surrounds the mansion and most of the island, with only a single gate granting entrance. The manor itself is a large affair standing three stories tall and built in the French colonial style. Oddly enough, not one of my informants made mention of any visible guards.

From all appearances, the baron values his privacy greatly. With such a remote location, he has effectively protected himself from the prying eyes of the public and press. In addition to providing a guarantee of privacy, I'm sure his locale also helps discourage or at least hinder any would-be assassins. However, in spite of his isolation, I would have expected a rail baron of his stature to show a little more concern for his own safety.

Burton's Drainage Company

Anyone who's tried to build in New Orleans learns one thing quickly: It's deuced hard to lay a foundation in a swamp. Anytime the city expands, engineers have to find a way to keep their buildings from sinking into the muck.

Well, about four years ago, a fellow from back East by the name of Elmer Burton came along with a plan to change all that. The Swamp Pump, as he called it, was a series of large, steam-powered vacuum pumps built into a building which, in theory, would suck the water from the marsh, leaving the heavier



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dirt sediments behind. But when the pump began drawing the water from the surrounding marsh, a fatal design flaw was uncovered. It effectively dug itself into a pit. Within less than a week the entire building housing the pump sank into the marsh.

The sunken building remains as a monument to Burton's failed endeavor. The roof of the warehouse still sits slightly above the marsh on the northwestern side of the city. Nearby, the enormous vacuum hoses sprout up from the swamp like the tentacles of some gargantuan octopus. For those readers not adverse to a hike through the mud, a look at the remains of Burton's Drainage Company is a strong testament to the power of nature.

Chalmette Battlefield

Located about six miles from New Orleans is the site of Andrew Jackson's finest hour: the Battle of New Orleans. The cornerstone for a monument was laid in 1840, on the 25th anniversary of the battle, but construction didn't actually begin until 1855. General Butler's occupation interrupted construction temporarily, and it's still underway today. Chalmette National Cemetery was also established after the Federals' departure, and it now serves as the final resting place for Confederate soldiers who have died along Mississippi.

Destrehan

Just outside New Orleans on River Road is a sprawling plantation named after the family that built it and continues to live there: the Destrehans. Destrehan has stood for nearly 80 years and is typical of many River Road plantations. It warrants mention in this *Guide* thanks to a peculiar and dangerous apparition said to haunt the road near the plantation.

Many residents have told of encountering an apparently headless black man near Destrehan after dark. Adding credence to the stories is the fact a few less-fortunate travelers have been found beside River Road come morning—minus their own heads! Anyone traveling the road near New Orleans after dark is urged to hasten to a nearby house and warm fire.

Dueling Trees

Dueling is still a very popular method for settling matters of honor in New Orleans. Since gunfights in the middle of a crowded city street aren't likely to go over well with the police—without a large bribe, at least—most take place

on the northern outskirts of the city. There, nature has kindly provided a pair of oak trees exactly 20 paces apart, so duelists don't even have to trouble themselves with counting.

The participant of a duel who finds himself in second place shouldn't despair. One of the city's foremost duelists, Señor Jose Llula, has opened a rather successful cemetery. St. Vincent du Paul cemetery, on the eastern side of the city, has been catering to the needs of the dueling community since 1857.

The Ghost Boat

While few Union boats hunt the waters of the gulf anymore, there is one Yankee boat that continues to haunt commerce around New Orleans. And if the stories along the riverfront are to be believed, the word "haunt" is very appropriate indeed!

Whatever happened to the Union flotilla back on that night in 1862, rumor has it one of the sunken boats didn't stay on the bottom. Every so often, the boatmen claim, an old, rusty Yankee ironclad, the *USS Benton*, appears on the river. Any riverboat is advised to stay beached on the nights when the *Benton* is prowling, because its ghostly crew still seeks revenge on New Orleans.



The Dueling Trees, a popular place for the settlement of disputes.

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Voodoo

No discussion of the Crescent City would be complete without talking about voodoo. Stories of depraved rites and evil voodoo priests are a staple of those odious dime novels, but there's much more to the religion than that. While I'm no expert on it, I've learned quite a bit about voodoo over the years. Here's what I do know.

History of Voodoo



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Voodoo traces its roots back to the religions of several West African tribes. Slaves brought the basics of their beliefs with them on the grueling voyages to the New World. There, after decades of isolation, the religion of West Africa began to blend with each other and add many new elements as well.

This trend was strongest in the Caribbean islands. There, huge plantations resulted in large, almost independent slave communities. Contrary to popular belief, plantations of that size were not often found on the North American continent, and the slaves were usually much more closely supervised.

The governor of Spanish Louisiana feared importing slaves from certain islands would place his citizens in danger. Whether or not it was because he believed in the power of voodoo or simply that the religion would lead to uprisings isn't clear. Nevertheless, in 1782, he passed a law forbidding the import of slaves from Martinique.

Haiti and the Louisiana Purchase

In 1791, the slaves on the island of Santo Domingo began a revolt against the French planters. The uprising lasted 13 years, but in the end the slaves won and established the Republic of Haiti. Refugees from Haiti, many of them free people of color whom the rebels identified with their former oppressors, fled north.

Fortunately for these refugees, in 1803, the United States had purchased the Louisiana territory from France. The prohibitions against inhabitants of the West Indies was lifted that year. Over the next few years, nearly 10,000 refugees eventually found their way to the city of New Orleans.

These people were well versed in voodoo, and also had learned a new respect for the spells and rituals of the religion. It seems the leader of the revolution and first dictator of Haiti was supposedly a sorcerer himself!

Voodoo began mixing with southern folk magic practiced by the poor folk of the region. Soon, voodoo had gained a reputation for powerful "mojo," or magic.

Religion, Cult, or Revolt?

Initially, the citizens of New Orleans were neutral on the subject of voodoo practices. Eventually, ceremonies conducted by barely dressed dancers and open claims of "magic spells" proved to much for even the tolerant atmosphere of the Crescent City. In 1817, the city government relegated all such ceremonies to Congo Square in the French Quarter.

By the 1830s, fears of slave uprisings began to gnaw at the minds of the populace of New Orleans. Many folks claimed the ceremonies in Congo Square would lead to a revolt just like the one in Haiti 50 years earlier. Soon, voodooists were denied even Congo Square and had to practice in secret.

Over the next 10 years, Congo Square once again became open to voodoo ceremonies, and by the 1850s, voodoo was actually being defended in the newspapers. Although this is most likely because it made for controversial headlines, it did result in voodoo being recognized by the general population of New Orleans as a legitimate, if odd, religion.

With the exception of the period of General Butler's heavy-handed occupation, voodoo has continued to be tolerated, if not respected, as a religion within New Orleans.

Voodoo Basics

Voodooists pay homage to loas, which are, for lack of a better phrase, a pantheon of very powerful spirits. Each loa has its own sphere of influence, like Baron Samedi, who is lord of the underworld, or Legba, who provides communication between mortals and the other loas. Each loa has many aspects, some good and some evil, and their worshippers appeal to the appropriate persona to grant their desires.

Congregations of voodooists are led by a mambo, or queen. Always a woman, she guides the worship and makes most of the decisions for the congregation. A houngan is a male voodoo priest, and while he may be as powerful as a mambo, he doesn't hold the same authority in the congregation. Conjure doctors are voodooists who use their talents outside the congregation, often for hire.

Voodoo ceremonies are intense affairs, even for the casual observer. The ecstatic fervor of the worshippers communing with the loa is something to behold.



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Dancing with the loa: A frenetic voodoo ceremony under way in Congo Square, as the locals look on.

Marie Laveau



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No one can dispute Marie Laveau is the voodoo queen of New Orleans. Only Baron LaCroix is reputed to wield more power than her, and many claim not even he does. She has ruled voodoo in the city since around 1830, and only the arrival of the baron has challenged her authority.

That Marie was destined for greatness, there is no doubt. She is not only a woman of great beauty, but she also possesses a sharp mind and shrewd business sense.

Out with the Competition

Once Marie began her rise to power, she knew she would have to contend with rival queens. She dealt with her contenders swiftly and ruthlessly. Some of her rivals left New Orleans, while others died—leading to claims that Marie placed powerful “gris-gris”, or curses, on them. When all else failed, Marie wasn’t above physically beating other voodoo queens into submission.

When the dust settled, only Marie remained to claim the title of New Orleans’ voodoo queen.

Marie's Voodoo

When Marie first became a voodoo queen, she was quick to integrate many practices of Catholicism into the religion. A practicing Catholic herself, the voodoo queen hoped to quiet the claims of “devil worship” that were often aimed at voodoo. Prayer, holy water, and even the statues of saints themselves found their way into the ceremonies.

Well, this may have helped calm some folks, but just as many were outraged—especially since Marie still used all the other trappings of voodoo as well. A few sour apples couldn’t spoil Marie’s plans though. Soon, voodoo was more popular than ever in New Orleans.

Marie extended invitations to nearly anyone who wished to attend her ceremonies. The upper class of New Orleans, the police, and even the press were welcome at her services—provided they were willing to pay the admission price, that is!

Under her guidance, voodoo became available to anyone on a paying basis. Until this time, only Doctor John had worked his mojo for hire, but now Marie Laveau made it almost a standard practice.



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The Arrival of LaCroix

Marie reigned securely for nearly 30 years, until the arrival of Baron LaCroix in 1861. It was immediately obvious these two were going to have it out. LaCroix, with his wealth and claim to aristocratic birth, would never submit to Marie Laveau's leadership, just as she would never relinquish her throne as the voodoo queen of New Orleans.

Even though the New Orleans tradition of female leadership favored Marie's continued reign, LaCroix was able to use his influence in the upper levels of society to somewhat offset her advantage. The two seemed at a stalemate when General Butler arrived with his occupying forces.

Both Marie and LaCroix suffered during the Yankee occupation. Butler, like others before him, viewed voodoo as just another form of Satanic cult. He had little tolerance for outspoken women, and possibly less for wealthy Southern aristocrats.

I wouldn't be surprised to learn one or both of these voodooists had something to do with coordinating the revolt and massacre against the Union troops in 1863. Certainly both had reason to strike against Butler's forces.



Marie Laveau, the lovely and mysterious voodoo queen of New Orleans.

The Voodoo War

For a few years, the struggle between Marie and LaCroix quieted down. Both were more interested in rebuilding their previous empires than eradicating a rival. By the late 1860s, things began to heat up between the two again.

The followers of each began to become involved in the conflict. Fights broke out in the streets of the city between the factions. Over time, LaCroix slowly seemed to gain the upper hand. He enjoyed considerable influence with the New Orleans police department, and Marie's followers were often dragged off to jail after an altercation, while LaCroix's went free.

Finally, things came to a head in 1872, when a rumor surfaced that LaCroix had tried to put a death-curse on Marie Laveau. By holding a ceremony that night in Congo Square, she made certain everyone could see the baron's curse had failed.

LaCroix's followers moved to break up the gathering, and two days of rioting ensued. The local Confederate garrison commander declared martial law and locked the city down until the rioting and fighting ceased.

LaCroix denied any involvement in the events in Congo Square. Although his city hall supporters backed him up, he received a notice from the Confederate Congress in Richmond that, should he be found responsible for any further "disturbances to the good order of New Orleans," he would be denied taking part in competition for the rail rights to the Great Maze.

The government's dispatch has had the desired effect. The "Voodoo War" has come to a halt.

At least on the surface.

Into the Shadows

Marie Laveau's followers still suffer harassment from the New Orleans police. She continues to hold ceremonies in Congo Square, but these are closely watched by officers of the law.

Workers at the Bayou Vermillion railyard seem to suffer an unusual amount of accidents, and these delays are beginning to take a toll on LaCroix's rail operations. With the difficulties he's facing out West from the Apaches, the Baron can ill afford setbacks in his own backyard.

To date, no outbreak of violence of a large scale has occurred since the Voodoo War. Recently, though, folks in the know have started whispering about a group of "enforcers" LaCroix has brought from Haiti to put an end to Marie once and for all.

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Conjure Doctors



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Although Marie Laveau is the only Voodoo queen in New Orleans, the city has a fair number of conjure doctors. These voodooists-for-hire are paid by customers to work spells, curses, and divinations. All conjure doctors are called by the title "doctor" whether or not they have any academic or medical training (and most don't). The title serves much the same function for these voodooists as "father" does for Catholic priests.

I've found that much of the effectiveness of voodoo magic is actually in the mind of the subject. However, I long ago learned to never discount anything, including voodoo, as complete fakery.

Doctor Beauregard

Doctor Beauregard arrived New Orleans in 1869. I'd imagine he decided New Orleans would be a more favorable place to practice his religion than his home in the hills of Kentucky. Personally, I'm surprised he didn't end up on a rope up there, because in all my years on the river, he's one of the most blatant mojo workers I've ever encountered.

He wears his hair long—it would probably reach to his knees if it hung loose—and tied up with a number of gris-gris bags and bottles. He takes great pleasure in frightening women and children with his appearance and behavior. Doctor Beauregard's name has become a replacement for "the bogeyman" with the children of New Orleans.

I'm of the opinion that someone who makes this great a show may not have as much skill as he claims. Perhaps Doctor Beauregard relies on his reputation more than any true skill with the supernatural.

Doctor John

Doctor John is only one of the many names this conjure doctor is called. Bayou John and Jean Montaigne are also used to refer to him. Regardless of what folks call him, there's little doubt Doctor John is one of the most important voodooists in New Orleans, and he's been around nearly as long as Marie herself.

A huge black man, Doctor John claims to be descended from Senegalese royalty. The strange ritual scars on his face are supposed by many to be proof of this claim. His imposing appearance doesn't keep customers from flocking to his door, though.



Doctor John, the best-known conjure doctor in the Crescent City.

In the power struggle between Marie Laveau and Baron LaCroix, Doctor John remains neutral. He provides his services—which include fortune telling, placing and lifting curses, and healing—to anyone who pays his fees.

People from all over the city seek Doctor John's advice in matters ranging from politics to social affairs. It is even rumored that several prominent Creole ladies regularly seek out his advice and counsel.

Doctor John has done quite well for himself in the voodoo-for-hire business, amassing enough money to purchase a large house out on River Road. Rumor has it that he has much as \$150,000 buried on his property, but no one has yet been willing to risk his wrath to try stealing it!

Papa Natanga

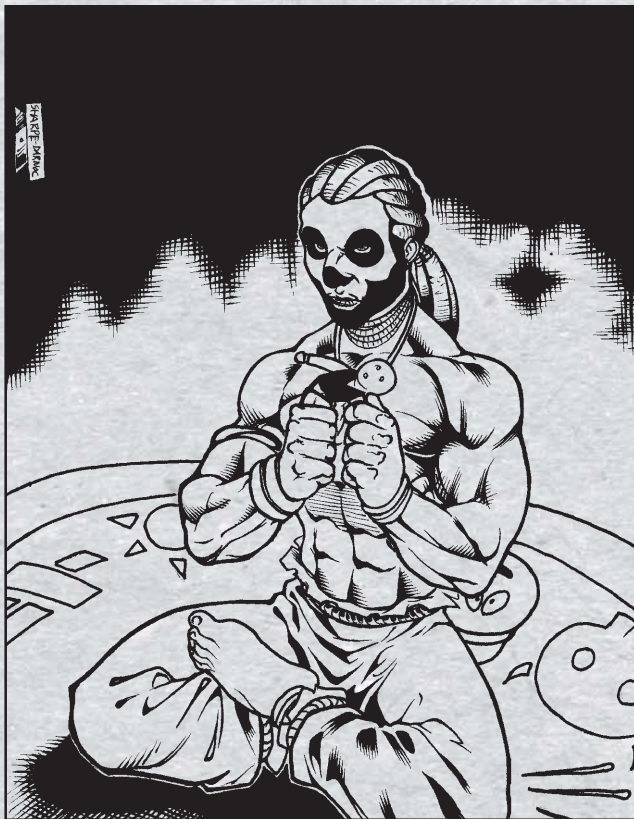
Papa Natanga is a very old houngan who immigrated from Haiti about eight years ago. No one I talked to is sure how old he is, and Papa isn't telling. Some say he fought alongside Toussaint L'Ouverture against the British and Spanish invaders in Haiti in 1793. Papa doesn't go out of his way to confirm these rumors, but he doesn't really try to deny them either. I suspect it's all part of his image.

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Working heavy gris-gris: A solitary conjure doctor at work.

Papa is said to be one LaCroix's most trusted advisors—if not his teacher. I can't confirm any of the talk on the streets, but I can say the single occasion I've had to meet the man I found him to be very free with his opinions of LaCroix. Some might even call his tone of voice when referring to the Baron patronizing, if not downright insulting.

Zozo LaBrique

While she's not technically a conjure doctor, Zozo LaBrique certainly deserves a mention here. This older woman is a well-known character to many citizens New Orleans. She wanders the streets of the city selling buckets of brick dust for a nickel. Many households use this dust to clean the front steps.

So what's the voodoo connection? Although any of the respectable folk who purchase the dust claim they use it solely for the purpose of cleanliness, the practice of washing the steps in such a fashion bears strong overtones of certain voodoo rites. This gives some insight into the attitudes and beliefs of the city when one considers many of the upper crust of New Orleans society regularly make use of Zozo's dust.

Bokkor

An evil voodoo sorcerer is referred to as a bokkor. Unlike followers of many other religious beliefs, voodooists don't name a sorcerer evil simply because he practices magic. When you consider that the leaders of the church—the mambo and the houngan—are expected to be potent magicians themselves, condemning all magic wouldn't make a lot of sense.

Voodooists reserve the label of bokkor for those practitioners of the magic who use their power for purely wicked purposes. Casting a spell or curse on someone intending harm is not considered an evil act, but laying a gris-gris on an innocent person is.

Not surprisingly, bokkor are supposed to have even more powerful spells than those voodooists who only practice "white magic." The legends attribute them with the ability to change their own shape and to create zombies from the dead to do their bidding. One of the most disturbing tales I've heard deals with a bokkor who turned a man into a pig and then sold him to a butcher!

The Zobop

As if a lone bokkor isn't bad enough, they are also supposed to have numerous secret societies called zobop. One of the worst of these societies, known as a "red sect," is believed to have come to New Orleans from Haiti. A red sect practices atrocious and bloody rites, often culminating in human sacrifice. Even cannibalism does not appear to be taboo for these bokkor!

Supposedly, the red sect gathers on certain days of the week to seek victims for its ceremonies. Such crimes occur outside populated areas to reduce the chance of discovery. Sect members reportedly prefer to lurk near crossroads and bridges to kidnap unsuspecting travelers.

Between these unholy ceremonies, a member of one of these societies always maintains a secret identity. A man may go years before stumbling onto the discovery his neighbor is a member of a zobop. As you might imagine, any local populace would be quite interested in stamping out such a cult!

Furthermore, opponents of Baron LaCroix claim the members of the local red sect actually work for him. I personally think this may simply be a result of clever propaganda on the part of the Laveau faction, combined with the willingness of the general public to believe anything as long as "voodoo" is attached to

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it. After all, logically considered, what purpose would it serve the Baron to associate with such villains?

However, I don't doubt some members of such a red sect have indeed arrived in New Orleans. The tolerant air toward voodoo and its practices would make the area a ripe target for such villains. Whether or not they actually have the supernatural powers many claim is another matter—but the victims of these rituals still die, regardless of the effectiveness of the magic.

Other Voodoo Legends

While I'm on the subject of voodoo, I'd like to introduce you to a few creatures from voodoo mythology. Believers say that these beasts are lurk in the dark shadows of New Orleans, even in this modern age.

Baka

Baka are wicked spirits often called upon by bokkor to perform acts of evil. These beings aren't limited to serving merely as the tools of earthly sorcerers. They're all too able to wander freely, as well. These foul creatures lurk in desolate, out-of-the-way places, seeking victims to devour.

According to the stories, they are among the most dangerous creatures a man may encounter. These creatures are particularly frightening in that they can change appearance as quickly as a coward can turn tail and run. They may assume an innocent-looking form, like that of a puppy or even an infant, to lure a victim close, and then they change into a horrifying escapee from a nightmare.

Legend has it the only way to truly defeat a baka is to stare it straight in the eye without fear—but that's usually a lot easier said than done!

Sucettes

This creature is a particularly vile form of vampire, sometimes called a "mauvais air." These creatures are always female and often seek employment during the day as nurses or maids.

Supposedly, these bloodsuckers shed their skin at night and fly off in search of food. They only feed on the blood of children, which they draw with a straw or other implement.

Fortunately, the creatures apparently require permission from the child's mother to do so! I can't imagine they find too many mothers willing grant such a request. Also, garlic is reputed to be effective in repelling the monsters.

Werewolves

These shapechangers are by no means restricted to voodoo, but they do warrant special mention here. There are a number of tales of the usual man-wolf form of these creatures throughout voodoo, but that's not why I've brought them up.

It seems the term "werewolf," or "loup-garou," is used freely by various voodooists to mean a few distinctly different creatures. When you hear this term, don't automatically start digging for a silver bullet. Depending on where the speaker is from, she may be referring to a member of a zobop, a sucette, or a true werewolf.

I am at a loss as to why the term is used for so many different meanings. I expect it's just another mystery of voodoo. In any case, if you do come across the term being bandied about by a practitioner of voodoo, by all means get a description of the creature in question!

Zombies

Virtually, everyone that's heard anything about voodoo has heard of zombies. These poor, restless souls are forcibly called back from their graves to serve a bokkor—usually in some wicked or menial labor.

The stories claim these walking dead have enormous strength and constitutions to make a riverboatman envious, but they have a peculiar weakness to eating salt. To prevent this, many bokkor are believed to sew the mouths of their zombies shut.

Of course, lots of undertakers do this as well, so don't assume the next corpse you see with a sewn mouth is a zombie in training. It could lead to an embarrassing situation!

In Closing

We have arrived at the mouth of the Mighty Mississippi, where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Beyond those blue waters lie Mexico, the Yucatan, South America, and the mysterious islands of the Caribbean.

We have also arrived at the end of this *Guide*. I hope that I've given you at least some sense of the wonder that is the Mississippi River—and perhaps a peek into the darker parts of it as well. There are mysterious things afoot, and only we—we who are willing to listen to the stories and tell them to others—can stop them. Just remember, the *Tombstone Epitaph* contains the most potent weapon with which to combat the strangeness that stalks abroad in the land: the truth!

RIVERBOATS





CHAPTER TWO: RIVERBOATS OF THE MIGHTY MISS



Daniel Clark talked a little about steamboats at the beginning of his *Guide*. If you're planning to riding on a riverboat, you're going to need detail on the nuts and boats of the vessels—in *Deadlands* terms. We've thoughtfully provided the lowdown on the most common riverboats in this chapter. With these, you should be up and rolling on the river in no time.

THE BOATS

If you're planning to have a lot of ship-to-ship combat in your campaign, the vehicle rules in *Smith & Robards* are very valuable. For those without the book, here's a short recap of the boats' descriptions and how to use them in your game..

Durability: The first number is the amount of damage the vehicle can sustain. All small-arms damage is divided by 10 before it's applied to the vessel's Durability. The second number is the craft's Reliability. Each time the accumulated damage reaches a multiple of this number, the boat must make a Reliability check. Add +1 to the roll for each check made as a result of damage after the first.

Passengers: This is the total number of passengers, including crew, which can ride comfortably. As many as twice this number can be wedged on in an emergency.

Pace: This is the vehicle's normal Pace. It can move at least twice as fast, but then maneuvering becomes more difficult.

Turn Number: This measures the craft's maneuverability. It's the base TN for all *drivin'* rolls made to maneuver the boat.

Travel Speed: This is the vessel's normal cruising speed. Use it to determine travel times from place to place.

Fuel: This is the amount in pounds of Smith & Robards' ghost rock cores needed to travel 100 miles. Multiply by two for unrefined ghost rock, by 50 for coal, and by 100 for wood.

Reliability: Roll against this number for Reliability checks. If the roll is higher, the vessel suffers a breakdown of some sort. Boats with a 20 Reliability are not products of mad science and only need to check Reliability when they've exceeded their damage threshold.

Hit Modifier: Most boats are big targets. All shots not targeted at a specific part of the vessel are modified by this number.





Pumps: This is the amount of flooding damage the boat's pumps can repair each turn. Automatic pumps are represented by a fixed number, while manual pumps have a die type to be rolled each turn. Bailing by bucket reduces 1d4 points of flooding damage a round.

Price: This is the cost to purchase the vessel. This price does not include weapons.

Hit Tables: Use this to determine where a shot hits the craft. The modifiers on the table are for called shots to the named location. If a ship suffers a malfunction due to damage, it occurs at the last-damaged location.

Entries which read "Hull (crew)" mean a part of the ship containing the crew or passengers was hit.

Whether or not the affected crew gets the benefit of cover depends on where they happen to be on the boat, so use common sense. Someone standing on deck may get cover from the waist down, while a crewman in the hold may be completely covered. If the target does receive cover from the hull, apply damage to the ship normally and then, if the shot penetrates the ship's armor, apply it to any targets behind cover.

FLATBOATS

A flatboat is a little more than a rectangular raft between 20 and 60 feet long. Some of the fancier models may have covered living quarters or even a tarp over the cargo area. Flatboats are only good for downriver traffic. They have no means of propulsion. When a flatboat reaches its destination, it's usually broken up for lumber or firewood.

There aren't many flatboats left on the river these days. Steamboats are the primary carriers of freight and passengers, and only the poorest travelers go by flatboat anymore.

Weapons and Armor: Flatboats are seldom, if ever, armed. Treat all hits in combat as Hull (Crew). The thick sides of the boat act as Armor level 2.

FLATBOATS					
Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel	
25/5	10	*	11	*	
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price	
0	20	+4	None	\$125	

*Flatboats are totally dependent on river current for their speed and travel times.

IRONCLADS

The most common warships seen on the Mississippi are ironclads. Both navies use the metal behemoths to protect their own banks while bombarding those of their opponent. These vessels may resemble the larger coastal vessels seen Back East as well as in the channels of the Great Maze, but there are notable differences.

Riverine ironclads are usually built on steamship hulls, instead of those of frigates. This provides them with a shallow draft—very important in the waters of the Mississippi. Also, the strong current of the river requires the vessels to rely on paddlewheels to maneuver effectively.

STANDARD IRONCLAD

The type of ironclad riverboat most often encountered resembles a slope-sided, metal-plated box mounted on a sternwheeler's hull. Both the Union and Confederate Navy employ vessels of this sort extensively on the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Unlike their oceangoing cousins, river ironclads are designed primarily to deal with shore fortifications. Since many river forts are located at bends, these warships have most of their firepower facing the front of the vessel and not the sides.

Weapons and Armor: Standard ironclads usually mount two cannons of any size to each side, two to the rear, and four to the front. Since the usual "passengers" on these ships are soldiers, attackers must contend with small-arms fire as well.

The protection on these boats is heaviest to the front, with Armor 5 there instead of the usual Armor 4. Many ironclads are also equipped with a reinforced prow to use as a ram.

STANDARD IRONCLAD					
Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel	
60/12	50	15	9	5 mph	
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price	
3	20	+6	1d8	\$80,000	
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod	
1-9		Hull	4	+6	
10-16		Hull (crew)	4	+5	
17-18		Paddlewheel	3	+2	
19-20		Boiler	4	+1	



RIVERBOATS

TURRETED IRONCLAD

The Union Navy has developed a warship which mounts a single turret holding two large cannons. Only a relatively small amount of the vessel is visible above the water line. The *USS Monitor* is the most famous example of this type of ship.

The riverboat version of this style of ironclad uses a stern-mounted paddlewheel to propel it. While this provides a larger target than the oceangoing counterpart, a standard propeller assembly just isn't capable of effectively propelling the weight of the ironclad against the river current.

Weapons and Armor: A turreted ironclad is limited to two cannons, usually 10-pound vapor cannons. The turret provides these weapons with clear fire to all directions except directly behind the paddlewheel.

TURRETED IRONCLAD

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
70/14	40	15	9	10 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
3	19	+3	1d6	\$100,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-5		Hull	4	+3
6-10		Hull (crew)	4	+2
11-14		Turret	5	+2
15-19		Paddlewheel	4	+2
20		Boiler	5	-1

KEELBOATS

A keelboat is the next step above the flatboat in rivercraft evolution.

This simple vessel has a tapered bow and stern. It also has a thick beam running along its hull lengthwise to protect it from impact with the river bottom as well as to keep it oriented with the river current. Although not a keel in the truest sense of the word, the keelboat gets its name from this beam.

Like flatboats, keelboats are seldom seen on the river anymore. While its tapered design allows it to be poled or pulled upstream, this is a long process. A trip from New Orleans to St. Louis can take four months or longer.

Weapons and Armor: A keelboat is seldom armed with anything beyond the firearms carried by the crew. Treat all hits to a keelboat as Hull (crew).

KEELBOAT

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
35/7	15	*/3	9	*/1 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
0	20	+4	None	\$250

*When traveling downstream, the keelboat's Pace and travel speed is based on the flow of the river.

MUDBOATS

A mudboat is a submersible boat modified for use in the shallow waters of the Mississippi. Mudboats have a number of additions to them not usually found on the standard submersibles of open-water locales. These vessels are found only in use by the Confederacy.

Mudboats are lighter than regular submersibles. Also, the river versions have telescoping snorkels, both for the engines and the crew, that allow them to remain underwater for much longer periods of time. Finally, these vessels have long, whisker-like feelers protruding



RIVERBOATS

from the bow to allow them to detect hazards and snags.

Weapons and Armor: The only weapons carried by mudboats are clockwork torpedoes. Unlike larger submersibles, mudboats cannot mount deck guns of any sort.

MUD BOAT

Durability	Pass	Pace	Climb
45/9	5	20/5*	5
Max Depth	Turn	Travel	Fuel
30 yards	5	15/5 mph*	2
Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
17	+4	4	\$18,000
d20	Hit Location	Armor	Mod
1-8	Hull	1	+6
9-13	Hull (crew)	3	+3
14-16	Hull (magazine)**	3	+4
17-19	Hull (boiler)**	3	+1
20	Screws/Rudder	3	-1

*Surfaced/submersed

**May only be targeted if the gunner is familiar with a mudboat's layout.



RAILROAD FERRIES

Not every railroad has access to a bridge spanning the Big Muddy. Black River's Memphis Trestle is the exception rather than the rule.

These enormous sidewheeler steamboats are similar to those used in New Orleans and elsewhere by Bayou Vermillion to ferry railroad cars from one side of the Mississippi to the other. Railroad tracks inside allow up to six cars to be placed on the ferry at a single time. The only other structures on the ferry are the pilothouse, the boiler room, and the paddlewheels.

Weapons and Armor: Most ferries are unarmed, but Bayou Vermillion vessels are notable exceptions. To protect against raids by other rail gangs, Baron LaCroix has mounted multiple Gatling guns on many of his railroad's ferries.

RAILROAD FERRY

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
50/10	12	20	7	10 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
3	20	+5	1d6	\$15,000
d20	Hit Location	Armor	Mod	
1-5	Hull (crew)	4	+1	
6-15	Hull (rail cars)	4	+5	
16-18	Paddlewheel	3	+3	
19-20	Boiler	4	+1	

RIVER RUNNERS

These odd-looking boats are based on Smith & Robards' famous Maze runner design. They are only found in the hands of the Confederate sailors at St. Louis. These dual sidewheelers make up the 10 Boats squadron.

Using independently geared, oversize paddlewheels, a river runner is capable of literally turning on a dime. This ability becomes especially important in the minefields of the northern Mississippi. Although the boat is a bit larger than a Maze runner, its improved maneuverability makes it just as hard to hit.

Weapons and Armor: The vessels of the 10 Boats squadron carry a six-pound cannon and a Gatling gun to the front, along with a Gatling gun mounted on the stern of the vessel. Two clockwork-torpedo launchers are mounted on the side of the boat, and the craft usually carries a stock of six such torpedoes.

RIVERBOATS

RIVER RUNNER

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
45/9	10	35	3	20 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
2	18	+4	1d8	\$20,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-5		Hull	3	+5
4-9		Hull (crew)	4	+4
10-15		Paddlewheel	3	+2
16-19		Boiler	4	+1
20		Rudder	3	-1

SALAMANDERS

Salamanders are small, amphibious landing vehicles designed by the Union. At first glance, they appear to be the unholy offspring of a small keelboat and a steam tank. These armored conveyances have propellers on the back to push them through the water, and metal tracks to carry them on land.

The Union Army has used salamanders in two of its attempts to seize St. Louis. Unfortunately for them, the current of the Mississippi has proven too strong for the vehicles' propellers and swept them far downstream on both attempts. Once they reached the Confederate shore, the vehicles did do a fair amount of damage, but St. Louis was spared the brunt of the assaults.

Weapons and Armor: Salamanders are usually armed with a single Gatling gun. A few do mount six-pound cannons instead, but this reduces the crew capacity to six. As with ironclads, the crews of these vehicles are almost always soldiers, and are armed as such.

SALAMANDER

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
40/8	8	15/5*	7/3*	10 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
2	18	+3	1d8	\$12,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-5		Hull (crew)	3	+0
6-7		Hull (gun)	3	+0
8-13		Tracks	3	+0
14-19		Boiler	5	+0
20		Screws	3	-1

*On land/in water.

SNAGBOATS

These twin-hulled sidewheelers are used to clear snags from river channels, mostly trees that have fallen. Two normal boat hulls are joined side by side to make the snagboat's foundation.

Snagboats work in the following manner: The boat's pilot deliberately crashes the craft against a submerged tree, wedging it between the twin prows. It then reverses its engines and pulls the tree from the riverbed like a dentist does a bad tooth. Then large booms on the snagboat hoist the tree out of the water and onto the deck. Next, crewmen cut up the tree using steam-powered saws, and the small logs are dropped back into the river to float downstream.

Weapons and Armor: None, although a boat may occasionally mount a six-pound cannon to use in freeing particularly stubborn obstacles.

SNAGBOAT

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
55/11	35	30	7	15 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
3	20	+7	2d10	\$32,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-7		Hull	3	+7
8-13		Hull (crew)	1	+6
14-18		Paddlewheel	2	+6
19		Boiler	3	+2
20		Rudder	2	+1

STEAMBOATS

These boats are by far the most common sights on the Mississippi. As Daniel Clark mentioned in the guide, steamboats come in two varieties: sidewheelers and sternwheelers.

SIDEWHEELERS

Sidewheelers are common on the river. Many of these are older models, but still in excellent working condition. The price listed is for a basic, new steamboat, it's possible to spend 10 times that amount on an elaborate, floating palace. Used boats are available for as little as one quarter the price.

Weapons and Armor: None, normally, but these boats may mount a variety of guns. Most steamboat captains shy away from anything that may mark their boat as a legitimate target for Union gunners.

RIVERBOATS

SIDEWHEELER

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
50/10	325	30	7	10 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
3	20	+8	2d10	\$25,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-7		Hull	1	+8
8-13		Hull (crew)	1	+7
14-18		Paddlewheel	2	+6
19		Boiler	3	+2
20		Rudder	2	+1

STERNWHEELERS

Most newer steamboats are sternwheelers. Although they are a bit more expensive, the design allows them to handle more cargo and travel faster as well. As with sidewheelers, the price listed is for a new, but unimproved boat.

Weapons and Armor: None, but the size of one of these steamboats allows them to carry nearly any weapon.

STERNWHEELER

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
50/10	325	35	7	12 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
3	20	+6	2d8	\$35,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-8		Hull	1	+6
9-14		Hull (crew)	1	+5
15-18		Paddlewheel	2	+4
19		Boiler	3	+1
20		Rudder	2	0

STEAMFLOATS

It was only a matter of time before someone put a steam engine on a flatboat or keelboat hull. Steamfloat is the standard name given to any small craft powered by a steam engine. These ramshackle craft are fairly common on the river now. Their low cost allows almost anyone to afford a personal steamboat.

There is no common design to this type of boat. Just about any kind of rivercraft can be fitted with a steam engine and method of propulsion—and probably has been! The most common means of propulsion is a small stern-mounted paddlewheel, but some designs rely on propellers or screws to push the boat.

Weapons and Armor: Few of these boats carry large weaponry. Not only does the Confederate Navy frown on it, but a deck gun simply takes up too much valuable deck space. Of course, river pirates load up their steamfloats with any types of weapon they can lay their hands on.

STEAMFLOAT

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
25/5	8	20	5	15 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
1	20	+3	None	\$1,750
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-6		Hull	1	+2
7-12		Passengers	0	-1
13-17		Paddlewheel	2	+1
18-20		Boiler	3	+1

TORPEDO BOATS

These small boats are typical of patrol boats employed by both navies on the Mississippi. They are also occasionally found in the hands of pirates, although such a boat would likely be the flagship of any river-pirate armada.

Torpedo boats are the size of the boats used by whalers. The boiler is mounted in the rear of the vessel, and the entire craft is covered in light armor. These craft are design to harass larger warships and attack transports and freighters. They simply don't carry the firepower to deal with shore fortifications.

Weapons and Armor: Torpedo boats usually mount a Gatling gun on the bow and a torpedo tube on each side. Some models, particularly those in the hands of river pirates, may have substituted a six- or even 10-pound cannon for the Gatling.

TORPEDO BOAT

Durability	Pass	Pace	Turn	Travel
40/8	8	25	5	20 mph
Fuel	Rel	Mod	Pumps	Price
2	18	+3	1d6	\$15,000
d20	Hit	Location	Armor	Mod
1-9		Hull	4	+3
10-16		Hull (Crew)	3	+2
17-18		Boiler	3	+1
19-20		Screws	3	-1

ARCHETYPES

CAJUN HUNTER

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 2d10
 Shootin': rifle 4
 Nimbleness 2d12
 Climbin' 1
 Drivin': boat 2
 Fightin': knife 2
 Sneak 3
 Quickness 4d6
 Strength 1d8
 Vigor 3d8
 Cognition 4d10
 Search 1
 Trackin' 4
 Knowledge 1d6
 Area knowledge:
 bayou 2
 Language: Cajun
 French 2
 Language: English 2
 Medicine: general 2
 Trade: trapper 3
 Mien 2d6
 Smarts 2d6
 Survival: swamp 4
 Spirit 3d6
 Guts 2
 Wind: 14
 Edges:
 Keen 3
 Sense o' direction 1
 Hindrances:
 Poverty -3
 Cautious -3
 Ferner -3
 Gear: Springfield .58
 rifle, 25 rounds of
 ammunition and
 powder, skinning
 knife, two varmint
 traps, one pound of
 beef jerky, and \$25
 dollars in CSA
 currency.

PERSONALITY

So, chere, you lookin' for a body to show you the Big Swamp, eh? Well, you come to the right place, I guarantee! You go in there by yourself, you come out dead dead, that for sure!

Nobody knows the swamp like I do. I been back in the deeps so far, I think maybe I never come back, but I find my way out of that place, and I know I find what you lookin' for.

But before we go rushin' off, let's sit a spell an' pass a good time. The coffee is hot hot, and there be plenty time for work come the sun tomorrow.

Quote: "Laissez le bon temps rollez!"



ARCHETYPES

RIVERBOAT MAN

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 2d6
Shootin': pistol 2
Nimbleness 2d10
Climbin' 1
Drivin': boat 2
Fightin': brawlin, knife 4
Sneak 1
Swimmin' 2
Quickness 3d8
Strength 2d12
Vigor 4d10
Cognition 1d8
Search 1
Knowledge 1d6
Area knowledge
Mississippi River 2
Language: English 2
Trade: boatman 3
Mien 4d6
Overawe 2
Smarts 2d6
Spirit 3d6
Guts 2
Wind: 20
Edges:
Brawny 3
Sand 2
Thick-skinned 3
Tough as nails 2
Hindrances:
Big britches -3
Big mouth -3
Habit: bragging -1
Hankerin': alcohol -3
Gear: Bowie knife,
Army pistol, 50
rounds, a bottle
of the good
stuff, and \$210
in CSA
currency.

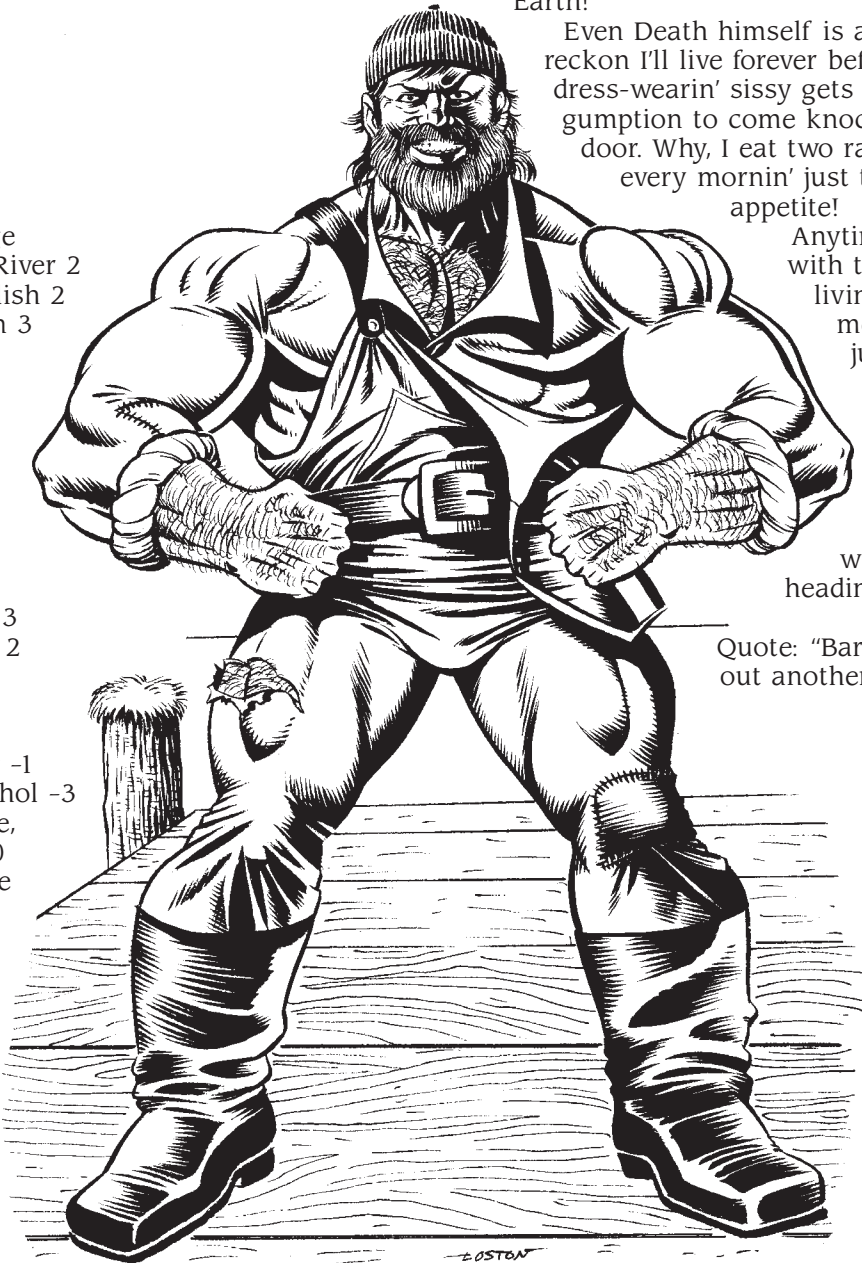
PERSONALITY

I hear you're lookin' for men. Well, I'm the match for any 10 men you'll find hereabouts. My daddy was a grizzly bear, and my momma was an alligator. When I walk, they can hear the sound of my footsteps all the way to Natchez! I fear no man or thing on, above, or below this Earth!

Even Death himself is afraid of me. I reckon I'll live forever before that old dress-wearin' sissy gets up the gumption to come knocking on my door. Why, I eat two rattlesnakes every mornin' just to whet my appetite!

Anytime you're bored with the world of the livin', you just cross me mister. You just better make sure you've booked a room with the undertaker beforehand, 'cause that's where you're headin'!

Quote: "Bartender, roll me out another keg!"



ARCHETYPES

SMUGGLER

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 1d8
 Shootin': pistol 3
Nimbleness 4d6
 Climbin' 1
 Drivin': boat 4
 Sneak 2
 Swimmin' 2
Quickness 3d8
Strength 2d6
Vigor 3d6
Cognition 2d12
 Search 2
Knowledge 2d6
 Area knowledge: local
 Mississippi 4
 Language: English 2
 Trade: boatman 4
 Trade: forgin' 2
Mien 2d10
Smarts 4d10
 Bluff 3
 Streetwise 4
 Tinkerin' 2
Spirit 1d6
 Guts 2
Wind: 12
Edges:
 Belongin's 3
 (riverboat)
Hindrances:
 Greedy -2
 Outlaw -2
 Big Britches -2
Gear: Double-action
 Colt Peacemaker,
 derringer, 25 rounds
 of ammunition for
 each, and \$210 in
 CSA currency.

PERSONALITY

Sure, my boat's for hire—if the price is right. She may not look like much, but she's the fastest on the river. I made a lot of improvements on her myself. Why, she made the Memphis run in two days.

I can get you wherever you're going, North or South. Course if there are any military entanglements, it's going to cost extra.

No, I really don't care what the cargo is. That is, unless it's likely to explode, eat me, or otherwise make trouble.

I guess all we need to discuss now is how much you have in your purse—I mean, how much my fee is.

Quote: "What's in it for me?"



ARCHETYPES

VOODOOIST

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 2d6
 Shootin': pistol 2
 Nimbleness 4d6
 Climbin' 1
 Sneak 1
 Quickness 3d6
 Strength 1d6
 Vigor 3d8
 Cognition 1d8
 Scrutinize 2
 Search 1
 Knowledge 2d6
 Academia: occult 3
 Area knowledge: New Orleans 2
 Medicine: general 2
 Language: English 2
 Mien 4d10
 Performin': dance 3
 Smarts 2d10
 Bluff 3
 Spirit 2d12
 Faith: voodoo 5
 Guts 2
 Wind: 20
 Edges:
 Arcane background: voodooist 3
 Favored chual (Damballah) 4
 Hindrances:
 Enemy -3 (zobop)
 Superstitious -2
 Stubborn -2
 Vengeful -3
 Spells: Charm o' success 2, cloud the mind 4, conjure doctor 2, poison powder 4
 Gear: Derringer, 25 rounds of ammunition, knife, and \$238 in CSA currency.

PERSONALITY

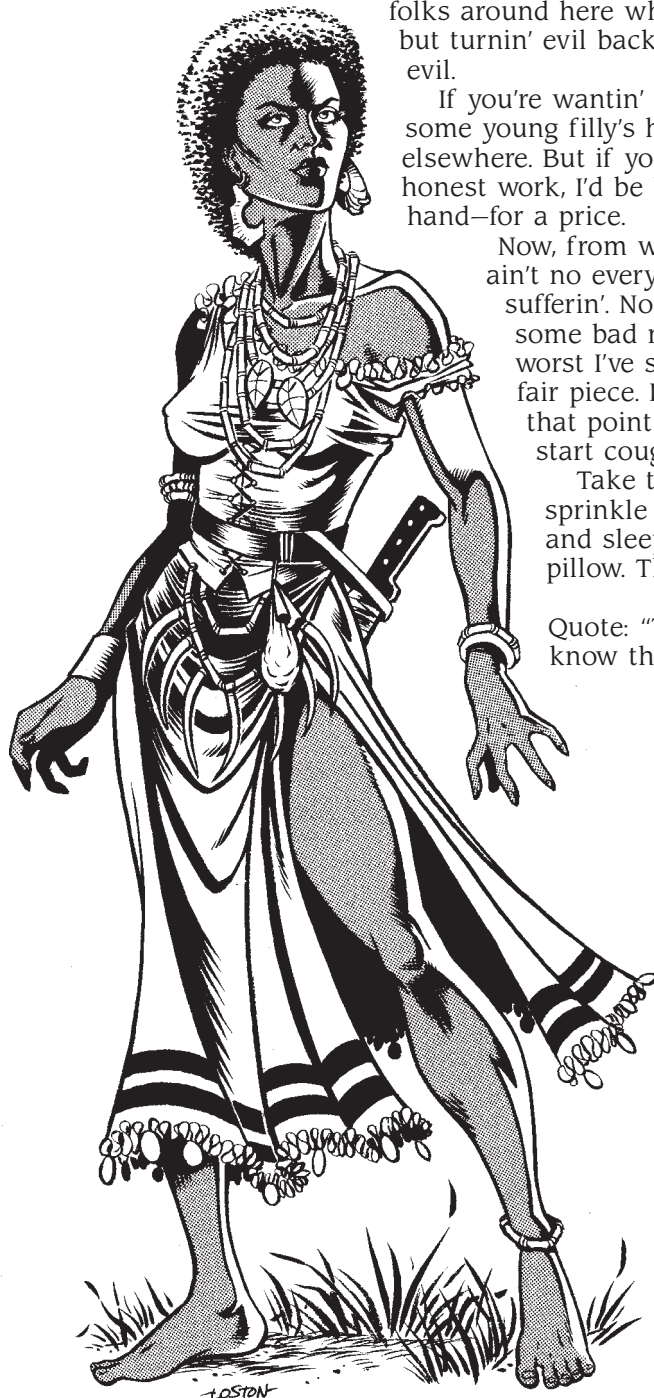
No, I ain't troublin' nobody unless they go troublin' me. I don't do bad work like some folks around here who know the mysteries, but turnin' evil back 'round on itself ain't evil.

If you're wantin' a gris-gris on a rival for some young filly's heart, you go lookin' elsewhere. But if you're wantin' help at some honest work, I'd be happy to lend you a hand—for a price.

Now, from what you're tellin' me, this ain't no everyday problem you're sufferin'. No, it sounds like there's some bad mojo workin'. Not the worst I've seen, mind you, not by a fair piece. I don't expect we'll get to that point either—not unless you start coughin' up snakes, that is!

Take this home with you. You sprinkle it three times each night and sleep with it under your pillow. That'll fix you up right.

Quote: "There's conjurin' here. I know the signs."



THE MARSHAL'S HANDBOOK







CHAPTER THREE: SECRETS OF THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI



Now that we've told the players a pack of half-truths and outright lies about what's going down on the Mighty Mississippi, it's time for us to give you the real scoop, Marshal. Hold on to your hat. This river journey is a rough one!

WAR ON THE RIVER

THE TEN BOATS

The Confederate Naval squadron based in St. Louis uses river runners as described in the *Guide*. The boats are effective, but the real reason for squadron's success is a secret weapon. Commodore Alexander also has under five mudboats (see page 73) at his disposal. These are stationed and serviced in a portion of the cave network under the city that links to the river. The underground base is reached through Stovington's Warehouse in St. Louis.

The boats are camouflaged. For instance, the snorkels have been modified to resemble driftwood. When patrolling, they spend daylight hours underwater and hug the shore at night.

The mudboats always operate with a river runner escort. Any damage inflicted by the

mudboat is credited to the river runner. This way, the reputation of the Ten Boats grows, and the mudboats remain an ace-in-the-hole.

So far the Confederacy's deception has been successful, and the Union forces are completely unaware of the submersibles.

STATE OF MISERY

GENERAL JOHN SCHOFIELD

Schofield is completely off his rocker. Early in the war, the mathematician stumbled across Hoyle's hidden formula for hexes. Experimenting with the forbidden knowledge, Schofield's very first hex was a resounding failure, and the resulting backlash drove the man insane.

There is no rhyme or reason to his malicious raiding. He just wants to cause as much trouble as possible. Although he's as mad as a hatter, Schofield is possessed of an uncanny cunning which has enabled him time and again to avoid troops dispatched by both governments.

For full details on Schofield's rapacious ways, as well as statistics for him and his group of marauders, see *Tales of Terror: 1877*.





THE KC & LR

Although Richard Barney has negotiated agreements with all three Confederate-based rail barons, he has secretly sided with one of them: Black River. Only a few trusted advisors and Barney himself know the full details of the agreement. He's careful to keep this alliance under wraps because he knows he's finished if either Dixie Rails or Bayou Vermillion learns he's sold out.

Barney's agreement with Mina Devlin isn't motivated by any sinister agenda on his part. Rather, simple infatuation is the driving force behind the partnership. Barney hopes his loyalty will someday win Mina's love. Hey, give him a break. He doesn't know much about her history.

He refuses to believe the recent rumors about a possible affair between Union Blue's Joshua Chamberlain and Mina are anything but slander. Little does he know that Mina herself is fanning the flames of that rumor as much as possible. Nonetheless, he makes sure the James Gang plays especially rough when it comes to robbing Union Blue trains.

Mina is well aware of Barney's infatuation, and she milks it for everything it's worth. She occasionally sweet-talks him into providing her with information on the other two railroads or even allowing her to slip war trains onto their main lines. Like with most of her other suitors, Mina plans to leave him by the wayside when he's no longer useful to her.

Lately Barney's become concerned that the Pinkerton's scrutiny of his company (due to the James Gang's activities), may reveal his ties to Black River. He's not sure what course the Pinkertons would take were it to uncover his underhanded dealings, but he knows it wouldn't bode well for his own well-being!

THE JAMES GANG

The James boys are indeed on Richard Barney's payroll. He's struck a rather lucrative deal with Frank and Jesse to ensure none of his gray-market deliveries are raided. He pays extra to make sure the boys play rough west of Kansas City though. The Pinkertons suspect KC & LR of such a conspiracy, but to date have been unable to find hard proof of it. Barney's accountants are smart enough to keep those transactions off the books.

For full details and statistics for the legendary Jesse James, his brother Frank, and the rest of the James Gang, see *Law Dogs*.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Fear Level 2

THE BURNING MAN

The stories are absolutely true. Harvey Wells, a local drunk, was beaten and accidentally killed by a bunch of smugglers. Now his ghost roams the back alleys of St. Louis every Saturday night, seeking vengeance.

Unfortunately, Wells has stopped being particular in his search for revenge. Every Saturday, Wells' ghost kills some unfortunate in St. Louis. He'll continue this until the last of his murderers is dead. Since his killers were only passing through, the spirit hasn't had much luck.

Wells' ghost looks like a stumbling drunk from a distance. Up close, his features are charred, and fire burns in his eyes and mouth.

GHOST OF HARVEY WELLS

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d4, Q:2d10, V:2d8

Belchin': fire 4d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:2d10, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Overawe 4d10

Pace: 8

Size: 7

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Belch Fire: Wells' ghost can belch forth a scorching blast of flame from his mouth. This blast does 4d12 damage to a single victim. Treat this as massive damage. Wells' flame blast has a Range Increment of 3.

Immunity: Wells can only be harmed by magic spells and effects. Even if he takes fatal damage from these, his ghost rises again on the next Saturday.

Vulnerability: Wells can be laid to rest by dousing his flames with at least an entire bottle of good whiskey.

Coup: Wells' essence gives a Harrowed increased resistance to fire, reducing all damage done by fire by -1 wound level.

PLACES OF NOTE

THE ARSENAL

The rumors are false. The arsenal is exactly that. The secretive shipments are experimental weapons arriving from the Confederate labs in Roswell, and the strange sounds are the racket the ghost-rock-powered gizmos make when activated.



The guards are quite serious about their duties, as the equipment at the arsenal would be of great interest to any Yankee spies. Any cowpoke foolish enough to tangle with them quickly finds himself facing a platoon of well-armed soldiers!

DR. PETER COLEMAN

Dr. Coleman is an exceptional physician and a good man. He also has small edge over many other medical practitioners—he has the *breech birth* Knack (see *The Quick & the Dead*). As you might guess, his patients have a high recovery rate!

Dr. Coleman was indeed at Gettysburg. He got a good look at the horrors of the Reckoning in the victims of the Butcher and the hordes of walkin' dead. He was greatly disturbed by what he saw, but he understands that something has changed in the way the world works now. His skill and influence make him a valuable ally to any posse he befriends.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d4, S:2d6, Q:2d6, V:2d8
Horse ridin' 4d4, shootin': pistol 2d8
Mental: C:3d10, K:2d12, M:1d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:2d8
Academia: occult 1d12, area knowledge: St. Louis 2d12, guts: 3d8, language: English 3d12, language: Latin 2d12, medicine: surgery 6d12, persuasion 3d8, science: biology, chemistry 3d12, scrutinize 4d10

Pace: 4

Wind: 16

Edges: Brave, renown 1

Hindrances: Heroic, loyal, oath (Hippocratic) 4

Special Abilities:

Grit: 1

Knack: Breech birth

Gear: Medical bag, derringer.

Description: Dr. Coleman is a slender, bookish man, with brown hair and beard. He dresses neatly but conservatively.

LEMP BREWERY

The company's underground operation has unwittingly stumbled into the hunting grounds of a nest of previously unencountered abominations: cave crawlers. These creatures are distantly related to the wall crawlers of the Southwest. Cave crawlers inhabit only the largest cave networks, such as Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, or the Carlsbad Caverns. There are 12 of the creatures scuttling about the caverns beneath St. Louis.



Cave crawlers lurk on the walls and roofs of the caves and prey on lone workers or, in some cases, groups of them. This is why no one has found any signs of the creatures' tracks so far.

The creatures are voracious hunters and are prone to take more prey than they can eat. Any victims not immediately devoured are encased in a stony secretion the cave crawlers produce, rather like a spider cocooning its food. These cocoons may be mistaken for natural rock formations unless an Onerous (7) *Cognition* check is made.

CAVE CRAWLER

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d8, Q:2d12+2, V:2d8
Climbin' 8d10, fightin': brawlin' 5d10, sneak 5d10
Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d6

Pace: 12

Size: 9

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+2d6), tail strike (STR+3d8)

Wall-Crawling: Cave crawlers can climb walls and ceilings at normal Pace. They may also run and pick up the Pace while doing so. These things are agile!



THE RAILYARD GHOST

This spirit appears as a wispy, nearly transparent, yet very angry Indian warrior. However, its dress is unlike any present-day tribe wears. An Onerous (7) *academia: anthropology* roll identifies it as from a tribe that lived in the area about 800 years ago.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d10, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:4d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:3d8, Sm:3d6, Sp:2d10

Pace:

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Chillin' Touch: The ghost attacks by touching its victim, a regular *fightin'* *brawlin'* roll. If it hits, it makes a *Strength* roll and does the result in Wind loss. This Wind loss does affect Harrowed. Any character brought to 0 Wind in this fashion falls unconscious. The ghost can then drain the life from an unconscious character in about 1 minute.

Immunity: The ghost is completely immune to physical attacks. Although magic can harm the spirit, the effect is only temporary. The ghost returns the next night.

Vulnerability: Weapons from the mound affect the spirit normally, and it can be killed permanently by them. Rebuilding the mound also lays the phantom to rest.

THE ST. LOUIS RAILYARD

The good news is nobody's really disappeared at the railyard. The KC & LR found every single worker they lost. The bad news is they were all dead! In every case, the missing workers were found the next morning in the railyard, but nothing remained of the men except dried-up and mummified husks.

The railroad used dirt from a large burial mound to level the railyard when it was built. The railyard is now haunted every midnight by a vengeful spirit that sucks the very essence out of its victims. It kills any folks it finds in the railyard at midnight.

There are only two ways to get rid of the ghost. The first is to return the dirt and artifacts to the burial site. Since that means tearing down Barney's new railyard, that's not too likely a solution. Fortunately, the ghost can also be wounded by the primitive weapons taken from the burial mound.

Wade Robertson, owner of Robertson's Sundries, just happens to have a stone dagger, two spears, and a war club found in the mound on display at his store.

THE CHARON

The reason the captain of the *Charon* takes risky charters is he has an edge on the other river pilots: He's already dead! Levi Ross really did sail his boat underneath the guns of Union ironclads, just like the story says. Unfortunately for Ross, the Yankee gunners just depressed their aim and sunk his little riverboat.

Ross didn't stay in Davey Jones' locker though, and neither did his boat. The *Charon* is now linked to him by supernatural bonds. As long Ross clings to his living death, the boat may be damaged but it can't be sunk! Otherwise use the standard river runner description on page 74 to describe the vessel.

Considering he's been to the bottom of the river and back, Ross looks remarkably alive. His skin is a bit pasty, and he exudes a persistent odor of swamp, but this isn't really that unusual, even for living river pilots.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d8, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:2d10
 Drivin': boat, fightin' brawlin' 4d8, shootin':
 shotgun 3d6, swimmin' 5d8
 Mental: C:3d10, K:2d8, M:1d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:4d8
 Area knowledge: Mississippi River 5d8, search
 4d10, trade: river pilot 4d8, tinkerin' 3d6
 Edges: Brave, mechanically inclined
 Hindrances: Big britches, greedy
 Pace: 8
 Wind: NA
 Special Abilities:
 Harrowed.
 Harrowed Powers: Cat eyes 3, chill o' the
 grave 3, relic (*Charon*) 5
 Gear: Scattergun, 20 shells and the *Charon*
 Description: Ross is a squat, stocky man with
 a scraggly, blond beard.

CAHOKIA

The Union troops avoid this mound city for a reason. However, things there are so strange we didn't have room to do them justice here. If you want the full story on Cahokia and what lurks within the ruins, you can find it in the upcoming adventure *A River Runs Over It*.

LITTLE EGYPT

Fear Level 2

THE MOUNDBUILDER

What's preying on folks in Little Egypt has nothing to do with the desecration of the burial mounds. It's actually a insect-like abomination similar to an ant-lion, but on a much larger scale. The only creatures the monster hunts are humans, so maybe a more accurate name for it is a human-lion!

The creature burrows under the ground and drags its victims with it. More often than not, its paralytic poison causes the prey to suffocate during its premature burial.

MOUNDBUILDER

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d6, S:3d12+2, Q:2d12, V:2d12
 Fightin' brawlin' 4d6, sneak 5d6
 Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4
 Pace: 6 (above ground)/16 (burrowing)
 Size: 10
 Terror: 9
 Special Abilities:
 Armor: 2 (thick carapace)
 Burrowing: Pace 16

Damage: Bite (STR+poison, see below), claws (STR+2d8)

Paralytic Poison: Any character bitten by the moundbuilder must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

CAIRO

Fear Level 4

General Nathan Bedford Forrest has a real problem on his hands. It seems the Wizard of the Saddle has laid his hands on a cursed saber, and it's slowly pushing him over the edge of sanity. Forrest and his army are currently bivouacked in Kentucky, planning their next campaign, while Forrest struggles with his personal demons. For more details, check out *Tales of Terror: 1877*.

FLESH STEALERS

Heroes who have experience with Baron LaCroix's skinwalkers are likely to place the blame on those creatures for the horrific murders near Cairo. Even once they got a look at the perpetrators, they may still think they're up against the dreadful abominations from Louisiana. However, they'd be dead wrong.





The creatures responsible are flesh stealers, a type of 'walkin' dead spawned by Bedford Forrest's raid on Union soil and his massacre of the garrisons on the Ohio. Some of the murdered soldiers' bodies have returned with an unholy appetite for the one thing denied their unnatural existence: skin.

Flesh stealers are similar in appearance to skinwalkers, except there are patches of tattered flesh still clinging to their bodies in places. Their teeth are chisel-like and have grown outward into a horrific overbite. The creatures use these to satisfy their craving for flesh, gnawing directly off their victims.

The creatures hide along the banks near the mouth of the Ohio. They take victims both on the shores and from passing riverboats. Their favorite tactic is to swarm over a boat and overwhelm their victims with sheer terror and numbers. Since there are only a few of these creatures, only the smallest vessels are attacked in this manner.

FLESH STEALERS

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:2d8
Fightin' brawlin' 4d8, sneak 4d8, swimmin' 3d8
Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d4
Pace: 8
Size: 6
Terror: 9
Special Abilities:
Damage: Bite (STR+2d4), claws (STR+1d4)
Undead.

NEW MADRID, MISSOURI

Fear Level 1

What's shaking the ground in the area is more movement along the same fault line that caused the first earthquake back in 1812. The Great Quake of '68 didn't just drop most of California into the Pacific. It wracked the entire continent, causing further instability and pressure in this region among others. When the next earth-shaker hits the New Madrid area, it's sure to be a whopper!

However, the rumors and movement in the ground has attracted the attention of a few members of the Cult of the Worm up in the Sioux Nations. A few members have headed down to Madrid to investigate, posing as geologists investigating the tremors.

Although there's nothing supernatural behind the rumblings in the ground, a posse that stumbles across the cultists is likely to assume so!

RIVER PIRATES

An average band of river pirates numbers between 10 and 20. They have 1d4 steamfloats (see page 76) which may or may not be armed, depending on how tough a fight you're looking to run.

Most of these scoundrels prefer to prey on those weaker than themselves, and they're quick to cut and run when the tide of battle turns against them. Dying is none too profitable.

TYPICAL RIVER PIRATE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:2d8
Drivin': riverboat 3d8, fightin' brawlin', knife 4d8,
shootin': rifle, pistol, shotgun 3d6, swimmin' 3d8
Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d6
Area knowledge: local river 3d6
Edges: Sand 2
Hindrances: Mean as a rattler, outlaw 3
Pace: 8
Wind: 14
Gear: A firearm with 25 rounds of ammunition, a knife, and a bottle of cheap whiskey

HAIRLESS PETE

Hairless Pete is everything his legends claim. He did lose his hair out West, but not as a buffalo hunter. Pete is and has always been an outlaw, and he ran into some trouble with the natives out there. Of course, getting scalped just made him meaner.

Pete's gang is the best equipped on the river. That's not only because they're so successful, but also because Black River gives them a little economic compensation to make river travel hazardous. Pete also has a few informers in Memphis to clue him in on particularly profitable targets headed upriver.

Hairless Pete's gang has 15 members and three steamfloats—all equipped with Gatling guns. (Use the stats for river pirates above, but up all their skills by +1 level.) His own craft, a captured Confederate torpedo boat, is armed to the teeth with a six-pound cannon, a Gatling gun, and two torpedo tubes. Pete has mounted a harpoon gun on the boat's bow. While he does occasionally use it on victims, the primary reason for it is to secure his hold on a riverboat.

Hairless Pete's gang has a couple of hideouts on the river. One of these is in the Forked Deer River, just below Fort Pillow, and the other is on a large island a few miles downstream from there.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:2d8, Q:4d8, S:1d8, V:2d10
 Drivin': riverboat 4d8, fightin': brawlin', knife 5d8,
 shootin': pistol, rifle 5d10
 Mental: C:3d8, K:2d6, M:3d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:2d8
 Area knowledge: local river 3d6, guts 3d8,
 overawe 4d8, streetwise 4d10
 Edges: Sand 3, thick-skinned, tough as nails 2
 Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, mean as a rattler,
 outlaw 5, ugly as sin
 Pace: 8
 Wind: 18
 Gear: A Colt Frontier pistol, a derringer, a Henry
 repeating rifle, and a Bowie knife.
 Description: Pete is of medium height, with a
 hideous scalping scar across the top of his
 head, and greasy black hair elsewhere.

FORT PILLOW

Fear Level 4

The ruins of Fort Pillow aren't haunted—at least not by the ghosts of the slain soldiers. However, the events of the massacre did spawn an evil in the waters just offshore. There, the large quantity of blood combined with the terror of the doomed prisoners gave rise to a terrible abomination.

THE FORT PILLOW HORROR

The creature is similar to a desert thing, although it's much larger. The creature attacks only at night, and only lone victims or small groups.

The abomination lashes out with its spiny tentacles at any prey on the shore below the fort. It can reach up to 10 yards inland, but it usually waits until a victim is right on the waterline.

Like a desert thing, the horror uses its tentacles to drag a victim to its maw. Once a target has been caught, the horror begins to drag its victim into the water. On each of its actions, the horror makes an opposed *Strength* roll. Every success drags the victim one yard closer to the abomination's maw.

The tentacles themselves can take 15 hits each before they're severed. However, the horror has so many of the appendages that the posse can blast away all day with little harm to the creature itself.

The horror's body is completely submerged about five yards offshore. This makes it impossible to attack from the land, and it's invisible to normal sight as well.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:1d8, S:2d12+4, Q:2d10, V:2d12+2
 Fightin' brawlin' 4d8, sneak 5d8
 Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d6
 Pace: 14 (in water)/4 (on land)
 Size: 12 (8' diameter core)
 Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8), tentacles (STR+blood drain, see below). The horror gets two tentacle attacks on each action.

Blood Drain: When a tentacle hits, it wraps and holds on to the victim. At the beginning of each round, it drains blood from the victim. Each grasping tentacle does 1d4 Wind per round. If the victim reaches 0 Wind or lower in this fashion, she falls unconscious. The tentacle's grip can be broken normally by an opposed *Strength* check, but the victim suffers an additional 1d4 Wind as it tears his flesh.

Vulnerability: Fire does double damage to the horror. Since the bulk of the body is underwater, this isn't too limiting, but its tentacles are vulnerable.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Fear Level 2

THE DEAD WAGONS

There's nothing sinister about the dead wagons themselves. The bodies are taken to the wilderness north and east of the city and unceremoniously placed in mass graves. This practice has led to the spawning of 'gloms in Memphis.

Now a few of these repulsive masses prowl Memphis. These abominations hide in plain sight on the city streets, resembling the piles of plague victims left for removal by the dead wagons.

'GLOMS

A 'glom is a mass of corpses joined together into a horrifying mass and animated by an especially strong manitou. Often the various heads giggle or gibber incoherently as the monster moves. Usually they're only found on battlefields, but the current conditions in Memphis have spawned more than one of the abominations.



'Gloms require at least two corpses to form. Most, however, are formed from considerably more. More terrifying is their ability to join other recently slain corpses to their seething mass, increasing their power proportionately. The corpse must have been dead for no longer than 10 minutes, and the abomination must spend an action to graft the body to its own.

This grafting process allows a 'glom to grow in size and power. Each Trait marked with an asterisk in the profile increases by +1 step per body added beyond the first, to a maximum of d12+8. The creature's Size is also increased by +3 for each additional body. The abomination gains one *fightin'* attack for every two bodies in the mass. Finally, for every body after the first, the mass gains +10 Wind.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, S:2d6*, Q:3d8, V:2d6*

Fightin': brawlin' 6d6, shootin': any 3d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d4*, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d8

Overawe 5d4*

Pace: 6

Size: 9+ (see below)

Terror: 9 (2 to 5 bodies)/11 (6 or more bodies)

Special Abilities:

Damage Resistance: A 'glom is difficult to damage in a way that slows it down. The abomination has a high Size—at least a 9, and that's when it's composed of only two bodies. Each additional body adds +3 to its Size, making it difficult to cause wounds with all but the largest weapons. There is one bit of hope, though, if the posse can determine which head holds the core brain. Destroying that head kills the 'glom dead.

Undead.

Weapons: 'Gloms can wield guns if available.

In general, there are no more guns than one per two bodies in the 'glom.

THE MHC

The MHC doesn't know it, but it has a powerful opponent: Solomon Thayer. Thayer is actually the secret identity of Ernst Biren, Edmund Hoyle's old apprentice-turned-nemesis (see *Hucksters & Hexes*). Maybe he's learned about getting reckless too close too home over the years, because he's has chosen Memphis as his primary playground.

He's watching Robert Church's small group of politicians and businessmen closely. It wouldn't do to have his lovely diseases spoiled by a bunch of meddling land speculators!

For now, Biren looks at the MHC as an amusing complication. However, should the commission become too successful in its goals, Biren may be inclined to take a more active, although no less subtle, role in their affairs.

BLACK RIVER

THE MEMPHIS BELLES

These ladies are among the best shootists Black River employs—and that's saying something. While the Wichita Witches may have more renown as gunslingers, the Belles can hold their own in any shootout.

Unlike the Witches, Belles are required to be schooled in social skills as well as gunplay. The Belles serve as Mina Devlin's personal bodyguard while she's in the city, so they have to be able to behave themselves in polite company. It's no coincidence the Belles are also among the prettiest ladies in town either.

The Memphis Belles shy away from the Wichita Witches' trademark bullwhip. That just wouldn't be proper, after all. Nor do they have any skill in the dark arts that many veteran Witches practice. Nonetheless, the Belles are a formidable group.

TYPICAL MEMPHIS BELLE

Corporeal: D:1d12, N:2d8, Q:2d10, S:2d6, V:2d8

Fightin': brawl'n' 4d8, quickdraw 4d12, shootin': pistol, rifle, shotgun 4d12

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Area knowledge: Memphis 3d6, guts 4d6, overawe 4d8, persuasion 4d8, streetwise 3d6

Edges: Friends in high places (Black River) 3, purty, "the voice" (soothing)

Hindrances: Enemy (other rail gangs), obligation (Black River)

Pace: 8

Wind: 14

Gear: A Silver plated, ivory handled, double-action Peacemaker, a fast-draw holster, a Winchester '76, and 20 rounds for each gun.

MINA DEVLIN

Ah, what to make of Mina Devlin? Lovely as a spring flower, deadly as a dancing cobra. Mina's motivation for pretty much everything she does is power. Whether it's witchcraft, seduction, or intimidation she uses, it all boils down to her exercising power over someone in some fashion. Her megalomania, not the desire for riches, is the force behind her drive to the Maze.



There's very little about Mina's past we haven't elaborated on already. She is as lovely and vengeful as Daniel paints her. To date, no one who's seriously slighted her has escaped her wrath.

Mina refinanced her railroad through a series of bloody and successful bank robberies throughout the Southwest. The Wichita Witches, led by Violet Esperanza, were tasked with raising the money, and they proved equal to the job.

Mina realized she had better spread her wealth among more investments than just Black River, or the next time she suffered heavy casualties, she might lose it all. Newcomb Pharmaceuticals is one such endeavor.

The rumors of her entanglement with Chamberlain are part of her plan. She did make approaches toward him, hoping to seduce him as she has many others before. Although Chamberlain remained faithful to his wife, she did secure a temporary alliance with Union Blue out of the deal.

Mina also hopes that gossip about the affair may prove damaging to Chamberlain's reputation, cutting the hero's support and financing from Back East.

SECRETS

PLACES OF NOTE

BLACK RIVER RAILYARD

This area is very heavily protected. The rail approaches to the yard are guarded by two cannons on each track, and eight watch towers mounting Gatling guns overlook the rest of the perimeter. In addition to the artillery positions, over 30 gunmen are on duty inside the railyard at all times, with an equal number off-duty in nearby barracks.

As if the standard guard complement wasn't enough, the Memphis railyard serves as the boarding point for all the mercenaries hired east of the Mississippi. Depending on the success of Black River recruiters, there may be more gunmen in the yard than just the regular guards at any given time.

THE HUNT-PHELAN HOUSE

The house serves not only as a home to Mina when she's in Memphis, but also as a training ground for some of her most promising students. Underneath the mansion are a number secret rooms where her apprentices perfect their black

magic. Some of her less fortunate enemies—like her husband's murderer, Kent Belfore—end up here as guinea pigs for her students.

Any band of heroes foolish enough to try to break in here are likely in for a personal visit to the undertaker. Mina's gang is ready to fend off an attack by a rival rail baron. A posse of trigger-happy gunslingers is just target practice.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

At any given time, there are 10 hired guns patrolling the area outside the walls. And these guys aren't tenderfeet. Use the Gunslinger archetype from the *Deadlands: The Weird West* rulebook. During nights when Mina isn't entertaining, a pair of enormous pet wolves roam between the outer wall and the house.

PET WOLVES

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d10, Q:2d8, S:2d10, V:3d10

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d6, M:3d8, Sm:1d6, Sp:3d8

Overawe 3d8, search 3d4, trackin' 5d4

Pace: 10

Size: 8 (these are really big wolves!)

Terror: 3





Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+Id6), claw (STR)

Howl: As an action, one of these wolves may howl. In addition to alerting the rest of the house, it causes all opponents to make a Fair (5) *guts* check.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Inside the house, there are no less than five Memphis Belles—and two to three times that number during a social gathering. Finally, there are always at least two witches-in-training in the basement.

Any sounds of gunfire bring reinforcements from the Black River railyard within 15 minutes.

WITCH-APPRENTICES

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, Q:2d8, S:2d6, V:3d8

Fightin': knife 2d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d8, M:1d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:2d10

Academia: occult 4d6, faith: black magic 4d10

Edges: Arcane background, friends in high places (Black River) 3

Hindrances: Obligation (Black River), mean as a rattler

Pace: 6

Wind: NA

Special Abilities:

Black Magic Spells: Bolt o' doom 2, cloak o' evil 2, ghost hands 3 (this is a new spell, see Chapter Four for details)

Gear: Dagger (STR+Id4)

THE MEMPHIS TRESTLE

There's nothing supernatural about the events on the river around Memphis. Black River gunmen are dropping onto smaller boats as they pass beneath the Memphis Trestle. After robbing the passengers, the bandits weight the bodies down with stones and dump them overboard. Mina had the stories about de Soto's ghost spread to throw off anyone poking his nose into the crimes.

Although originally the robberies were intended to raise money for Mina's dwindling coffers, now she has her thugs continue them in the hopes people will avoid river travel in favor of the railroad. So far, the bandits have been very careful about their crimes, choosing only the most vulnerable of targets and leaving no witnesses.

Boatmen in the area are becoming nervous and are seeking an answer to the problem. A posse of gun-toting heroes might be just the thing they're looking for. If the bandits are

caught, Mina's already got a cover story ready about the gunmen being rogues acting without her knowledge. She's even ready to tack a small bounty of her own onto any reward a posse earns!

NEWCOMB PHARMACEUTICALS

The reason Ronald Newcomb's endeavor is so successful is Mina Devlin is secretly backing the company. After heavy fighting nearly caused the financial ruin of her railroad earlier this year, Mina has begun to diversify her investments. With a little push here and there, she's gotten Newcomb's products into a number of well-known medical establishments across the South. In a few years, she hopes the company will show a sizable return on her surreptitious investments.

As an added bonus, Mina has directed Newcomb to focus no small amount of his efforts into the resurgence of alchemy. One or two of her more skilled students of the arcane often assist the chemists with the less rational aspects of alchemical formulae.

Of course, if Ronald's little operation is too successful, it may draw the unwelcome attention of Solomon Thayer, head of Thayer Shipping. Thayer has his own sinister plans for the Memphis area (as you'll read about in a moment), and they do not include the presence of a company whose purpose is furthering the cause of medical science.

OGILVIE'S OUTFITTERS

Assume Clayton Ogilvie has any normal item or firearm from the *Deadlands: The Weird West* rulebook in stock. If the posse is looking for something particularly unusual, Ogilvie has it if it might be needed by a pioneer, homesteader, or farmer.

At any given time, he has 2d6 gizmos on hand. Most often, these are labor savers like the trail stove or rattler detector. Once he even had a diving suit available. It was snatched up by a local steamboat company to use on a snagboat.

On occasion, Ogilvie may have a weapon or two in stock, or perhaps a piece of armored clothing. Only in a rare circumstance does Ogilvie carry alchemical concoctions. They're just too volatile.

The outfitter also never gets any of the military weapons like vapor cannons or steam Gatlings. Unlike his normal goods, Ogilvie charges slightly higher than normal prices for gizmos. His prices are +10% above the prices listed in *Smith & Robards*.





TENT CITY

Tent City's population is mostly made up of travelers—and the folks that are there to gouge them out of their money. Any goods or services purchased in Tent City cost 25% more than the usual listed cost.

THAYER SHIPPING

This little building is the source of much of Memphis' woes. From here, Solomon Thayer, a.k.a. Ernst Biren, pollutes the city with disease and plague. For more on Biren, see his section on page 107. The barrels left on the river bank or near the office are usually disease-carrying agents of some sort. Tipping the MHC off as to the contents of these barrels gains the posse a sizable reward.

One of Biren's primary test beds and staging grounds for his horrific experiments is Tent City. The intense concentration of people provides an ideal environment for spreading disease, and the transient nature of the place ensures that Biren's virulent little creations are spread far and wide.

Daniel is correct that posse members can easily gain employment guarding Thayer riverboats. The pay is \$1 a day, plus ammunition. Mina Devlin suspects, with good reason, that Thayer is somehow aligned with LaCroix. She makes sure local river pirates pay special attention to his boats. When pirates aren't handy, Mina isn't above sending her own troops to make trouble for Thayer.

THE WHISKEY CHUTE

Owen Ross is well-informed about events on the Mississippi—maybe just a little too informed. Ross is Hairless Pete's best spy in Memphis. Because the Whiskey Chute is so popular, someone from the larger riverboats is bound to visit it when in port.

OWEN ROSS

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:2d8
Fightin': brawlin' 2d6, shootin': shotgun 3d6
Mental: C:3d8, K:2d6, M:3d8, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d6
Area knowledge: Memphis 3d6, persuasion 4d8,
scrutinize 5d8, trade: bartender 4d6
Edges: Big ears, keen
Hindrances: Greedy
Pace: 6
Wind: 14
Gear: Scattergun (under bar).
Description: Ross is a balding, red-haired man,
with a prominent gut and a receding chin.

THE LOST PACKET

Daniel is absolutely right in his assessment of Captain Jack MacGowran's ability as a pilot. Actually, MacGowran knew the river a little too well for his own good. MacGowran took a little known cutoff to save a few miles on his trip. Unfortunately, the Mississippi made one of its unpredictable course shifts right in the middle of *his* shortcut and left the *Demeter* grounded in a newly formed oxbow lake.

Although Daniel doesn't know it, Captain MacGowran was actually running a charter cargo for LaCroix upriver. On board were 20 coffin-sized crates containing nosferatu the Baron was sending to wreak havoc in Memphis. In the confusion after the channel disappeared, the abominations got loose and made short work of the crew.

The vampires moved inland shortly thereafter. The small town Daniel mentioned fell victim to the bloodsuckers, but since then, the small group has disbanded and spread throughout the upper Louisiana area.

What's left is a rotting steamboat filled with empty coffins, and an oxbow lake with the bloated bodies of the crew underneath the waters. The problem is that five of the crew have returned to life—not as vampires but as a repulsive form of walkin' dead called bloats.

BLOATS

Bloats are waterlogged walkin' dead. To become a bloat, a zombie has to be submerged at the time it was reanimated and remain submerged for at least a few months. The water reacts with the corpse's tissues, turning most of it into a waxy substance that has a nearly overpowering stench to it.

The result is the corpse's flesh becomes pale and distended. Hence the name 'bloat'. The swollen features make the creature's eyes look like foggy black marbles. In general, their appearance is disgusting—hence the higher Terror score than the run-of-the-mill undead.

The composition of these abominations make them even more resistant to damage than normal walkin' dead. They take only half damage from most firearms or piercing weapons. Shotguns and cutting or slashing weapons do full damage to the monsters, as do blunt weapons like clubs.

Alcohol affects the creature's rotting flesh like acid, and any character making an Onerous (7) *medicine*: any roll realizes this.



SECRETS



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d8, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, swimmin' 5d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Pace: 8 (land)/6 (swimming)

Size: 7

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR)

Stench: Any human within 10 feet of a bloat must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* check to avoid being sickened by the incredible odor. Those who fail lose 1d6 Wind and are at -2 to all rolls for the encounter. Characters only have to make this roll once per encounter.

Immunity: Bullets and stabbing weapons do half damage due to the bloat's rubbery skin. Undead.

Vulnerability: Bloats have a bit of an allergy to alcohol. Any sort of alcohol does 2d10 to any location hit by the liquid. The damage continues at the beginning of each round, but is reduced by -1 die type each time. Once the damage is reduced to less than 2d4, it stops.

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI

Fear Level 5

Little of value is left in Vicksburg. The refugees took most everything with them when they fled years ago. The city is little more than the ruined shells of buildings. The situation in the river town has quickly gone from bad to worse.

There are lots of things wrong in Vicksburg these days. It does serve as an occasional hideout to outlaws on the run—but seldom more than once to the same gang. The few folks too stubborn or desperate to move stick to the muddy banks of the river.

THE TUNNELS

There is indeed an intricate network of tunnels laced underneath Vicksburg. These passageways connect the basements and artillery shelters. The tunnels are hand dug from the hard, claylike soil and are small enough to make even a ghost-rock miner claustrophobic.

These tunnels are the part of the reason decent folk avoid the city. The other reason is what lives in them.



MULESKINNERS

These are the remains of jackasses eaten by the people of Vicksburg, both during the siege and afterward while they suffered the Wasting. They look a little like a regular mule, although they walk upright. Their torsos are bare of flesh or organs and their eyes glow with an unearthly red light. Finally, a muleskinners' forelegs end in long knifelike bones used to butcher its prey.

The abomination gets its name from its habit of lining its lair with the hides of its victims. A muleskinners prefers lone victims, but it may stalk a group, preying on stragglers. They live in the tunnel network under the city.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:2d8, Q:2d8, S:2d12, V:2d10

Fightin': bone knife 5d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:3d6, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Area knowledge: Vicksburg 3d4, overawe 3d6, search 3d8, trackin' 3d8

Pace: 8

Size: 10

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bone knives (STR+2d8)

Night Vision: Muleskinners see in total darkness the same as daylight

Undead.

RATCATCHERS

Ratcatchers are the reanimated corpses of people forced to subsist on rats during the siege and the Wasting epidemic. They appear much like the poor wretches that live nearby Vicksburg: dirty and unkempt and dressed in long, tattered clothing that hides most of their bodies. And with good reason, because underneath the clothing a ratcatcher's torso has been replaced by a swarm of rats. Their heads dart in and out between the ribs, and their teeth seem unnaturally long. The abominations try to grab their victims and pull them up close to let the rats devour them.

Although they can't speak, as long as they're clothed, many folks mistake ratcatchers for beggars. Like muleskinners, ratcatchers nest in the tunnels beneath Vicksburg, but they also venture outside the city when hunting. They usually travel in packs of 2d6 and attack groups of equal or smaller numbers.

When threatened, the ratcatchers scurry back to their lairs underneath the city, using their knowledge of the tunnels to escape their pursuers.

One might think that the abominations of a horrible place like this might be working together, but that's definitely not the case in Vicksburg. Muleskinners hunt ratcatchers all the time.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d10, Q:2d8, S:4d6, V:2d8

Dodge 4d10, fightin': wrasslin' 4d10, shootin':

pistol, rifle 2d8, sneak 4d10, swimmin' 4d10

Mental: C:3d6, K:3d4, M:2d4, Sm:2d4, Sp:1d4

Area knowledge: Vicksburg 4d4, search 3d6, scroungin' 5d4

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor of Rats: -6. The rats inside the creature provide light damage protection

Gnawin': Ratcatchers use *fightin': wrasslin'* in an opposed roll to pull their victims against the rats in their torsos. If the victim loses, she suffers 8d4 damage on each of the ratcatcher's action until she breaks free by winning another opposed roll. Since the rats bite anywhere on the victim they can, treat this as explosion damage.

Night Vision: Ratcatchers see in total darkness the same as daylight.

Undead.

THE WASTING

The Wasting is an invention of the Reckoners and may appear anywhere starvation, fear, and despair are present in a large population. A character in an area affected by an outbreak of the Wasting must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll to avoid contracting it. If she succeeds, she is immune to that particular outbreak of the disease—although a cruel Marshal may keep rolling dice to make the posse nervous.

Any character unlucky enough to contract the disease takes a single wound directly to the guts, loses -1 die type from every Trait, and loses 1d4 Wind every week. This Wind cannot be recovered until the disease is cured.

If any Trait is reduced below a d4, the victim is unable to use it for any Trait or Aptitude rolls. If all Corporeal Traits drop below a d4, the victim dies. If all Mental Traits are reduced below d4, or if the hero's Wind is reduced to 0, the victim lies in a coma.

The only way to halt this weekly decline is to make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. Healing is possible only once the victim has made two such rolls. At that time, the character begins the long road to





recovery and regains +1 die type in each Trait, 1 wound level, and 1d4 Wind per week until the original levels in each are reached.

HAVEN

Inquiry into the recovery rate of Haven's patients shows no one has ever successfully recovered while at the institute. This isn't hard for Thayer's "researchers" to explain, though, since only terminally ill patients are accepted. Haven has even managed to gain a reputation as a fine medical facility—*ailin'* posse members may even be drawn to it by reputation.

Solomon Thayer is actually none other than Ernst Biren. (There's more on him on page 107.) Biren has no intention of curing the poor souls at Haven. He's using the institute as a testing ground for his own diseases, which he plans to unleash on the teeming population centers Back East. The researchers and medical staff are all students of the occult and aware of their employer's true intentions, although none know his actual identity.

As yet, Biren's men been unable to duplicate the effects of the Wasting, a plague that Biren wishes he had come up with. But the ancient sorcerer was never a quitter. It took him nearly five years to master cholera, after all.



THE SULTANA

Despite the claims of either side, no human agency was responsible for the fate that befell the poor souls on the *Sultana*. The boat was dangerously overloaded, but this was only a contribution to the enormous loss of life, not the cause.

The true fault for the disaster was an infestation of gremlins in the riverboat's boiler. A pack of 15 had clambered aboard the vessel shortly after the *Sultana* was completed. It's a testament to the skill of the operators that they were able to keep the boat moving at all!

The gremlins remained in the sunken wreck of the *Sultana* and multiplied (in whatever fashion gremlins accomplish this—we don't really want to think about that ourselves). Any vessel crossing this stretch of the Mississippi now has a good chance of picking up a supernatural stowaway.

Anytime a boat passes the wreckage of the *Sultana*, draw a card. If it's a Joker, a gremlin sneaks aboard. Of course, you can forego the process and simply decide to have one of the little troublemakers hitch a ride!

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

Natchez-On-the-Hill is a very peaceful and pleasant town. The area on top of the bluffs is Fear Level 1. With all the violence and crime, Natchez Under-the-Hill has a Fear Level of 2.

MISSING CHILDREN

The children are actually victims of Dennis Thornsbury's hideous ceremonies. See the section on Longwood on page 98.

DEAD MAN'S BEND

Fear Level 3

Oddly enough, Dead Man's Bend isn't haunted. The strange moaning Daniel mentioned is merely the sound of wind blowing over empty liquor bottles that have also washed up in the bend.

While there are no ghosts at the bend, the sheer volume of murdered folks turning up there has given rise to an unusual number of walkin' dead. Any victim that washes up on the bend draws two extra cards to see if she comes back Harrowed. The nature of the riverbank gives anybody who returns from the grave there a -5 penalty to the initial Dominion checks.



EMERALD MOUND

There is nothing out of the ordinary about Emerald Mound. A group of local boys occasionally sneak out to the mound, build a fire, and sit around scaring each other with ghost stories. They're so good at spooking themselves that they douse their fire and scatter like leaves at any sound from the surrounding woods.

Of course, this being the Weird West, the boys had better be careful with the stories they tell. Horrible creatures have a habit of leaping right out of people's imaginations and into the real world these days. For a good example of this see the Spanish Garrison in New Orleans, on page 113.

LONGWOOD

Longwood is not haunted. Something more sinister lurks behind its walls. Unknown to anyone in town, Dennis Thornsby is a descendant of a member of the Natchez tribe—and he's quite mad. Thornsby believes he has been chosen to mete out revenge for the extinction of his ancestral tribe.



He follows a version of the sun worship practiced by the old Natchez tribe. Thornsby's version, while powerful, is also quite evil. He has kept one of the more unpleasant rituals of the Natchez—that of child sacrifice.

These rituals are what's behind the rash of missing children in Natchez. They're also the cause of the strange noises and lights reported by townsfolk.

Thornsby is careful about maintaining his cover. He is a licensed attorney and continues to practice in Natchez. His legal expertise, along with his sterling reputation as a Confederate war hero, may prove as troublesome to a posse as his formidable black-magic powers!

Thornsby has no "master plan" for revenge at this point. He's just quietly sacrificing the children of Natchez and building up his dark powers. What his twisted plans he might have in mind is impossible to predict.

DENNIS THORNSBY

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:3d6, S:2d6, V:2d8

Fightin': saber 4d8, shootin': pistol 3d6, sneakin' 5d8

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d8, M:2d6, Sm:4d8, Sp:3d10

Academia: history, occult 3d8, faith: black magic 4d10, professional: law 5d8

Edges: Arcane background: black magic, friends in high places (local judge) 3

Hindrances: Loco, vengeful

Pace: 8

Wind: 18

Special Powers:

Black magic: Bolts of doom 3 (black flames), cloak o' evil 2 (heat distortion), spook 2 (eyes burn with a black flame)

Gear: Cavalry saber, and a .44 army revolver

Description: Thornsby is a handsome man in his late 40s with salt-and-pepper hair and beard. He's let himself go a bit since his army days, but he still cuts a dashing figure.

O'NEIL & COMPANY COAL YARD

Like Daniel said, coal is the preferred fuel for most steamers. The cost for 50 pounds of coal at O'Neil's is a mere \$5, whereas a pound of refined ghost rock is \$150, and nuggets are \$115.

O'Neil doesn't keep a tremendous amount of ghost rock on hand. The demand isn't that high, but the risk of robbery is. At any given time, the coalyard has 2d6 pounds of refined ghost-rock cores and half that amount of unrefined nuggets. The ghost rock is kept locked in a safe in the office.

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

THE RED STICK

There is absolutely nothing supernatural about the blood on the Red Stick, nor is it related to the recent disappearances. For more on the missing folks, see the section on The Hood below.

A local bank teller and part-time student of the occult, Victor Alphand is convinced the pole is some sort of otherworldly gateway. Alphand has become obsessed with activating the gateway, and he's the source of the fresh blood found on the pole recently. He steals blood from a local slaughterhouse and paints the pole with it from time to time. Alphand has been careful to keep his practices secret so far.

The Red Stick is indeed a gateway to the Hunting Grounds. However, it only works when painted with fresh animal blood on the night of a new moon. Alphand has made an error in his research. He believes it can be opened only during a full moon.

VICTOR ALPHAND

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:2d6

Fightin': knife 2d6, sneak 5d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d8, M:2d4, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d10

Academia: occult 3d6, area knowledge (Baton Rouge) 4d6, professional: accountant 4d6

Edges: None

Hindrances: Bad eyes (glasses), curious, tinhorn
Pace: 6

Wind: 16

Gear: Bucket of pigs' blood, a paintbrush, and a couple of badly translated occult works.

Description: Alphand is a slight man in his early 50s with a grey mustache and sideburns. He wears tiny spectacles, and he squints constantly.

THE HOOD

The actual cause of the murders in Baton Rouge is a homicidal maniac who recently visited the area. What's worse is the villain is a *tempest* (see *Hucksters & Hexes*) and what's even worse than that is he's also Harrowed!

Willard Gage was a murderous madman with an edge. From his early teens, he was able to *shadow walk* from time to time. His insanity made it difficult for him to fit into any civilized community for any length of time, so he made his living as a roustabout on riverboats.



Whenever the boat stopped in a port, Gage would indulge in his favorite pastimes: torture and murder.

A few months ago, Gage got caught in the act in the small rivertown of Port Hudson, north of Baton Rouge. A group of men found him in the process of slaughtering an entire household. The band of vigilantes dragged him—still covered with the blood from his crime—to a tree in the center of town. Before the law could intervene, they strung the murderer up.

As is sometimes the case, the dead man didn't stay that way anymore. Gage's body dug itself out of his grave two days later, but he was no longer in control. The powers of the manitou, combined with Gage's unique ability, have made him nearly unstoppable. He's left a trail of brutal murders from Baton Rouge down the River Road to New Orleans. Currently, he's moving through the swamps and bayous, preying on homes and plantations in the area.

Those lucky enough to escape an encounter with Gage have taken to referring to the him as "the Hood." To date, no one has seen Gage's face because he's wearing the hood the vigilantes put over his head before hanging him (with eyeholes cut in it, of course).

SECRETS

WILLARD GAGE, THE HOOD

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d8, Q:2d12, S:2d8, V:2d6
 Fightin': axe, brawlin', knife 4d8, lockpickin' 2d6,
 sneak 5d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:1d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:2d4

Edges: None

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, grim servant o' death
 5, loco, mean as a rattler, outlaw 5, vengeful

Pace: 8

Wind: NA

Special Abilities:

Harrowed.

Harrowed Powers: berserker 2, cat eyes 3,
 stitchin' 5

Knack: tempest (*shadow man*). Gage uses this
 only in special circumstances, either to
 escape or appear where his prey least
 expects him. In addition to the Marshal's
 Fate Chips, Gage has three of his own just
 to activate his *tempest* ability.

Terror: 7

Gear: A large knife, an axe, and any sharp object
 he can lay his hands on.

Description: The Hood is a white man of
 medium height and weight. To date, no one
 has seen the Hood's face.

RIVER ROAD PLANTATIONS

Although travel along the River Road is
 generally safe (as long as you discount the
 Hood), the deserted buildings in this area often
 serve as hideouts for bandits or voodoo cults.
 The sheer size of the plantations makes them
 perfect lairs for outlaws or cultists.

THE HAUNTED BAYOU

Unlike many horrors in the Weird West, the
 force behind the strange happenings in the
 swamps west of Baton Rouge has little to do
 with the Reckoning. Back in 1800, a meteorite
 crashed into the area across from the town. The
 rock contained an unearthly, virus-like life-form
 which, free from any natural competitors, began
 to slowly spread.

The meteorite is buried in a stagnant pond.
 The alien creature's essence has polluted the
 nearby water table, and it now has limited
 control over most simple terrestrial life in the
 area.

Normal plant life isn't capable of much
 movement, just the occasional swaying
 mentioned in the local stories Daniel noted. The
 insect life in the area exhibits strange behavior,
 such as lightning bugs all flashing at once or
 swarms of flies forming in complex patterns.

Higher life-forms, such as reptiles and
 mammals (including humans), can only be
 controlled by the alien once it completely
 replaces the creatures' nervous system with its
 own. For all intents and purposes, this process
 results in the subject's death. It takes time—a day
 or more—so the alien tries to trap its victims in
 bogs or similar natural pitfalls where it can
 work on them at its leisure.

Terrestrial creatures which have their nervous
 systems destroyed by the alien appear to be
 undead. In game terms, treat them as though
 they had the immunities of the undead (no Wind
 loss, no stun checks, and so on), but miracles
 like *protection* and other effects that specifically
 affect undead creatures are useless against them.

Replaced characters and creatures can be
 slain by destroying the brain, just like with
 normal walkin' dead.

THE ALIEN

The creature itself is a small mass of tendrils
 and goo about two feet in diameter. It rests
 among the broken remains of the meteorite at
 the bottom of the four-foot deep pond. Killing
 the otherworldly being releases its control of the





other life-forms. Unfortunately, any higher life forms like alligators, dogs, or even humans are left virtually comatose and never recover.

THE ALIEN

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:2d10, Q:2d8, S:2d4, V:2d6
Fightin': brawlin' 4d10

Mental: C:3d12, K:2d8, M:2d4, Sm:3d10, Sp:4d8

Pace: 0

Size: 4

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Tendril lash (STR+1d4+paralytic venom)

Paralytic Venom: The creature's tendrils produce a toxin that paralyzes most living things. Any creature struck by a tendril must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes.

Control: The alien secretes a poison which allows it to take possession of other creatures. To take control of a creature, the alien must win get a raise on a test of *Spirit* with the victim. If the poison is ingested, this roll is made immediately. The poison also works on touch as well, although this requires a full day of contact to attempt a single roll.

CAJUNS

Anyone with the *language: French* Aptitude can use it to communicate in Cajun French. Because of the differences in the two languages, a character using standard French suffers a -2 to all rolls to understand Cajun French.

The Cajuns do provide troops to Baron LaCroix in return for his "help" with the fever spiders that infest the swamp. Of course, the Baron is using these folks. See *Fever Spiders* for more details

TYPICAL CAJUN

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:2d8
Drivin': boat 3d8, fightin' brawlin', knife 4d8,
shootin': rifle, pistol, shotgun 3d6, swimmin' 3d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d6

Area knowledge: local bayou 3d6

Edges: Sand 2

Hindrances: Mean as a rattler, outlaw 3

Pace: 8

Wind: NA

Gear: A firearm with 25 rounds of ammunition, a knife, and a bottle of cheap whiskey

FEVER SPIDERS

It just seems a little too convenient that the Cajuns are plagued by a menace that Baron LaCroix is uniquely equipped to deal with doesn't it? Well, that's because the spiders were planted by Bayou Vermillion troops in the first place.

LaCroix brought a few of the spiders with him from Haiti, and he had originally intended to use them to drive the Cajuns from the area prior to laying his tracks, but a bad season of hurricanes slowed the spread of the arachnids. By the time they were in full swing, Bayou Vermillion was already halfway across Texas.

Still, LaCroix was never one to pass up an opportunity to take advantage of someone. Now he uses the spiders to blackmail Cajun sharpshooters for his rail gangs. In fact, the patrols he sends into the swamps are more likely to be carrying spider eggs to spread than actually hunting the creatures.

The troops LaCroix uses to root out the fever spiders are all undead. The bite of the arachnids is completely ineffective against the walkin' dead and other evictees from Boot Hill. The Baron does take steps to hide the nature of the patrols from the devoutly Catholic Cajuns. If they knew the true nature of their patron, it's doubtful they'd serve him for long.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d8, S:1d4-2, Q:2d10, V:1d4

Fightin': brawlin' 1d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 8

Size: 1

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR)

Venom: Fever spider venom hurts like the dickens but is never fatal. Any character bitten by one of them loses 1d4 Wind immediately. He loses another 1d4 Wind for the each successive day from the fever. If his Wind reaches 0, he's bedridden until the fever runs its course (1d6 days). At the end of the fever, he quickly recovers. However, 2d10 days later, he flies into a murderous rage for the next 2d10 days. The victim may attempt to resist by making two consecutive Incredible (11) *Spirit* rolls. Failure on either roll means the victim becomes a homicidal manic for the duration of the fever. During this time, the victim ignores 2 levels of wound modifiers.





SWAMPS & BAYOUS

CREATURES OF THE SWAMPS

Alligators are a common sight once a body gets away from the high traffic areas of the swamp. While these critters don't exactly go out of their way to hunt people, they're ornery as all get out.

GATORS

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:3d10, Q:3d8, V:2d10
Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak 2d8
Mental: C:1d4, K:2d4, M:2d6, Sm:2d4, Sp:1d6
Pace: 8 (on land)/12 (swimming)
Size: 7
Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Light Armor: -4

Damage: Bite (STR+1d6) Once a gator gets a hold on a victim, it doesn't tend to let go. The victim can break free by winning a contest of *Strength* with the gator. Otherwise, the gator automatically does bite damage on each of its actions.

Tail Lash: Any hero hit by a tail lash must make an opposed *Strength* roll against the gator. If the gator wins, the target is knocked off her feet and must make a stun check. The victim must make a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll to recover. This attack can only be used against victims to the critter's rear.

Thick-Skinned: Gators ignore 1 level of wound modifiers.

OLD AL

A giant alligator does haunt the swamps and lower stretches of the Mississippi, but he's nowhere near as clever as most riverboatmen claim. Of course, when you're as big as Old Al, you really don't need as much in the way of smarts.

Old Al is close to 35 feet long. Fortunately, being that big, he's also pretty lazy. Only seldom does he stir from his hiding places in the deep swamps west of the lower river. And while he may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, Old Al has been around long enough to know once the little two legged creatures get sight of him, he won't be around too much longer.

Still, every now and then he gets a hankering for a little bit of human, and he slithers out into the populated regions to grab a bite.

By the way, he doesn't give a hoot about tobacco.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:3d12+6, Q:3d8, V:2d12+2
Fightin': brawlin' 5d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:4d8, K:2d4, M:2d10, Sm:4d4, Sp:1d10

Overawe 5d10

Pace: 4 (on land)/8 (swimming)

Size: 16 (35 feet long)

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8). Once Old Al gets a hold on a victim, the poor soul's in a world of trouble. The victim can break free by winning a contest of *Strength* with the gator. Otherwise, the gator automatically does bite damage on each of its actions. Old Al is also likely to just drag the victim underwater to drown.

Tail lash: Any hero hit by this must make an opposed *Strength* roll with the monster. If Old Al wins, the target is knocked 2d6 feet and stunned. The victim must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll to recover. This attack can only be used against victims to the critter's rear.

Thick-Skinned: Old Al ignores up to 2 levels of wound modifiers and receives a +2 bonus to all rolls to avoid or recover from stun.

SNAKES ALIVE!

The variety of snakes in the swamps gives you all kinds of ways to make the posse squirm. All the snakes listed below share the same basic stats, but the particulars of their behavior and venom differ a little.

COPPERHEAD

Copperheads are the least venomous of the poisonous snakes commonly found in the area, but that doesn't make getting bitten pleasant. They're cantankerous creatures, and they don't even have the decency to warn potential victims off like rattlesnakes do. Watch your step when walking through the woods!

If a copperhead bites a victim, it injects its poison. The victim must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll immediately. If she's successful, she suffers a -3 to all rolls involving the affected area for 1d6 days.

If she fails, the bitten area swells painfully and can't be used for 1d6 days. If she goes bust, she dies in 1d4 days unless someone sucks out the poison and makes a Hard (9) *medicine* roll within 10 minutes after the bite.



SECRETS

CORAL SNAKE

These are pretty shy, even for snakes. Only bad luck or plain bullheadedness is likely to get a hero bit by one—good thing, because the poison is incredibly deadly.

If a coral snake bites a victim (and if you handle one, it will bite you), it injects a potent neurotoxin into the victim's bloodstream. The victim must make an Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. If he's successful, he loses 1d6 Wind each day for the next 1d4 days. This Wind can't be recovered until the venom has run its course. Should the victim drop to 0 or lower Wind, he falls comatose for the duration of the effect.

If the victim fails the *Vigor* roll, he dies in 1d10 hours unless someone makes a Hard (9) *medicine* roll within 10 minutes of the bite. If he goes bust on the *Vigor* roll, he dies on the spot.

COTTONMOUTH

Also known as a water moccasin, the cottonmouth can strike underwater. Cottonmouths swim very well, moving through the water at Pace 6. If a cottonmouth bites a victim, it injects a dangerous venom. The victim must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll

immediately. If she's successful, the bitten area swells painfully and can't be used for 1d6 days.

If she fails the *Vigor* check the location swells painfully and cannot be used effectively for 1d4 weeks. If she goes bust, she dies in 1d4 days unless someone sucks out the poison and makes a Hard (9) *medicine* roll within 10 minutes of the bite.

Cottonmouths are by far the most ornery of all the snakes presented here. A cottonmouth that's been provoked does not run, plain and simple.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d6, S:1d4, Q:4d12, V:2d4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 6

Size: 2

Terror: 3

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+poison)

Poison: With a successful bite that causes even a single point of Wind, the snake injects its poison. See the individual snake descriptions above for details.



GUIDES

BERNARD SULLEROT

Bernard is the probably the most experienced guide-for-hire on the river. He's lived in or near the swamp for nearly his entire 40 years of life, and there are few places he doesn't know.

Bernard is a devout Catholic, and he loves getting into debates with "heretical" Protestants. He is also superstitious, but his fear of the full moon has nothing to do with superstition.

Bernard is a loup-garou, or werewolf, and has been ever since he was nearly killed by one in the swamps nearly 10 years ago. Each full moon, he rows himself far out into the swamps and chains himself to a tree so he can't hurt anyone while in his bestial form.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:4d10, Q:4d6, S:2d8, V:4d8
 Fightin': knife 3d10, drivin': pirogue 510, shootin': rifle 4d8, sneak 5d10
 Mental: C:2d12, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d8
 Academia: theology 2d6, area knowledge: bayous 6d6, faith: Roman Catholics 4d6, medicine: general 2d6, survival: swamp 6d6, trackin' 5d12



Edges: Keen, light sleeper, sense o' direction
 Hindrances: Self-righteous, stubborn, superstitious

Pace: 10

Wind: 16

Special Abilities:

Grit: 1

Loup-Garou: On nights of the full moon, Bernard becomes a werewolf as described in *Deadlands: The Weird West*. While a werewolf, he retains all his knowledge of the swamps. This makes him a very dangerous opponent.

Gear: A Ballard '72 rifle, 25 rounds of ammunition, skinning knife, and his pirogue.

Description: Sullerot is a thin, lithe man, with red hair and piercing, blue eyes.

LEGENDS OF THE SWAMPS

PIRATE GOLD

Gaston's story is indeed true. Not only did he find the treasure chest, he also encountered the guardians, a trio of skeletal pirates and their ghostly captain.

Gaston refuses to reveal the location of the treasure to anyone. He's afraid the pirate ghosts will come for him if he does. However, he does keep the map to the treasure hidden under the floorboards of his shack.

The treasure, if found, is easily worth \$60,000 in gold. It's buried on a marshy island in the bayous about 10 miles southeast of Lake Verret.

SKULL AND BONES

The three skeletal pirates arise immediately when anyone uncovers the treasure chest. The skeletons claw their way from the ground directly around the chest. They wear the tatters of their 17th-century clothing and carry cutlasses.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d8, Q:2d10, S:3d6, V:4d6

Fightin': brawlin', cutlass 3d8

Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Cutlass (STR+2d8, Defensive Bonus +2)

Undead: In addition to the usual undead immunities, bullets and other piercing weapons do only one-quarter damage to these abominations.



THE CAPTAIN

Even if the skeletal guardians are dispatched, anyone taking the treasure from the island suffers the wrath of the captain.

The captain appears as the ghostly form of a dead and decaying pirate with seaweed in his hair. He plagues the characters who takes the treasure exactly as if they suffered from the "Haunted (black)" mysterious past. If the ghost appears to simply frighten the hero, he has a Terror of 11.

Spending or giving the treasure away does not end the Captain's haunting. Only returning the gold—all of it—to the island puts him to rest. That is, until someone else takes the gold!

COUCHEMALS

The legends about the origins of couchemals may be correct, but they are actually a type of will o' the wisps lurking in the swamps. These abominations haunt dangerous areas in the swamps like quicksand pits. They feed off their victims' pain.

Couchemals never directly attack their targets. Instead, they lead unsuspecting travelers into a place where they are likely to be hurt or, better yet, killed. They do this by mesmerizing the victim with their brightly flashing bodies.

Couchemals are supernaturally linked to the corpse of the infant whose death created them. The creatures cannot stray more than about one mile from the body.

The couchemal has only a single hit location, which is the guts. If it suffers five wound levels, it winks out of existence, only to appear again on the next night.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d12+4, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:4d8

Dodge 3d12+4

Mental: C:3d4, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:4d8, Sp:2d10

Bluff 4d8, overawe 3d6, persuasion 5d6

Pace: 16 (floating)

Size: 2

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3 (only versus mundane attacks)

Hypnotic Control: Anyone viewing the couchemal for the first time must make an opposed *Spirit* roll against the abomination. If the viewer wins, the couchemal tries to seize control again at the first opportunity. If the victim loses, the couchemal controls him for the next 10 minutes. The victim follows wherever the couchemal leads, even

into dangerous situations, at a normal Pace. He can't speak or act normally, and he responds violently to any attempt to restrain him. Another posse member can attempt an Onerous (7) *leadership* roll to allow the victim another *Spirit* contest. However, the victim receives a -2 on his roll this time. A couchemal can only control a single victim at a time.

Immunity: Couchemals are immune to Wind and stun, but they suffer wound penalties normally.

Pain Drain: A couchemal can feed off the pain of any injured person within 100 yards. Each time another creature gains a new level of wound modifiers, the couchemal heals 1 wound level to itself. If fully healed, it can save extra levels. All damage sustained is subtracted from these bonus levels first. Once a couchemal has gained 10 levels, it splits, forming two couchemals.

Vulnerability: A couchemal can be permanently killed by an electrical attack which inflicts five wound levels. Also, couchemals can also be killed by locating the body of the infant and performing an *exorcism* on it.



SECRETS



SKUNK APES

Skunk apes, or peremalfaits, aren't distant relations of wendigos or sasquatch. In fact, they aren't even hairy. These creatures are actually the ghosts of people murdered and hidden in swamps or bayous. They are covered in Spanish moss and other plant life, thus giving them a "hairy" appearance at a distance. The rotting plants also account for the stench that accompanies them. A dirty, rotting visage is the only hint to a skunk ape's identity.

The ghosts come back to seek out their murderers and avenge their deaths. Unfortunately, plant life isn't well suited to detective work, even when it's animated by the supernatural. As a result, skunk apes generally attack anybody they can get their mossy hands on.

A skunk ape can be put to rest by finding its corpse and burying it in a proper cemetery.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:3d6, Q:2d6, S:4d12, V:4d12
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d6, Sneak 4d6
 Mental: C:2d4, K:2d4, M:2d8, Sm:2d4, Sp:2d8
 Pace: 6

Size: 8

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Damage: Club-like arms (STR+1d8). This is real damage—not brawling. The creature gets two attacks each action. If the skunk ape gets a raise on a *fightin': brawlin'* attack, it seizes its victim in a viselike bear hug, in addition to dealing normal damage. On each of its following actions, it does 2d12 damage to its victim's *guts* as it crushes her ribcage and spine. The victim can break free by winning an opposed *Strength* check against the abomination.

Invulnerability: The damp, vegetable body of a skunk ape makes it particularly hard to put down. Bullets and shotgun blasts do only a single point of damage to the creature and skunk apes don't suffer Wind loss from any means. Fire attacks always do the minimum possible damage to one of these creatures. Magical attacks have full effect, unless they're based on fire, in which case they do minimum damage.

Vulnerability: A skunk ape can be killed by a spear made from a bayou gum tree. Any hit to the gizzards with such a weapon instantly kills the creature.

THE DELTA

THE DELTA POX

The pox isn't a disease, it's a thing—or rather a lot of little things. Mosquito swarms have always been a problem in the Gulf Coast marshes, but now they're a terminal one! Fortunately for the city of New Orleans, the phenomena seems limited to the far reaches of the delta itself.

Doctors studying the bodies—usually after a day or so in the sweltering Louisiana heat—have misdiagnosed the attacks as the symptoms of a disease. Not surprising, really, given the virulence of disease in the area.

The mosquitoes responsible aren't anything out of the ordinary. Only their behavior is. The insects descend on a victim in a densely packed swarm, often numbering well over 10,000 or more. Within moments, the voracious bloodsuckers drain the poor sap nearly dry.

Any posse trying to collect the Pilot Town Channel Company's reward is going to have its collective hands full. Solving the mystery of the Delta Pox is going to take a lot more than a few hexes and six-shooters!



NEW ORLEANS

THE NEW ORLEANS MASSACRE

On July 3, 1863, the Union occupying force announced all public gatherings, except for church gatherings were forbidden without written permission. General Butler, a man of strict Protestant upbringing, had no intention of recognizing voodoo as a legitimate religion. This order was to prove the undoing of the Union forces in New Orleans, if not the entire lower Mississippi Valley.

Baron LaCroix gathered his followers and performed a series of powerful rituals. With the assistance of the Reckoners, these worked beyond even LaCroix's hopes. The Union soldiers were awakened by the pain of their own fleshing rotting or snakes and spiders eating them from within. By dawn, the few survivors had fled, raving mad, into the wilderness.

The people who discovered the aftermath understood the implications and quickly cleaned up. Entire buildings were burned to hide the evidence, and a cover story was concocted. To this day, almost all who witnessed the massacre speak of it only in confessional.

The general public was too happy about the defeat of the despised Union troops to investigate too deeply into the affair. Most folks in the city didn't even suspect the Baron's involvement in the massacre. Those who did kept quiet out of fear of the power which could accomplish such a feat in the first place.

THE FLOTILLA'S FATE

There never were any mines or other man-made hazards placed to stop the Union riverboats. Even LaCroix was innocent of any involvement in the demise of the flotilla. Instead, the boats were destroyed by a group of river leviathans lurking in the depths of the lower river. The black snakes mentioned were actually the creatures' tentacles pulling the hapless sailors beneath the river's waters.

SOLOMON THAYER

As mentioned earlier (and elaborated upon more fully in *Hucksters & Hexes*), Solomon Thayer is actually Ernst Biren—onetime apprentice and later nemesis of Edmond Hoyle. Years ago, Biren adopted the alias of Solomon Thayer and took on the guise of a shipping magnate to mask his evil practices.

Biren has a psychotic fascination with disease and, worse yet, an arcane ability for causing it. He was responsible for a number of plagues in Europe during the last century, and he arrived in North America just prior to the onset of the war. Many of the outbreaks of disease suffered by the soldiers on both sides originated as a result of Biren's magics.

New Orleans offers Biren an ideal place to study the causes and effects of a variety of diseases. However, he's learned from his experiences in Europe not to practice too close to home. Instead, he uses his "hospital"—Haven—to perfect new and more terrible plagues before unleashing them on other, distant communities.

BIREN'S PROFILE

Biren has had several centuries to learn the secrets of black magic and has mastered most of them. That means he has access to most of the black-magic powers at whatever level you need him to. Like many of the big personalities of the *Deadlands* world, we have decided not to give Biren a profile. Biren is another villain whose power level lies far beyond that of the ordinary gunslinger or huckster.

If he put his mind to it, Biren could whup the butts of just about any posse out there—but that's not the way he operates. He's not an opponent one would meet in a face-to-face confrontation. Biren prefers to work behind the scenes.

THAYER AND LACROIX

Like the old saying about birds of a feather, these two buzzards have been drawn together. When two such powerful forces of evil come together in one place, there can be only two outcomes: alliance or war. Both LaCroix and Biren saw the benefits of an alliance. Neither knows the full story of the other, but the two have recently formed a formidable partnership, just as Daniel indicated.

Biren is well aware of LaCroix's darker practices and the undead nature of his "workers," just as LaCroix knows Biren is somehow responsible for the plagues wracking Memphis. However, LaCroix has no idea of Biren's true identity or history, and Biren believes LaCroix to be an upstart magician who's milking his power for financial success.

Regardless of their misconceptions of each other, their current alliance has benefited both tremendously. Both have seen great financial profits from a joint transport network providing





access to most of the central and western Confederacy. LaCroix has persuaded Biren to exempt towns on his rail line from any man-made plagues. In return, he has sent some of his undead minions to the Great Maze to recover faminites for Biren's study.

The alliance between the two may just be a ticking time-bomb. Biren has a love of treachery as well. He's begun experimenting with a new type of virus—one that he hopes will prove effective in the undead! Should the voodoo sorcerer ever discover this, the unholy alliance would certainly be destroyed. Of course LaCroix, being the fiend he is, may have plans for Biren's demise as well.

THE COURT

Biren doesn't work alone, of course. His secret society, the Court, assists him in his nefarious activities.

On the surface, the Court is a secret society of hucksters designed to provide information and mutual aid. In reality, it serves as Biren's eyes and ears throughout the Weird West. Most of its members are totally unaware of the true nature of the Court, believing it to be either

dedicated to fighting the Reckoners or to protecting hucksters and the like from overbearing government agencies like the Rangers or Pinkertons.

Biren does use the Court to keep an eye on both governments and their law-enforcement arms, especially the Rangers or Pinkertons. However, he also manipulates members of the society to hinder or even thwart members of those agencies as they battle the Reckoning. Only the highest-ranking members of the Court even know who leads it, and even they don't know his true identity.

The Court's presence is especially strong in New Orleans, as the city is the society's base of operation. The group's headquarters is on the sternwheeler *New Dynasty*, which is usually docked in the city. Biren pays particular attention to powerful heroes in his own backyard, and skilled hucksters may find themselves subtly approached by Court recruiters.

For more details on the Court, check out *Hucksters & Hexes*.

BARON LACROIX

Damien Brionne's account of LaCroix's past is pure fiction. The Baron has no claim to any European title whatsoever. Rather, his unique name—and royalty—is entirely a creation of his mother.

LaCroix was born the illegitimate son of Colette Devaux, a rather unimportant Haitian mambo. For years, she tried to garner more power among the voodooists on the island, but to no avail. Then, when she found she was with child, she concocted a wild plan.

She claimed her child was the offspring of Baron la Croix. Baron la Croix is one of the three major Lords of the Dead, along with Baron Samedi and Baron Cimetiere. She also "foretold" the infant would grow up to be a great and powerful mambo, but that until that time she would rule in her child's place. Soon her story began to grant her the power and respect she craved.

TWINS!

When the child was born, much to her surprise she found she'd given birth to fraternal twins. She named the twins Simon and Simone LaCroix, honoring, she claimed, their father. Twins are thought to possess special arcane powers by voodooists, and Colette's reputation grew even more.



As the siblings grew, it became obvious they were two sides of a coin. Simon was a malicious child, whereas Simone was sweetness incarnate. Folks just naturally favored Simone over Simon. You've heard the one about catching more flies with honey than vinegar. Anyway, by the time the two came into adulthood, Simon was tremendously jealous of his sister.

In 1848, on their 18th birthday, their mother announced to her now-large congregation of followers she intended to pass the mantle of priesthood to Simone. Simon was enraged.

REIGN OF TERROR

That night, Simon killed both Simone and his mother, conducting dark rituals he believed would grant him their power. The next day, he presented himself before the congregation, claiming to be a vessel not only of his own soul but also that of his sister. He even went so far as to take her name, Simone, as his own.

While many of the voodooists suspected the truth, they feared the young LaCroix's evil and power. He began to study under Papa Natanga, a famed ally of the first dictator of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture. Under the old conjure doctor, LaCroix's arcane knowledge grew, but he also gained contacts in the Haitian zobop.

Through them, LaCroix began to influence nearly every aspect of everyday life on Haiti for almost a decade. Although another man might have claimed rulership during this time, LaCroix actually controlled it. Any who opposed him simply disappeared. It was during this time he began to call himself "baron," claiming the right to his fictitious father's title.

Finally, the Haitian people rose up against him. LaCroix and a few of his closest allies were forced to flee the island. However, he managed to take with him a good portion of the fortune he'd amassed over the years.

New Orleans was the obvious of choice for his exile. A number of voodooists had moved to the city over the last half century, so LaCroix felt he could exert his influence easily. The city had a reputation as a growing trade center, as well as a den of iniquity filled with thieves and worse.

THE MASSACRE

LaCroix would never have thought to try his might against the Union Army had he been left unmolested. However, the order against public gatherings directly impinged on the sorcerer's source of power: his religious gatherings. Even

with his ire raised, LaCroix could never have accomplished such a tremendous magic, but for one thing: the Reckoning.

Whatever dark spirits LaCroix had dealt with in the past were freed of their restraints by Raven. The same day the dead rose on Gettysburg, LaCroix received a sign from his demonic allies. That night, he and his Haitian sorcerers performed the ritual that destroyed the Union garrison in New Orleans.

Even to the most favored of servants, magic of that power is not without cost. All of LaCroix's bokkors died enacting ritual. LaCroix survived, but the strain took him years to recover from. His reputation for reclusiveness developed during this time. To this day, LaCroix keeps away from the public eye. At least part of this is due to his paranoia concerning Marie Laveau, the one person he's encountered that seems totally immune to his powers.

There are a few folks in New Orleans who suspect LaCroix was behind the terrible deaths of the Union soldiers. However, they're far too afraid of the baron's power to breath a word of their suspicions to anyone.

AFTERMATH

The terrible cost of the ritual taught LaCroix that such power can only be bought with blood—sometimes his own! Rebuilding the ranks of his bokkors took many years, and LaCroix isn't willing to throw them away again without a very good cause. Besides, as long as his foes believe him capable of such powerful curses, he doesn't really need to perform them.

Thanks to his assistance in preparations for the city's defense, LaCroix found himself portrayed as a figure of respect in New Orleans. Since that time, LaCroix has been careful to perform blatant magic—like the creation of nosferatu or walkin' dead—as far from New Orleans as possible.

THE RAIL WARS

Unlike the other rail barons, LaCroix has no real desire to win the race to the Maze. He competes only because his dark patrons demand it of him. Even LaCroix has no idea why they ordered him into the competition. He only knows he had better not lose!

Lately, LaCroix's masters have warned him to conserve his resources and look to the west for a new threat. His otherworldly benefactors have hinted that if he heeds them, tremendous earthly power may soon be his for the taking.





LACROIX'S STATISTICS

LaCroix is another man who's just too dang powerful for your average posse to take down, so statistics for him aren't listed here. To get an idea what he's capable of, just remember he's got a direct line to his evil masters, a number of evil sorcerers working for him, an army of zombies at his beck and call, and the resources of an entire railroad to draw on.

DISEASE

The high disease rate in New Orleans has nothing to do with Ernst Biren. It's simply a result of building a city in the middle of the swamp! Like we mentioned earlier, he's learned not to fool around in his own backyard.

Fortunately, the chance of a posse member catching an ailment is actually pretty small as long as they don't frequent disease wards. Unless you're feeling particularly nasty, don't worry about the heroes contracting any of the listed diseases.

CITY GOVERNMENT

The corruption in the city government is far worse than Daniel suspects. Between Baron LaCroix and Solomon Thayer, just about every member of the New Orleans city council is in someone's pocket. Some are enslaved to Thayer or LaCroix's will, while others are just being blackmailed. The end result is the same: Thayer and LaCroix control New Orleans, plain and simple.

THE LAW

NEW ORLEANS POLICE

Daniel's assessment of the corruption in the police department is fairly accurate. Alexander Bolles is as crooked as a bed spring. He's been taking money from LaCroix for so long it takes effort for him to not call the baron "boss."

However, he's always looking for new customers. Bolles is willing to overlook nearly any crime, provided a suitable incentive is paid up front—prices double if the bribe comes after the fact. He only concerns himself with large transgressions of the law. Petty criminals deal directly with the police themselves. With such a sterling role model, it's hardly surprising that nearly half the police force considers bribery a legitimate source of income.

TEXAS RANGERS

Lieutenant McKay was killed by a curse laid on him by LaCroix's bokkors. The man was uncovering too much about the zobop and LaCroix's activities to be allowed to live. General King, the head of the Texas Rangers, strongly suspects the Baron had a hand in McKay's death, but he has no hard proof. The Rangers keep a close eye on LaCroix, but the rail baron is careful not to give them any cause to meddle in his affairs. You can read McKay's final report in the Ranger's Bible Addendum #84: The Voodooists booklet included in this boxed set.

There is a gap in Ranger leadership in New Orleans left by Lt. McKay's demise. Although there are always a few Rangers in the city, there is currently no one filling the post responsible for the area. A posse looking for the cavalry to come riding over the hill to pull their bacon from the fire is going to wait a long time!

A Ranger hero could be called on to fill the post by General King if it suits the campaign, but she would have to be at least a Lieutenant (rank 3) to do so.

CITIES OF THE DEAD

Staying out the cemeteries at night is sound advice. Criminals aren't the only danger a nighttime visitor might face. Many voodooists, usually bokkor, often creep into graveyards after dark, gathering foul components for their spells.

ST. LOUIS No. 1

Fear Level 3

The new tomb Daniel is talking about is the final resting place of Marie Laveau I. The few followers who know the identity of the occupant pay their respects after dark so LaCroix won't discover the deception. For more details, see the section on Voodoo on page 117.

ST. PETER STREET CEMETERY

These days, nothing strange is going on in the buildings built on the St. Peter Street Cemetery. This is due to the diligent efforts of the Archbishop of New Orleans and the Order of St. George (see Ursuline Convent, page 114).

A few building owners reported strange noises and lights a few years back, and word reached the Archbishop. He knew the history of the St. Peter Street, and he performed a series of exorcisms on the spot as a form of "preventive medicine." There have been no problems since.



MARDI GRAS

Criminals aren't the only ones who hide their identity behind the masks of Carnival. LaCroix has found the festival a perfect time to slip some of his less human minions into town. Behind the garish masks, he can hide walkin' dead, tonton macouts (see page 119), and even nosferatu. He plans to bring in a large number during the next year's Mardi Gras to deal with Marie Laveau and her followers—permanently.

THE FRENCH QUARTER

Fear Level 1

PLACES OF INTEREST

CONFEDERATE MINT

Make this as rough as you wan. Any heroes willing to rob a government mint deserves what they get!

CONGO SQUARE

The square is actually an enormous humfor, allowing any voodooist to perform spells there without the usual -5 penalty to her rolls. Since voodoo ceremonies are fairly commonplace in the square, unless the character is involved in a harmful ritual like *sendin' o' the dead* or *voodoo doll*, no one is likely to interfere.

LaCroix's zobop keeps a careful eye on the goings-on in Congo Square, however, and they are likely to assume any stranger practicing there is allied with Marie.

GIANNETTO'S TOYS

Ivo Giannetto isn't the gentle toymaker he seems. He moved here from Salt Lake City in 1874, where he studied with Dr. Erwin Gottlieb. Dr. Gottlieb was responsible for creating the mechanical alley cats that currently plague the residents of the city. (See *City o' Gloom* for more on Dr. Gottlieb.)

When Dr. Gottlieb's creations killed their builder, Giannetto packed his bags and moved to New Orleans. There he opened a small store where he continues to try to break the secret of Hellstromme's automatons. Like his predecessor, he's failed in that endeavor, although he has come up with many popular clockwork toys.

However, all is not well in Gianetto's workshop. It seems a small piece of the bad luck that plagued Dr. Gottlieb has clung to Gianetto



like a prairie tick. His experiments have created a new type of mechanical abomination, the manikin, detailed on page 112.

Giannetto is a good person, if a little unstable. He is completely unaware of the existence of the manikins, although he does notice he seems to lose a lot of tools.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:3d4, Q:2d6, S:1d6, V:2d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d10, M:2d6, Sm:3d8, Sp:1d6

Academia: occult 2d6, area knowledge: New

Orleans 4d6, overawe 4d6, performin' 5d6,

science: engineerin' 2d10, scroungin' 3d6,

streetwise 3d6, tinkerin' 5d8

Edges: Arcane background: mad scientist, mechanically inclined

Hindrances: Clueless, curious, yearnin' (solve the mystery of the automatons) 4

Pace: 4

Wind: 12

Gear: A clockmaker's tool kit, and a few small toys (yo-yos, balls, etc.).

Description: Gianetto looks like someone's kindly uncle, with bushy, white whiskers and a twinkle in his eye.

SECRETS

MANIKINS

The manikins appear like normal dolls on examination, if somewhat heavier than expected, around three pounds. They stand between eight inches to one foot tall, and come in a variety of styles. However, all have the same abilities.

The manikins live quietly in their new homes until they become an accepted part of the toy or doll collection. Meanwhile, they seek to convert any other dolls into manikins as well. The abominations then turn on their owners, preferably in a cat and mouse type of hunt throughout the house. If an owner appears to be a tough customer, they take other measures to remove her, such as smothering her in her sleep, poisoning her food, and so on.

Once revealed, manikins are frightening, miniature killing machines. Their eyes are a glossy black, and their teeth are tiny razors. In the case of converted dolls, they are patchwork assemblies of knives, razors, and the like. The manikins move unnaturally fast for their size and are devilishly clever in their ambushes.

Giannetto has inadvertently sold at least 15 of these devilish dolls to various customers throughout New Orleans.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:2d10, Q:2d10, S:3d4, V:4d8

Dodge 3d10, fightin' brawlin' 2d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d4

Bluff 5d6

Pace: 10

Size: 2

Terror: 7 (once revealed)

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR), and claw (STR+1d4)

Mechanical Toughness: The manikins are immune to Wind loss of any form. They are also immune to stun or wound modifiers.

Conversion: Giannetto's manikins can convert normal dolls into generic versions of themselves. This process requires 1d4 hours and utilizes materials at hand, such as kitchen knives, sewing needles, and such. Obviously, they are very secretive about such operations, often performing them during the early morning hours, while their owners sleep.

LALAURIE HOUSE

Fear Level 2

The spirits of the tortured slaves do indeed still inhabit the house, but they've found a new way to voice their screams. Marcus Stephens' compositions are haunting—really haunting. Performing the composer's music has two consequences. First, everyone hearing the concert must make a Fair (5) *Spirit* roll or gain the Hindrance *night terrors*. The nightmares last until the sufferer successfully makes the Hard (9) *Spirit* roll to get a good night's rest. If a listener goes bust on the initial *Spirit* roll, the *night terrors* are permanent.

The music also temporarily raises the Fear Level in a one mile radius by +1. This heightened level initially lasts only the night of the concert and the next. This period is lengthened by one night each time another piece by Stephens is played at the same place. Stephen's practice room has a permanent Fear Level of 3.

A number of Madame LaLaurie's victims remain buried underneath the mansion's ballroom. The only way to lift the curse on the music is to dig up these hidden bodies and give them a proper burial.

ST. LOUIS CATHEDRAL

The cathedral isn't haunted. Like most Catholic sanctuaries, it is hallowed ground, having been *sanctified* during its dedication.





SALOONS

THE FULL HOUSE

This bar is actually a front for the Court. While anyone is welcome on the lower floor, only members of the society or potential inductees are eligible to enter the upper levels. The Court does not conduct business here. This is simple a meeting place for members.

The occasional "hauntings" witnessed by locals are actually the effects of hexes cast by incautious members in the upper level. Although such behavior is frowned upon by the management, it does happen from time to time when a hexslinger has imbibed a little too much.

THE GREEN TREE

There's no curse here. The deaths are just the price of doing business on Gallatin Street.

SPANISH GARRISON

Fear Level 4

This is a prime example of the power of fear since the Reckoning. Daniel is absolutely correct that the Garrison wasn't even built until after the period of Spanish rule, so the story can't be true. However, so many folks now believe it, the haunting has taken on a life of its own.

Large, man-eating, humanoid ratlings do hide in the walls of the abandoned building, preying on explorers. Phantasms of ghostly Spanish officers are occasionally glimpsed chained to the walls, and screams may be heard from time to time, echoing up from the bowels of the basement. Even though there is no history to it, this is now a genuinely haunted house. If the posse investigates, keep the abominations creepy but not too blatant at first. Monsters aren't scary when they're overdone!

RATLING

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:2d8, V:4d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d4

Pace: 8

Size: 4

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR) and claw (STR+1d6)

Fear Leech: These abominations are completely products of the local imagination. As such, they gain strength from the heroes' fear. For every cowpoke that fails a *guts* check caused by a ratling,

the monster gains a +1 to all Trait and Aptitude rolls for that encounter. So, if two heroes fail the roll, the ratling gets a total of +2 to its rolls.

SULTAN'S RETREAT

The "Sultan" is actually Kevin Bonner, a Pinkerton detective sent to keep an eye on events in New Orleans and on LaCroix in particular. Bonner chose a persona so outlandish no one would ever expect him of being a spy. After all, what spy would ever call such attention to himself? Even the man's guards and "harem girls" are unaware of the ruse. His guise has served him well, making him a figure of curiosity desired at all important social affairs in the city.

Bonner recently made contact with Marie Laveau, hoping to gain information on LaCroix. Unknown to either, this drew the baron's attention to the Sultan's Retreat. Using the special talents of a skinwalker, he has begun spying on the spy. Although Bonner's cover is still intact, it won't protect him if LaCroix decides "the Sultan" is allied with Laveau.

THE SULTAN (KEVIN BONNER)

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:1d10, Q:4d8, S:2d8, V:3d8

Dodge 3d10, shootin': pistol 4d6, fightin': brawlin', sword 5d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:4d6, M:4d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d6

Area knowledge: New Orleans 5d6, disguise 5d6, guts 4d6, overawe 4d10, performin' 5d10, scrutinize 4d8

Edges: Brave, brawny, dinero 5 (from Pinkertons)

Hindrances: Big britches, enemy (LaCroix) -2, enemy (Rangers) -2, obligation (Pinkertons) -3.

Pace: 10

Wind: 14

Gear: A Gatling pistol (hidden in his quarters), and a tulwar (sword, STR+2d8).

Description: Bonner is a tall, thin man of Irish descent. He uses a special dye to make his skin darker, and he keeps his hair dyed black.

FUNCH GUARDS (8)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d8, Q:2d8, S:2d10, V:3d10

Fightin': knife, sword 4d8,

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d6, M:3d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Guts 2d6, overawe 4d8

Edges: Brawny, "the voice" (threatening)

Hindrances: Ferner, obligation (the Sultan) -3

Pace: 8

Wind: NA

Gear: A Tulwar (sword, STR+2d8).





URSULINE CONVENT

There is something going on at the convent. The reason the church is so tight-lipped about the third floor is the Ursuline Convent serves as the headquarters for the Order of St. George on the North American continent. The Order of St. George was formed by the Pope to study and combat the strange and frightening events plaguing the world. Lack of evidence has prevented an official stance on the subject so far, so the order itself is secret from even the lay members of the church.

Some of the "mysterious visitors" Daniel mentions are actually members of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. From time to time, the Pinkertons and members of the order work together or swap information. Should the Confederate government learn of the order's association with Union spies (not to mention that they are not working with the Texas Rangers), it may strain the relations with the Catholic Church—regardless of the intent.

The Archbishop of New Orleans, Jean-Paul d'Alleaume, is a member of the order, and all records compiled by the American members are housed here. He seems a very stately and somewhat disinterested man, but he possesses an inquisitive mind and a sharp intellect. In particular, he pays careful attention to the activities of both Marie Laveau and LaCroix.

JEAN PAUL D'ALLEAUME

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:4d6
Mental: C:4d10, K:2d12, M:2d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d12
Area knowledge: New Orleans 5d12, faith:

Catholicism 7d12, guts 5d12, overawe 4d10,
professional: theology 6d12, scrutinize 4d10

Edges: Arcane background: blessed, brave,
friends in high places 3 (the Vatican), religious
rank 4

Hindrances: Curious, obligation (the Church and the Order) 5

Pace: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Blessings: 2

Gifts: Insight, wisdom

Miracles: Benediction, confession, exorcism,
last rites, protection, sanctify

Gear: A Bible, several vials of holy water, and a rosary.

Description: The archbishop hardly looks the part of the God's foremost spiritual warrior in New Orleans. He is a short, balding man, but there is the fire of faith in his eyes.

THE REST OF THE CITY

JOHNSON'S PERFUME FACTORY

Fear Level 2

The factory is haunted by the ghosts of Union officers, but these men weren't victims of the massacre. Captains Devers and Cromley faked a robbery of the monthly Union payroll and hid the money. They weren't as clever as they believed. General Butler himself suspected the men and ordered an investigation.

The night before they were to be arrested, the men met in one of the house's upper rooms. There they sang a single verse of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and killed themselves with a single shot from their revolvers. The money, all \$10,000 of it, was never discovered.

The money is buried in a hidden tunnel under abandoned slave quarters behind the factory. As long as the money remains on the premises, the ghosts persist, plaguing the workers with patriotic songs and occasionally other manifestations. They can't physically affect the living, but their actions can force an Onerous (7) *guts* check.

Removing the treasure ends the haunting, but the cowpoke (or cowpokes) doing so must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll to avoid picking up the *death wish* Hindrance from the ghosts' essence.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE ROW

Fear Level 2

This area is a dumping place for the zobop after they've finished with a "goat without horns"—a human victim. That's where the body parts originate, not the nearby slaughterhouses.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Treatment for any injury or illness is available at the teaching hospital at a price comparable to other medical facilities in the city. The doctors have 4d10 in *medicine: general* for heavy wounds or light wounds or 5d10 in *medicine: surgery* for more serious injuries. The cost for treating an injury within the "golden hour" is \$5 times the original wound level. Extended stays give the patient a +5 on all weekly *Vigor* rolls to heal, but they cost \$50 a week.

The researchers are making good progress in fighting the diseases of the area. If left unmolested, they may very well find a vaccine for yellow fever. Unfortunately, Biren plans to interfere with the university's activities soon.



THE OUTSKIRTS

BARON LACROIX'S MANOR

Fear Level 5

The Baron has chosen to live so far from the city to allow him to practice his dark arts without the concern of being observed by muckrakers or the Rangers, or of interference or harm from Marie Laveau and her followers. The surrounding bayou is overrun with alligators and worse, forcing interlopers to approach by boat.

In addition to all of this, LaCroix has eyes throughout the bayou watching the approaches to his manor. Walkin' dead are particularly useful in this task, being able to remain nearly completely underwater for hours on end. Of course, LaCroix loses one or two zombies a month to the occasional alligator, but he can always make more.

The walls are 10 feet high, and broken glass is embedded in the mortar along the top. The glass and the walls aren't to keep people out as much as they are to keep them inside once they're there. At night, LaCroix releases feral walkin' dead onto the grounds of his estate. They prowl the island from dusk until dawn, looking for tasty morsels.

The reason Daniel was unable to find any visitors to the manor is LaCroix never invites anyone to his estate that he plans to release. Instead, he allows (or forces) them onto the grounds and lets the crazed zombies outside finish them.

Should the heroes be foolish enough to attempt to enter the manor, they're in for a bad time. While LaCroix is careful about using his undead minions where he can be caught, his estate is remote enough to give him a free hand. The soon-to-be-late heroes find large numbers of walkin' dead, tonton macouts, and even nosferatu on their hands.

FERAL DEAD

These nasty versions of walkin' dead are made with a special mixture of LaCroix's reanimation fluid. This stuff has a deleterious effect on the metal capacities of the body it's used on, but the walkin' dead produced are fast as lightning and homicidally savage. They're also perpetually hungry, and they love their meals still squealing.

Although they're not as intelligent as regular walkin' dead, LaCroix is finding uses for these vicious monsters. Right now, his favorite is after-



dinner entertainment! There's nothing the baron likes better than a nice glass of sherry while watching someone be devoured by his "pets."

Unlike regular walkin' dead, feral dead are unable to use firearms or other weapons.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:2d10, V:2d8
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak 5d8, swimmin' 2d8
 Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d6, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
 Pace: 14 (These guys are fast and wily!)

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR) and claw (STR+1d4)

Bushwack: These zombies are cunning, hiding in places where they're least expected—like a barrel full of rainwater. Regardless of their victims' preparations, the TN for the *Cognition* roll to avoid surprise by one of these monsters is at -4.

Hunger: Once one of these zombies puts down a victim, it must make an Onerous (7) *Smarts* roll to keep from stopping whatever else it was doing and chowing down on the unfortunate sap.

Undead.



DESTREHAN

Fear Level 3

The largest slave uprising in US history began in the area in 1811. After the rebellion was put down, 21 leaders were rounded up and put on trial at Destrehan. All were found guilty and beheaded at their own plantations. The heads of two of the men were placed on poles along the River Road outside Destrehan.

The two slaves have returned to haunt the road as a unique abomination similar to a headless horseman. Each night, one of the abominations prowls the road, looking for a replacement for its own missing head.

The only way to permanently defeat these creatures is to dig up their skulls buried near the gate and inter them with their bodies. This might be difficult, since the old slave graveyard on the plantation has fallen into disrepair, and the marker names are no longer readable.

HEADLESS FOOTMEN

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d12, Q:4d8, S:3d8, V:3d8

Fightin': axe' 4d10

Mental: C:4d8, K:2d6, M:3d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d8

Pace: 12

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Invulnerability: A maiming gut wound puts one of these headless footmen down for the night, but he rises again to continue to haunt the River Road two nights later.

Undead.

DUELING TREES

Death seems to take a special interest in any duel fought here. No Fate Chips can be spent to prevent damage during a duel at these trees, and any injury causes an additional wound above that indicated by the damage. Also, hits to the guts area, upper or lower, are automatically moved to the gizzards.

SEÑOR JOSE LLULA

Señor Llula is one of the most famous and deadliest duelists in the city. Fortunately for his opponents, he's getting on in years—although if anything it's made his temper worse.

Heroes who run afoul of him are sure to face a challenge at the dueling trees—and refusing a duel is surefire proof a cowpoke's lily-livered. Word of that has a way of getting around faster than a prairie fire in Kansas.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d12, N:2d6, Q:2d10, S:2d6, V:3d6

Shootin': pistol 8d12,

Mental: C:2d4, K:1d6, M:2d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d10

Area knowledge: New Orleans 3d6, guts 5d10, overawe 6d10, ridicule 5d6,

Edges: Brave, level-headed, nerves o' steel, renown 3

Hindrances: Bad ears -3, geezer, vengeful

Pace: 4

Wind: 16

Gear: Two silver-plated single-shot dueling pistols.

Description: Llula is a portly man in his late 60s, but his hair and mustache are still the jet black of his youth, with only a little gray at the temples.

THE GHOST BOAT

There is no true ghost boat. Actually, it's much worse! The party responsible for the sightings is an enormous river leviathan. It's the last remaining of the abominations that destroyed the Union fleet in 1863. It killed or chased off the others of its kind long ago.

When exposed, it looks like a gargantuan black octopus about 55 feet across, with tentacles nearly 30 feet long. However, its true form is unlikely to be seen, because the beast has taken up residence in the hull of a Union ironclad (standard model): the *USS Benton*.

The creature spends weeks and even months submerged on the river bottom, emerging only when its hunger so motivates it. Then it attacks a riverboat or two, fills its stomach on the tasty morsels inside, and sinks back to the bottom to digest its meal.

THE GHOST BOAT LEVIATHAN

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, S:4d12+4, Q:4d10,

V:3d12+6

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10, swimmin' 5d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:3d12, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d12

Pace: 30 (swimming)

Size: 30 (main body) or 6 (tentacle)

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Artificial Armor: The ironclad shell of the *USS Benton* gives the creature 4 levels of Armor.

Damage: Bite (STR+2d10). The leviathan's beak, 8' across, does serious damage.

Gulp: The abomination can swallow smaller opponents (Size 9 or less) in a single gulp.

A hero swallowed in this fashion can strike



directly at the beast's unarmored gizzards—assuming she survives! In addition to drowning, the hero takes 2d6 damage to each hit location every round from the leviathan's stomach acids.

Heat Sense: The leviathan can sense heat from living creatures with its tentacles, in essence “seeing” them.

Swimming: Pace 30.

Tentacle Grab: On a successful *fightin’ brawlin’* roll, the leviathan grabs a victim. The abomination then begins dragging the poor soul toward its central mouth. The victim can only break free by getting a raise on an opposed *Strength* roll or by destroying the tentacle. Tentacles take 30 points of damage to sever, and damage to them doesn't count against the thing's total.

Vulnerability: The monster is sensitive to fire and takes an additional die of damage from any fire-based attack. If the *Benton* is somehow set on fire, the leviathan breaks off its attack and dives for safety. Of course, if it's really mad, it may be back as soon as the flames are extinguished!

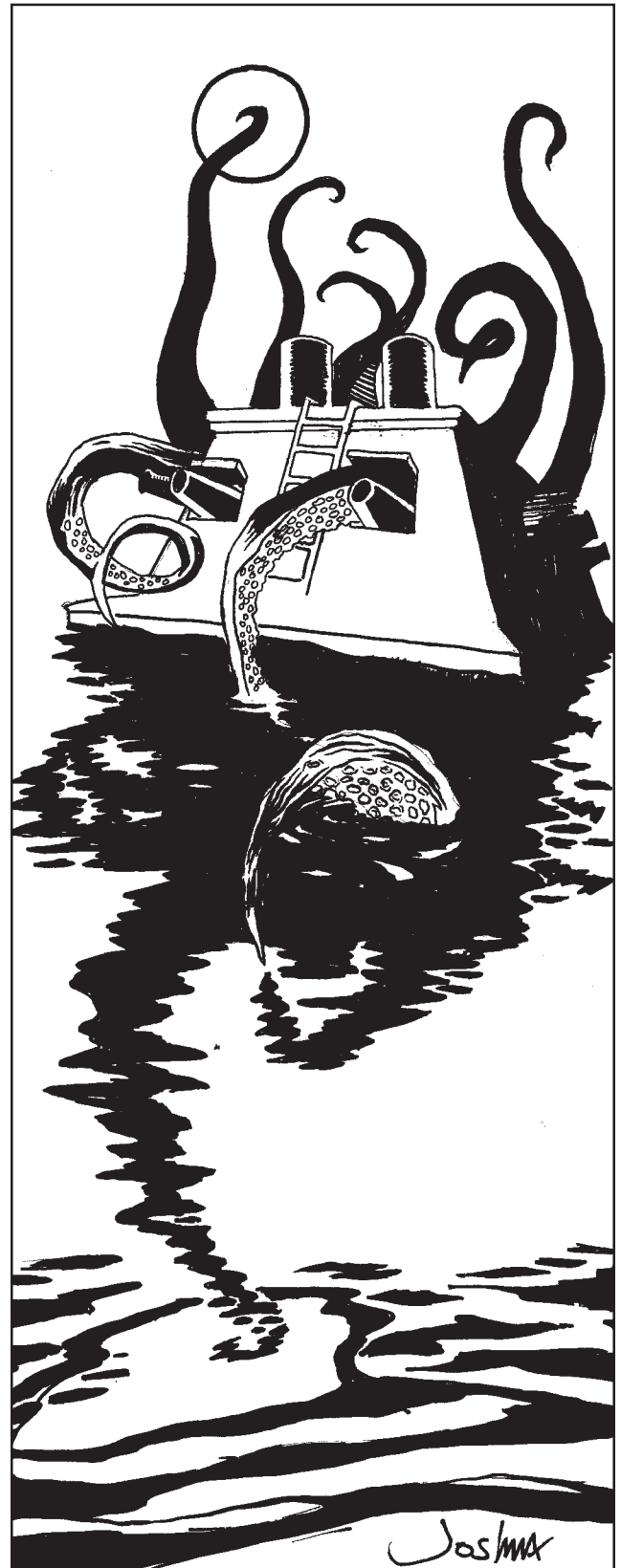
VOODOO

MARIE LAVEAU

Here's the startling truth: LaCroix did succeed in his attempt to kill Marie Laveau. LaCroix obtained a couple of Marie's hairs from her comb and used them to place a deadly curse on her. Within days, she was dead. When someone as powerful as the Baron wants you out of the picture, you tend to end up in a coffin, no matter who you are! So how is Marie still walking around?

Well, what most folks—including LaCroix—don't know is there are actually two Marie Laveaus, a mother and a daughter. Marie's desire to rule as a voodoo queen was so great she wanted it to last as long as possible—so great, in fact, that she had her daughter, also known as Marie Laveau, begin impersonating her as early as the 1850s.

The swap of identities took place over a couple of decades and not overnight, so by the time the first Marie completely stepped down, no one even knew she was gone. Although a few people have noted how young Marie has remained, none have pieced together the deception. The original Marie became known as “Marie Laveau's mother.”





LaCroix was fooled too. His spell was cast using the older Marie's hair, and it was quite successful. Marie is now dead and buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1. LaCroix has tried again several times to curse "Marie," but he's failed on every attempt. He believes Marie somehow countered his spell and is mocking him.

MARIE LAVEAU II

Marie Laveau II is every bit the beauty her mother was. A tall woman with white, black, and Indian ancestors, she can only be described as exotic. Her skin tone is a light bronze and her hair is thick and black, with only a slight curl. She's very fond of elaborate dresses and jewelry.

Marie the daughter is perhaps even more ambitious than her mother. However, she recognizes the danger LaCroix poses to her. She also knows he killed her mother and is likely vastly more powerful than her.

She knows the only thing protecting her against LaCroix is his belief that she is able to counter his spells. Marie is careful to leave no personal items where his agents could take advantage of them. She has even gone so far as to place the hair of other women in her own combs to further confuse her enemy. She hasn't curtailed her public appearances, knowing her apparent disregard for danger infuriates LaCroix.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d8, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:2d8

Shootin': pistol 2d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:2d8, M:4d10, Sm:2d12, Sp:4d10

Academia: occult 6d8, area knowledge: New

Orleans 5d8, faith: voodoo 6d10, guts 4d10,

medicine: general 2d10, overawe 4d10,

performin' 5d10, persuasion 5d10, scrutinize

3d10, streetwise 3d12

Edges: Arcane background: voodooist, favored chual (Baron Samedi), purty, renown 2 (New Orleans voodoo)

Hindrances: Enemy (LaCroix) -5, vengeful, yearnin' (rule New Orleans voodoo again) -4

Pace: 8

Wind: 18

Special Rules:

Voodoo Spells: Marie knows all the spells in the voodoo book at level 2, and these at higher levels: bitter tongue 4, coax 3, foretellin' 4, gad 5, poison powder 6, voodoo doll 5

Gear: A derringer and various conjure bags. (She carries an *Ogu's aura* 4 and *gad* 5 at all times.)

Description: See above.

THE FEUD

Both sides of the war have followers among the general populace. LaCroix's true nature is unknown, and he is seen as just another voodoo leader. Folks from all walks of life may become embroiled in the conflict between Marie Laveau and Baron LaCroix.

LaCroix knows better than to become distracted from his dark masters' orders, but he is infuriated by Marie's seeming invulnerability. However, he was willing to put his curiosity on hold until Bayou Vermillion reached the Great Maze.

He called off the worst of his attacks on Marie, leaving it to his bokkor to try to bring her down with a curse or gris-gris. The only thing his followers managed to accomplish was capturing and killing Marie's 20-foot long constrictor snake Zombi.

This didn't sit well with Marie, so she has upped the stakes in the fight by hitting LaCroix where he feels it the hardest: the Bayou Vermillion. Her followers have been sabotaging the baron's trains at every opportunity. Unfortunately, by doing so she has unknowingly placed herself in a very dangerous position. Since her followers are hampering his railroad's advance, LaCroix feels he must now eliminate Marie and her faction.

Still, his magic continues to fail against her. He has begun to fear his inability to curse Marie is a foreshadowing of his own downfall. In desperation, he has brought a number of abominations called tonton macout from Haiti. He hopes to send them to end the reign of the voodoo queen once and for all.

TONTON MACOUT

The very name of these abominations give Haitian children nightmares. At first glance, they appear as nothing more than extremely large, bald black men. They stand about six feet tall and weigh in at close to 300 pounds.

A closer examination reveals a few distinguishing characteristics. Their eyes are abnormally small for their oversize heads and are entirely black. Their hides are tough, leathery, and completely hairless. Finally, they lack finger- or toenails.

These creatures are completely insensitive to pain. This makes them particularly cruel when dealing with victims.

Tonton macouts are found only in the service of powerful bokkor. These creatures are fairly dull-witted and never operate alone.



SECRETS

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d8, S:3d12+2, Q:2d8, V:4d12

Fightin': brawlin', machete 5d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:2d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d4, Sp:1d6

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Tonton macouts are usually armed with machetes (STR+2d6).

Invulnerability: Although they are not undead, they are immune to normal Wind loss and stun. Also, tonton macouts never suffer from wound modifiers.

Magic Resistant: Tonton macout are very resistant to magic. All hexes or spells cast against them suffer a -5 to the roll. Favors and miracles do not receive this modifier.

Throttle: If a tonton macout gets a raise on a *fightin': brawlin'* roll in combat, it has grabbed its victim by the throat. On each of its actions, it rolls a contest of *Strength* against its victim's *Vigor*. If it wins the contest, the poor sap caught by its meaty hands takes the difference in Wind.

CONJURE DOCTORS

DOCTOR BEAUREGARD

As Daniel suspects, Doctor Beauregard is a complete fraud. The man has no true magical skill, and he relies on his reputation and appearance to frighten people. Usually this is enough.

Doctor Beauregard does covet the power of the true voodooists, however, and would do anything to gain it. Lately, he's been spying for LaCroix in hopes the Baron will teach him how to do real "ju-ju."

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d8, Q:2d6, S:1d8, V:2d8

Fightin': club 2d8, sleight o' hand 2d6, sneak 3d8, throwin': unbalanced 3d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d6

Academia: occult 2d6, area knowledge: New Orleans 4d6, faith: voodoo 3d6 overawe 4d6, performin' 5d6, scroungin' 3d6, streetwise 3d6

Edges: "The stare"

Hindrances: Habit -3 (bad personal hygiene), vengeful, yearnin' (learn real voodoo) -4

Pace: 8

Wind: 14



Gear: A walking stick (small club). Various conjure bags and other "voodoo" items hang from his clothes and hair.

Description: Doctor Beauregard is a thin, almost emaciated black man with long, dirty dreadlocks.

DOCTOR JOHN

Doctor John is a skilled voodooist, there's no doubt about that. After LaCroix and Marie, probably only Papa Natanga wields more skill in this area.

However, most of his power comes from his intricate network of informers throughout the city. Nearly every wealthy household has at least one servant that earns a little extra money gossiping to him, and numerous street people do as well. Doctor John twists this information to make it appear of supernatural origins.

He's also careful to remain neutral in the war between LaCroix and Laveau. He lacks both the arcane ability and the resources to stand up to either, so he's decided to avoid the conflict altogether. Just in case one or the other decides he's violated his self-imposed neutrality, Doctor John has a number of escape plans.

SECRETS

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d8, Q:2d8, S:2d10, V:3d10
 Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, shootin': shotgun 4d6
 Mental: C:4d8, K:2d8, M:2d12, Sm:3d10, Sp:3d8
 Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: New Orleans 7d8, faith: voodoo 5d8, disguise 5d8, guts 2d8, overawe 5d12, performin' 2d12, scrutinize 4d8, streetwise 5d10,
 Edges: Arcane background: voodooist, friends in high places (society informants) 3, friends in high places (street informants) 4, "the stare"
 Hindrances: Curious, greedy, illiterate, superstitious, ugly as sin
 Pace: 8
 Wind: 18
 Special Abilities:
 Voodoo Spells: Bitter tongue 3, conjure doctor 4, curse o' failure 3, foretellin' 4, gad 5, Ogu's aura 3, wanga 3
 Gear: A double-barrel shotgun with *wanga* 3 (only when at home), and conjure bags of *gad* 5 and *Ogu's aura* 3.
 Description: As mentioned in the posse section, Dr. John is huge, black man whose face is covered with scars in various ritual patterns, belying his generally friendly demeanor.



PAPA NATANGA

Papa actually works *with* LaCroix rather than for him. He was LaCroix's teacher back in Haiti and he moved to New Orleans a few years ago, intending to capitalize on his student's good fortune. However, once he arrived, he found LaCroix quite different than he recalled.

LaCroix's power had grown enormously since the Reckoning. Papa still had the advantage of experience on his old pupil, but LaCroix's might now far outstripped his own. Rather than test his luck against LaCroix, Papa decided instead to throw in with him.

This hasn't curbed the old man's tongue. He chuckles at LaCroix's claim to the title of baron and refers to his magic as "dabbling," apparently for no other reason than it infuriates the younger man.

For now, LaCroix puts up with this abuse for a number reasons. First, Papa is an extremely skilled houngan who LaCroix believes can still teach him many things. Second, the old guy is damned handy to have around. More than once, his skill with voodoo dolls has eliminated an bothersome foe.

Finally, Papa knows LaCroix's origins and how he came by the title of "baron." The old man hasn't told anyone what he knows, but the threat that he might keeps LaCroix civil.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, Q:2d8, S:2d4, V:4d8
 Shootin': rifle 4d6
 Mental: C:2d8, K:3d10, M:4d6, Sm:2d12, Sp:4d8
 Academia: occult 8d10, faith: black magic 5d8, guts 4d8, ridicule 4d12, scrutinize 3d8
 Edges: Arcane background: voodoo, friends in high places (LaCroix) 5
 Hindrances: Geezer
 Pace: 4
 Wind: 16
 Special Abilities:
 Black Magic: Curse 2, forewarnin' 3, puppet 3, stun 2, zombie 3
 Voodoo Doll: Papa Natanga is an expert with these devilish toys. If he gains a piece of the victim's hair, skin, or nails (not that difficult for a man with his connections), he can cast a spell similar to the voodoo spell *voodoo doll*. However, Papa can use the doll to inflict up to 10 wound levels to the victim regardless of range. He can inflict -1 level per action, with no limit to the number of wounds per hit location. He must win a contest his *faith: black magic*



versus the victim's *Vigor* to cause each wound level. If the victim wins, that use of the doll has no effect. Papa can only have one such doll at a time.

Gear: A Springfield .58 rifle

Description: Papa Natanga is a tough, sinewy man with bandy legs and a wiry frame.

ZOZO LABRIQUE

Zozo used to be Marie Saloppe, the voodoo queen in New Orleans before Marie Laveau I came to power. Zozo, like all of Marie Laveau's competitors, lost the struggle. After her defeat, Zozo lost her grip on reality as well.

Now Zozo wanders the streets, ranting at unseen characters and selling her brick dust. Not all of her arcane ability is lost however. Any doorstep cleaned with her brick dust is protected by a *cemetery gates* spell until the next sunrise. The dust can't be stored. It's only effective the day it's bought.

BOKKOR

These evil sorcerers make perfect enemies for a group of heroes. Don't worry about trying to keep track of the new voodoo rules when you're running a villain. Use the black magic rules in *The Quick & the Dead* instead. They're a whole lot quicker and easier to handle.

With a few modifications, most of the spells can be made to resemble voodoo effects. For example, a *bolt o' doom* from a bokkor might not have a physical bolt, but it could require him to put a pin into a voodoo doll to work.

We've also included a pack of new black-magic spells in Chapter Four, so take a gander. Some are especially appropriate for voodooists.

ZOBOP

As anyone who's familiar with LaCroix has probably already guessed, the zobop are in New Orleans, and they do work for him. However, they are not the crazed murderers that popular myth makes them out to be.

Instead, the zobop serve as LaCroix's secret police and his link to the criminal community in New Orleans. Between these dark magicians and his skinwalker spies, LaCroix is able to harm his enemies effectively while appearing innocent himself. Any posse that meddles too far into Bayou Vermillion business may draw the attention of the red sect!

By the way, they do practice human sacrifice, and yes, they are cannibals.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, Q:4d6, S:3d6, V:2d8

Fightin': knife 3d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:3d8, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d8

Academia: occult 3d8, faith: black magic 4d8

Edges: Arcane background: voodoo, friends in high places (LaCroix) 4.

Hindrances: Vengeful

Pace: 6

Wind: NA

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Members of the zobop know one or more spells at level 2 or 3, but only powerful members of the sect are likely to know more than two. Common spells are animal mastery (snakes), curse (voodoo doll), cloak o' evil, puppet (voodoo doll), stun (evil eye), transformation, and zombie.

Gear: A dagger (knife).

VOODOO CREATURES

BAKA

Baka delight in causing fear and terror, and they are a favorite tool of the Reckoners in areas where Voodoo has a strong following.

Baka are able to assume the form of just about any creature or abomination in the blink of an eye. They favor horrific shapes—the more terrifying, the better. Nothing makes one of the monsters happier than scaring some poor sap into a heart attack!

Although baka enjoy a good scare, they aren't the sort to give up just because a fellow's got some iron in his belly. They possess formidable fangs and claws as well, and they don't hesitate to use them to rend a cowpoke to pieces. They often hide along lonely roads and fall upon unsuspecting victims, tearing them apart.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d8, S:3d10, Q:3d10, V:4d8

Fightin': brawlin' 5d8, sneak 5d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d12, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d12

Overawe: 5d12

Pace: Varies (see below)

Size: Varies (see below)

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+2d8)

Invulnerability: A baka is immune to all physical attacks, although it does suffer from magical ones. Baka never suffer Wind loss from any means.



SECRETS

Shapechange: A baka can assume any form from Size 2 through Size 10 in a single action. It gains all the natural (and supernatural) abilities associated with the new form. Its mental Traits remain the same, although its corporeal Traits change to that of its new form. It gains any attacks possessed by the new form, but always retains its claws! (Even as say, a fish.)

Needless to say, baka prefer powerful forms.

Weakness: The one thing baka are powerless against is bravery. A cowpoke can cause one to flee by winning a test of *overawe*, *bluff*, or *ridicule* against the baka's *Spirit*. If the if it loses, the abomination turns its head away from the hardy soul and vanishes!

SKINWALKERS

A skinwalker's natural appearance is very similar to a skinless human body. However, whereas a human's muscles appear red, the corresponding areas on a skinwalker are brownish-black. Their skeletons are entirely hardened cartilage which can be softened at will to allow great variety in form. They possess long,



retractable claws which extend from the index and middle fingers of each hand and their tongues are rough and rasp-like.

Skinwalkers are seldom seen in their natural form. They prefer to wear the skins of humans and hide among mankind. Their mutable skeleton allows them to freely mimic any human from the size of a 12-year-old child to the largest of adults. Their musculature expands or contracts as necessary to facilitate these changes.

Since few people intentionally remove their own outer flesh, skinwalkers usually have to take it from unwilling victims. They are very talented at this, able to accomplish the complete and flawless skinning of an adult in less than five minutes.

Skinwalkers' claws are naturally suited for this task, and they use their coarse tongues to draw off the blood from their victims as they remove the skin. Being particularly malicious creatures, they often try to keep their victims alive for as long as possible during this process, assuming they can find places where the poor unfortunates' screams can't be heard.

Finally, the tongue possesses a proboscis-like cartilage tube that they insert through the base of the skull and use to devour the brain of the subject. Through some unknown means, they are able to glean some of the subject's memories by this process.

While the monster does not gain complete access to the mind of the victim, it does seem to learn enough to pass a cursory interview. Needless to say, this final procedure is invariably fatal. The skinwalker can use this ability on a body that is dead, as long as it has been less than 24 hours since its demise.

A skinwalker can wear a skin for about a month before decay begins to make it unusable. The hide can be used indefinitely if the creature regularly maintains it with vinegar or formaldehyde. The monster can also store skins for up to three months in solutions of either substance. This practice gives the skin a noticeable odor, detectable by anyone near the creature on an Onerous (7) *Cognition* roll. Also, on a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll anyone closely examining a skinwalker from behind may notice a faint line or "seam" up its back.

Baron LaCroix has somehow made an alliance with a number of these abominations. They serve as his primary infiltrators and spies throughout the Weird West, giving him an intelligence network that makes the Pinkertons look like peeping toms.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:3d10, S:1d10, Q:3d8, V:2d8
Fightin' brawlin' 4d10, skinnin' 6d12, sneak 6d10
Mental: C:1d8, K:2d8, M:1d8, Sm:3d12, Sp:3d6
Bluff 5d8, disguise 6d8, persuasion 3d8

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Terror: 9 (without a skin)

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4) and claws (STR+2d6)

Disguise: A skinwalker in disguise gives all scrutinize tests to detect it a -2.

Immunity: As long as a skinwalker wears another's skin, it is impervious to physical harm. Once 30 Wind has been dealt to it, however, the skin is considered destroyed by physical damage. At this point, the beast slough off the skin—a horrifying sight in itself, causing any witnesses to make an Incredible (II) *guts* check. Once its true form is exposed, the creature may be harmed by normal weapons. Even then, skinwalkers are tough. Treat them as having Armor 1 when they're "skinless."

SUCETTES

These monsters are exactly as Daniel described them. After dark, the sucette sheds its skin, spreads its membranous wings, and flies off in search of a child on which to feed.

A sucette must return to its human skin by dawn or die. One way to defeat a sucette is to follow it back to its home and kill it once it returns to its human skin. They lose all their invulnerabilities once they've donned it.

A common method to prevent the abominations from drawing blood from a child is to feed the child a mixture of garlic and other spices. A sucette who drinks such "tainted" blood is wracked with violent stomach cramps and must return to its skin immediately. Any hero making a Hard (9) *faith: voodoo* or Incredible (II) *academia: occult* roll knows of this treatment.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d10, S:4d8, Q:3d10, V:4d8
Fightin' brawlin' 3d10, sneak 6d10
Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:1d8, Sm:3d6, Sp:1d4
Pace: 10 (ground)/20 (flying)

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Blood Drain: The first time the abomination feeds, the child gains a minor *ailin'*

Hindrance (1 point). The second time, the Hindrance becomes chronic (3 points), and it's fatal (5 points) on the third. Should the monster feed a fourth time, the child dies.

Damage: Claws (STR+1d4)

Flight: Pace 20

Invulnerability: Sucettes are immune to normal attacks. Magical attacks are effective, and the creatures are repulsed by garlic. When in human form, they can be killed normally.

ZOMBIE (VOODOO)

Zombies are often mistaken for walkin' dead, and understandably so. Both are human in appearance, and both wear the stench of decay and the grave. However, although they are a form of undead, zombies differ greatly from the more familiar walkin' dead.

Zombies are slower and stronger than standard walkin' dead. Also, their mouths are frequently sewn shut—something no self-respecting undead would allow. They are not free-willed like Harrowed, and they are not inhabited by manitous. Instead, zombies are created by bokkors—evil Voodoo sorcerers—and are totally under the control of their creator.

Zombies are very resistant to physical damage. Unlike regular undead, wounds to the head do not impair the zombie in any way. Short of total destruction of the guts area, zombies cannot be slain by physical attacks. Maimed limbs slow a zombie down until it can be repaired by its creator.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d6, S:4d12+4, Q:1d6, V:4d12+2
Fightin' brawlin' 4d6

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Undead: Voodoo zombies can only be killed by a maiming wound to the guts, not the head.

Vulnerability: Anyone brave enough to put salt in a zombie's mouth destroys the tenuous hold its creator has over it. The zombie makes a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll. If it's successful, it seeks out its creator to exact vengeance. If it fails, it simply falls to the ground, its soul freed. Turning the zombie so it can see the ocean also kills the zombie and releases the tortured spirit.



SECRETS



* WITH APOLOGIES TO (BRANDON) PETERSON *



CHAPTER FOUR: NEW BLACK MAGIC



With Black River's witches, Ernst Biren, and LaCroix's bokkors running around down in New Orleans, it's only fitting we throw out a passel of new black-magic spells for you to sling at those poor heroes. These new black-magic spells can be used by folks other than just evil voodoo priests of course. More information on how black magic works can be found in *The Quick & the Dead*.

THE NEW SPELLS

Each of the spells that follow have a set of common characteristics:

A black-magic spell's *Speed* is the number of actions it takes to cast.

A spell's *Duration* is how long the spell remains in effect. This works just like durations of a huckster's hexes.

Trappings are suggested visual effects that accompany a spell's effects. Not all black magicians are the same after all.

CONTAGION

Speed: 1

Duration: Permanent (until cured)

Trappings: Evil eye, glowing hand

This spell is a favorite of Ernst Biren. He's used it to start at least two outbreaks of the Black Death in Europe, and numerous typhoid epidemics during the Civil War.

The black magician must touch his intended victim for this spell to take effect. Of course, few able-bodied people are likely to stand still for such treatment. In combat, the sorcerer needs to make a *fightin': brawlin'* roll. Once the victim has been touched, she must make a *Vigor* roll against the appropriate TN on the table below. If she fails, she acquires a fatal *ailin'* Hindrance and suffers all the effects of that.

The disease takes immediate effect on the victim. Any disease delivered by a *contagion* spell is contagious. Anyone coming into contact with a victim of the hex must make a Foolproof (3) *Vigor* roll or contract the illness as well.

Unlike with the normal *ailin'* Hindrance, a disease inflicted by *contagion* can be cured by a physician. Healing a patient afflicted by *contagion* requires one week and an Incredible (11) *medicine: general* roll.



Level	Vigor TN
1	3
2	5
3	7
4	9
5	11





CURSE

Speed: 1d6 minutes

Duration: Varies

Trappings: The "evil eye," voodoo dolls, poisons

Evil cults have more ways to punish those who cross them than just sending a group of robed thugs to shed a little blood. There are much more subtle methods of vengeance.

Curse inflicts a slow wasting on the target. This is represented by a daily loss of the victim's Wind. Wind lost to this black magic cannot be recovered by normal means. Once the victim reaches 0 Wind, she becomes bedridden. She begins to suffer wound levels as usual when her Wind goes negative.

This one is often found in a bokkor's twisted repertoire. Any victim dying of a bokkor's *curse* suffers an especially horrifying fate. Live snakes and spiders crawl from the corpse's mouth. For anyone watching, that's an Incredible (II) *guts* check!

The caster must be able to see the target and have an item belonging to the victim in order to cast the spell. After that, there is no range restriction, and the spell has a virtually limitless duration.

The caster can freely release the *curse* at any time, and killing the cultist who invoked the *curse* ends the spell as well. The miracle *dispel* and the hex *disrupt* are also effective means for lifting a *curse*. While magical cures such as *succor*, *lay on hands*, or *helpin' hand* restore the lost Wind, they do not prevent any further losses.

Finally, all *curses* have a method for removal specific to the cult. This is often used as a method to force the victim into a course of action. For example, one of the more common *curses* is lifted if the victim partakes in cannibalism.

The *curse* victim's Wind loss is based on the caster's level with the spell, as shown on the following table.

CURSE

Level	Wind Lost
1	1 per day
2	1d2 per day
3	1d3 per day
4	1d4 per day
5	1d6 per day

DECAY

Speed: 1

Duration: Permanent

Trappings: Strange elixirs, glowing hands, arcane glyphs

Decay allows a black magician to rot dead organic material, destroying it. Wood, leather, cloth, food—all are susceptible to this effect. The volume of material that can be affected varies according to the sorcerer's spell level. Check out the chart on the next page for full details. The caster must touch the material in question to destroy it.

While this power is mainly useful for pure effect, like witch destroying crops or a bokkor rotting a way a door, it can be used in combat. In order to destroy something that hero (like clothing, or a gunbelt), the caster must first succeed at a normal *fightin': brawl* check with appropriate called-shot penalties.

Material affected by *decay* rots away almost instantaneously. Normal organic material is simply destroyed. Material with an Armor value has that value permanently reduced by -1 for every level of the caster's *decay* power.

Decay is only useful on dead organic material. The spell has no direct effect on living creatures.



DECAY

Level	Area of Effect
1	10 cubic feet
2	50 cubic feet
3	150 cubic feet
4	500 cubic feet
5	1,000 cubic feet

GHOST HANDS

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1 Wind/round

Trappings: Strong winds, murmuring voices, elaborate gestures

Sure, hucksters have *phantom fingers*—big deal. Black River witches have the whole hand!

Using this incantation, a cultist can lift, move—even hurl—objects in the physical world. If the caster attempts to affect a living being with this spell, he must win an opposed *Spirit* roll against the target's *Strength*. If he wins, the target is firmly held by the magic. Otherwise the spell has no effect.

The amount of weight the caster can lift is based on his level on the cart below. Hurlled objects also do damage according to the caster's level. The higher the level, the harder he can throw items.

GHOST HANDS

Level	Weight	Damage
1	50 pounds	2d6
2	100 pounds	3d6
3	250 pounds	3d8
4	500 pounds	4d8
5	1,000 pounds	5d10

ILLUSION

Speed: 2

Duration: Concentration or 1 Wind/round

Trappings: Hypnotism, heavy incense, or poisons

The forces of evil have always been masters of lies and deceit, so it's no surprise some favored servants have been granted the power to change the appearance of reality.

Illusion affects an area up to a radius equal to the caster's *faith* times 10 feet. Inside that area, the caster can produce illusions of nearly anything she chooses. These illusions are very realistic and difficult to detect. All characters

within this area must make a *Cognition* roll to recognize a phantasm conjured by this spell as false. The TN for the *Cognition* roll is based on the caster's skill with the spell. If the hero is successful, he has seen through the *illusion* and is unaffected by the spell.

If the caster wishes, she may summon up horrific images to terrify her victims. This is a simple action on the caster's part, and it can only be done once per round. Viewers who fail to detect the *illusion* must make a *guts* check against the TN shown on the table below.

While the caster can have the *illusion* attack the characters, it's not particularly well suited for this. She must roll a *Spirit* roll against a Fair (5) TN to hit a character, and any successful hit does only 1 Wind for each level she has in the spell. Heroes who make their *Cognition* roll to detect the *illusion* are invulnerable to these attacks.

This spell is best used to mislead the posse or frame innocent folks. The illusion affects all the senses, but only for its duration, so if it's used for the second purpose, a clever hero may notice a lack of physical evidence after the fact.

ILLUSION

Level	Cognition TN	Guts TN
1	5	3
2	7	5
3	9	7
4	11	9
5	13	11

SENDIN'

Speed: 2-12 minutes

Duration: One night

Trappings: Nightmares

When a hero gets on the bad side of a cult, it may seem there's nowhere left to hide. *Sendin'* lets the unholy hound their prey even in sleep.

This spell allows the cultist to inflict nightmares upon the character. Treat it as if the character were afflicted with the Hindrance *night terrors*. Although each casting lasts only a single night, the cultist can recast the spell on the victim each night to get a sustained drain on the character's will. The TN for the victim's *Spirit* roll to resist the nightmare is Hard (9), just as with the Hindrance.

Feel free to tailor these nightmares to fit the scenario or campaign rather than simply telling the character she's having bad dreams.



SECRETS



SENDIN'

Level	Range
1	100 yards
2	500 yards
3	1 mile
4	5 miles
5	10 miles

STORMCALL

Speed: 5-30 minutes

Duration: Varies

Trappings: Blizzards, hailstorms, tornadoes

Few things make folks nervous like a dark and stormy night. Better yet, bad weather is quite handy for keeping a posse pinned down while a cult carries out its abominable schemes. This particular piece of black magic doesn't really fit the evil voodoo paradigm, but it's an excellent tool for other black magicians

Stormcall brings a terrible squall down upon the area. Anyone venturing out into the storm is battered and torn, both by the storm itself and by the array of whirling debris stirred up by it, and the hapless sodbuster slowly takes Wind

damage. Although the storm may shake and rattle buildings, any sort of structure—even a tent in good repair—is proof against the damage from this spell.

The area affected by the spell, as well as the Wind damage inflicted, are based on the caster's level.

STORMCALL

Level	Area of Effect	Wind Loss
1	1-mile radius	1/30 minutes
2	5-mile radius	1/10 minutes
3	10-mile radius	1/5 minutes
4	25-mile radius	1/minute
5	50-mile radius	1/6 rounds

TRANSFORMATION

Speed: 2

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Trappings: Body painting, self mutilation, jagged claws

Voodoo legends abound with stories of bokkor who transform themselves into werewolves or worse. This spell gives an evil sorcerer of any persuasion a fighting chance against the heroes—literally!

With *transformation*, the cultist calls on the power of her dark patrons to change her physical form. This is a spell and not a natural ability like that of certain abominations. As such, it does require the caster to perform some ritual prior to the spell taking effect.

The spell alters the cultist's body into a fearsome monstrosity. The appearance of the monstrosity is up to you, Marshal, but it should be something horrible. At lower levels, it may only change a limb or two, but more skilled casters can affect their entire body.

When transformed, the caster gains the damage bonus and Terror score listed below. So he can apply his new form effectively, the magician also gains *fightin': brawlin'* at a level at least equal to her skill with the spell.

TRANSFORMATION

Level	Terror	Damage Bonus
1	None	+2d4
2	3	+2d6
3	5	+2d8
4	7	+2d10
5	9	+2d12

**Ranger's Bible
Addendum #84:
The Voodooists**

December 12, 1876

General King,

As usual, you were right. There's more to those voodoo cults down New Orleans way than just superstitious mumbo-jumbo. It's definitely something that deserves a closer look—particularly with all the influence LaCroix's enjoying lately thanks to Bayou Vermillion.

I'm sending the first part of my report along with this letter. In it, you'll find details on the "good" side of voodoo—and, yes, there definitely are two sides to this coin.

It's taken the better part of the year to win my way into the confidence of the local congregation. And that's here in New Orleans, where voodoo is pretty much accepted—if not exactly smiled on—by most of the populace. Outside the city, most practitioners of the religion are more skittish than a long-tailed cat in a room of rocking chairs.

Of course, it's with good reason. These folks have to be even more careful about their doings than those confounded hucksters. Why, I'd imagine a bloodthirsty lynch mob would let a hexslinger go in a heart beat for just the rumor of a voodoo-practicing "witch doctor."

But then, strange rituals with chicken blood and chanting are a few steps across that line most folks draw for "acceptable behavior."

Voodoo: A Basic Primer

Unlike many religions, voodoo doesn't have a strict set of moral guidelines. The general idea is that most folks know what's right and what isn't anyway, so cluttering up the religion with a lot of philosophy on it is a waste of time. What voodooists do pay attention to is showing the proper respect to a powerful group of spirits known as loas.

Loas

Lots of folks tend to think of loas as the gods of voodoo, but that's not quite right. They're actually very powerful spirits. Each has its sphere of influence, and the faithful petition them for aid.

Rada and Petro

There are two types of loa—the rada and the petro. For every rada loa, there is a petro aspect mirroring its influence, but with a darker, malicious cast.

Rada loa are generally considered the "good" loas, and they're the ones voodooists most often pay homage to in their ceremonies.



Petro loa are malevolent and mischievous entities. Even though their magic is more potent, it's considered a bad idea to consort with the petro loa. That's the realm of the black magician, or *bokkor*.

The Loa

The total number of loa is probably somewhere in the hundreds, but I've decided just to list a few of the more powerful and commonly worshipped below. These are all *rada loa* as well—in case you were wondering.

Legba

Legba serves as the interpreter to the other loa. Only through Legba can the other loa communicate with each other and human beings. As a result, all rituals and ceremonies first honor Legba, regardless of the practitioner's primary loa.

This loa is also the guardian of gates, fences, roads, and paths. He is known as the Master of Crossroads—and since crossroads are a favorite haunt of spirits and sorcerers in voodoo, he receives homage from magicians as well.

Although he is represented as a crippled old man dressed in rags, Legba has a terrific strength. Nonetheless, he is often symbolized by a crutch.

Agwe

Agwe is the patron of the sea, sailors, and sailing. Anyone planning a shipboard journey is advised to pay respects to him. He's also viewed as the patron loa of Haiti, so he's got quite a following in the Caribbean.

Agwe has a fondness for gunfire. Many ceremonies to him involve a bit of shooting to honor his desires.

Damballah-Wedo

Damballah-Wedo, or just plain Damballah, is the snake god of voodoo. Now, most folks north of the Mason-Dixon tend to look on snakes as squirmy and creepy, but Damballah is viewed as a benevolent spirit by most voodooists. Damballah is one of the most popular of all the loas.

Silver is his color, so he's also the loa people seeking treasure most often consult for aid. That may have something to do with his popularity.

Ogu

This boisterous loa is the patron of soldiers and war. He is a powerful combatant—and a powerful curser too! However, Ogu is depicted as being as skillful as he is strong. Believers seeking aid in battle often petition Ogu for assistance.

Few things please Ogu more than a chance to prove his toughness and ability. Ceremonies to him often include tests of strength and willpower.

Loco

Contrary to what his name might indicate to the average person, Loco is the patron of plants. He's also the loa responsible for healing the sick and injured. That makes him a right popular fellow!

Loco is a cautious sort, not given to snap decisions or rushing into a situation. Because his power is more subtle than some, Loco's following isn't as large as that of many of the other loas. That is, until somebody gets hurt!

Ezili-Freda-Dahomey

This loa is the icon of feminine beauty, grace, and love. Her name is usually shortened to simply Ezili. She is flirtatious and passes her favor according to her own whim of the moment.

Ezili loves men's company and has romanced many of the male loa.

Baron Samedi

The Baron is a member of the Guede, the group of loa responsible for the underworld and the darker side of life. The Baron is a member of a trio of spirits. These three, Baron Samedi, Baron-la-Croix (not the owner of

Bayou Vermillion!), and Guede-nibo are so closely united it's hard to tell if they're three separate spirits or just aspects of the same one.

Although his realm is death and the graveyard, the Baron is one of the liveliest of the loa. He's renowned for his black sense of humor and love of celebration.

Mounting the Chual

From time to time loas possess, or "mount," their followers, much like a rider mounts a horse. The "mount," or *chual*, takes on many aspects of the loa and gains some of the being's power as well. Possession by a loa is a honor to a voodooist, as it shows the spirit's favor for the individual.

Usually, this only occurs during secretive ceremonies in the *humfor*, the voodoo temple (see below). However, a few voodooists are specially favored by their patrons and can open themselves to the loa outside the sanctified ground of the *humfor*. They're often able to take advantage of the power of the loa in a more practical fashion. These folks are called *favored chuals*.

Holy Ground

Just as in many other religions, certain areas are considered to be consecrated ground. These are sanctified to a loa or loas, and they're very important for casting spells. The two types of consecrated ground most often encountered are the *humfor* and the shrine.

The Humfor

A *humfor* is holy ground for voodoo ceremonies. You can think of it like a voodoo temple or church, if you'd like. It's a square, or sometimes round, building or hut with a number of shrines to various loas.

A *humfor* always contains a *poteau-mitan*. The *poteau-mitan* is a large pole that serves as sort of a supernatural lightning rod, aiding in the congregation's efforts to contact the loas. A *humfor* is a kind of "neutral" holy ground. It honors all the loa equally.

Ritual ceremonies are held to pay homage to the loas and to petition for their favor. Congregations are lead by *mambos*, or voodoo queens, and *houngans*, or voodoo priests. Women hold the preeminent role in a congregation, but *houngans* wield just as much magical power.

The Shrine

A shrine is small altar dedicated to a particular loa. It usually contains a variety of ritual objects and sacrifices to the loa. Shrines are often found in the homes of voodooists. Unlike *humfors*, shrines are dedicated only to a single loa—usually the voodooist's patron.

Voodoo and the Dead

The spirits of the dead receive special honor in voodoo for a pretty simple reason. Unhappy ghosts tend to make other folks unhappy as well. Voodooists have known this for a long time, but it's especially true lately.

As long as the spirits of the dead are shown proper respect, they tend to not bother the living too much. Voodooists put a lot of stock in proper funerals, wakes, and burials. The general idea is that if you send a fellow off right, he's not likely to come back.

Many bokkor use petro magic to compel the dead to do their bidding. The best known example of this practice is the zombie—an undead slave of a black magician. This is the blackest of magic, and no worshiper of the rada loa would think of casting such a spell. Such sorcery is as frightening and repulsive to a voodooist as to the average person—maybe even more so!

In Closing

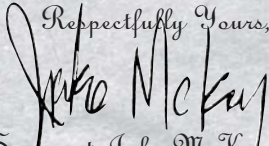
I know this is but a brief overview on this strange mix of religion and superstition, but I think I have encapsulated the basics for you, General

Without a doubt, there are certain peculiar "talents" of voodooists that could be of assistance to the Rangers. However, I think we need to consider the position the bignwigs in Richmond would take if word of that sort of activity were to leak out.

The next report I send will detail what I've been able to learn of the bokkor—or evil voodooists. Even though I've only scratched the surface so far, I guarantee it'll knock your boots off!

Believe me, getting the dirt on the Red Sects—that's what folks in the know call the cults practicing black magic hereabouts—makes what I've done so far look about as hard as beating a one-legged man in a butt-kicking contest!

Honestly, I hope to finish up here soon. Something about this damp climate doesn't seem to agree with me. Lately I've been having some real strong stomach pains. I'm sure a few days in the good old Texas sun will fix me right up. That and a couple of shots of that Tennessee sourmash whiskey of yours, that is!

Respectfully Yours,

Sergeant Jake McKoy
Texas Rangers



DOIN' THAT VOOODOO!

MAKING A VOOODOOIST



So, are you ready to invoke the power the loa? Are you prepared for your hero's body to be "ridden" by Baron Samedi himself? If so, let's get down to the real meat of this book: making a voodooist hero!

NEW APTITUDES

FAITH: VOOODOO

Associated Trait: Spirit

This is the religion followed by voodooists. It includes a knowledge of the tenets of voodoo as well as the names and spheres of the various loas. When buying this Aptitude, the voodooist must also chose a patron loa.

Unlike most other characters with *faith* Aptitudes, voodooists do not gain access

to the *protection* miracle. Also, characters with this Aptitude never become blessed. Instead, they can choose the *arcane background: voodoo* Edge.

A character must have at least 1 level in this Aptitude to select *arcane background: voodoo*.

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: VOODOO

3

Your hero knows the ways and the secrets of voodoo. Maybe she's a conjure doctor or a mambo. Whatever her background, she's able to learn any of the voodoo spells that are described in this book on pages 17-32.



Most folks that know how to work voodoo spells and rituals grew up around New Orleans or in the Caribbean. Of course, if you've got a good idea for a character that learned the mysteries of voodoo another way, talk it over with your Marshal. If he says it's okay, that's fine too.

FAVORED CHUAL

*

Loa possession is a central part of voodoo. In ceremonies and rituals, it's a fairly common occurrence—but it usually takes a lot of preparation to perform.

Some folks are favorite mounts of a particular loa however. Possession is almost second nature to these voodooists. To choose this Edge, your hero must have *arcane background: voodoo*. The cost of this Edge depends on the voodooist's patron loa.

If your hero's one of these favored mounts (or "chuals") select a rada loa as his favored patron. From time to time, he can call upon certain aspects of the spirit for aid. This requires not only a *faith: voodoo* roll, but also the expenditure of a Fate Chip—not unlike a *knack*. The color of the Fate Chip determines what type of assistance the loa grants.

Only the hero's patron loa can be petitioned in this manner.

LOAS & THE HUNTING GROUNDS

Both types of loa, rada and petro, are actually inhabitants of the Hunting Grounds. In fact, you can think of loa as just another name for "spirit." Rada loa are potent spirits just like those worshipped by the Indians, while petro loa are particularly powerful manitous.

With the assistance of the loa, a voodooist can tap the energies of the Hunting Grounds to use in his spells. Voodooists use sacrifices and rituals to gain the favor of the loa, much like the rituals of shamans. Generally, the methods used by voodooists are slower than those of other spellslingers, but also a little safer.

CALLING THE LOA

A *favored chual* may attempt to persuade his patron loa to aid him. When a *favored chual* wants to call his loa to lend a hand, he must first declare what color of Fate Chip he intends to use.



Next, he spends 1 round and makes a *faith: voodoo* roll against a Fair (5) TN. If successful, he captures the attention of the spirit and can persuade it to grant a little of its power. Now the voodooist must spend the chosen Fate Chip to activate the power.

If he fails, he can try again on the next round if he wants. The Fate Chip is not spent until the power is activated.

However, if the voodooist goes bust on the *faith* roll, he's captured the attention of a petro loa. He loses the chosen Fate Chip and becomes possessed by his patron loa's petro counterpart.

The possession lasts as long as the original power would have. The Marshal controls the hero body and soul for that time, and given the malicious nature of the petro loa, that's plenty of time for mischief! The loa also manifests the chosen power as well—but the petro loa uses it for its own ends.

MOUNT 'EM UP!

On the following pages, there are the descriptions of the powers each loa conveys on its chual. Like we said above, once the *faith* roll has been made, these work just like *knacks*.

VOODOO!

Once the loa possesses the voodooist, some aspects of its nature carry over into the chual's behavior. Read the section on each loa to find out what effect this has.

Unless the description of the power says otherwise, the length of the possession depends on the color of Fate Chip spent to activate it. The influence of the loa's personality, as well as any physical manifestations of it, lasts five times the actual possession length, or the duration of any powers granted by the loa, whichever is longer.

MAINTAINING COST

Chip Spent	Possession Time
White chip	1 minute
Red chip	5 minutes
Blue chip	10 minutes

Beside each loa is the cost to purchase the *avored chual* Edge it. A voodooist buy this Edge only once and only for her patron loa.

AGWE

2

Agwe is very fond of gunfire—sometimes a little *too* fond. If he has a firearm handy when possessed by Agwe's presence, the chual must make an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll or fire off a couple of rounds just to hear the sound of them!

Also, a voodooist under Agwe's influence is attracted to water. The chual has to make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll to resist the urge for a quick dip any time he's near a river, lake, or larger body of water.

White: The hero automatically passes all *swimmin'* rolls for 10 minutes per level of his *faith* Aptitude. His swimming Pace gets a bonus of +2 while under Agwe's influence as well.

Red: The voodooist gains a +5 bonus to all *trade: seamanship* rolls for one hour per level of his *faith*. During this time, she can detect water hazards, such as hidden reefs or cross-currents, by making a Fair (5) *Cognition* check.

Blue: This works the same as for a white chip, and the voodooist can also breathe underwater for the duration.

BARON SAMEDI

4

Folks under the influence of the good Baron Samedi gain a rather black sense of humor. Although they're quite amiable, they tend to crack somewhat off-color jokes at the most inappropriate times. A voodooist mounted by Baron Samedi gains a 2-point *habit: dark humor* Hindrance.

Additionally, the Baron's presence manifests itself as a palpable sense of death. Anyone near the voodooist during a possession can detect



an odor of decay (similar to that of a Harrowed) on a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll.

White: The voodooist can cast the *conjure doctor* spell to heal wounds on a Harrowed character at the normal TNs. The spell dice must still be rolled to see if the casting is successful. This effect lasts for a single casting of the spell.

Red: The voodooist can ask a single yes or no question of the spirit of a deceased person. The body must be present, and no more than 1 day per level of the voodooist's *faith: voodoo* may have passed since its death. The voodooist may spend more than one chip per spirit.

Blue: Baron Samedi's presence makes the voodooist invisible to walkin' dead and zombies created by black voodoo. The abominations completely ignore the character for as long as he maintains the power. This requires the voodooist's concentration, so he may only take simple actions like walking or speaking for the duration. Even with concentration, the effect ends after a maximum period equal to 10 minutes per level of the voodooist's *faith: voodoo*.

DAMBALLAH-WEDO 4

A chual being ridden by Damballah-Wedo can't speak for the duration of the

possession. She hisses, and her tongue occasionally darts out. For the most part, she acts like a two-legged snake.

As you might guess, most folks find this behavior downright odd. In addition to being unable to speak, the voodooist gets a -2 to all *Mien* based Aptitudes with people. This negative modifier does not apply to anyone with at least 1 level in *faith: voodoo*—but she still can't talk to them.

White: The loa guides the mount to a minor hidden or lost treasure. The value is equal to the result of the voodooist's *faith* roll to call the loa in dollars. It takes from 10 minutes to an hour to locate the treasure.

Red: The chual is immune to effects of all poisons—natural, magical, or otherwise. Any poisons injected into or imbibed by the hero during this time are negated. This immunity has a duration in minutes equal to the chual's *faith* Aptitude.

Blue: The voodooist becomes sinuous and serpentine in movement. The mount automatically succeeds at all *climbin'* rolls and takes no damage from falls of 30 feet or less. Also, the mount is able to squeeze his body into or through spaces as small as one foot in diameter. This effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the hero's *faith*.



EZILI-FREDA- DA-HOMEY

5

To attempt to call this loa, the chual, male or female, must be wearing feminine clothing. That means a dress! While that's not a concern for female voodooists, it may cause the males some discomfort.

Also, while possessed by Ezili, her chual all flirt as though they have the *randy* Hindrance. The hero isn't required to follow up on her flirtations, but they may cause her no end of trouble later on. By the way, Ezili only flirts with men, so if the chual is also male, he might have some explaining to do after the loa departs!

White: The voodooist radiates grace and poise. She gains a +5 bonus to all *persuasion* rolls made against men. Against women, this bonus is only +2. This bonus is in addition to any from other sources. The bonus lasts for 1 minute for each level of the chual's *faith* Aptitude.

Red: Ezili's presence raises the hero's charisma and charm to supernatural levels. The voodooist's *Mien* is raised by a number of die types equal to her *faith*. This lasts 10 rounds.

Blue: The loa's manifestation is so powerful that any man must make a *Spirit* roll against the chual's *faith* in order to cause her



harm. If he loses, he can't cast spells, fire a gun, or otherwise directly attack her. Male Harrowed are affected by this power, but other abominations are not. The effect lasts for 1 round for each level of the voodooist's *faith*.

LEGBA

5

Due to the power of this loa, when possessed, the hero must make an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll. If he fails, he's thrown into convulsions from the force and power of Legba for 1d4 rounds and is unable to act until the seizure passes. After that time, the possession has its normal effect.

For the duration of the possession, the voodooist gains a pronounced limp and loses -2 from his Pace.

White: The voodooist is able to communicate in any spoken language. This ability lasts the for a number of minutes equal to the chual's *faith* Aptitude level.

Red: Legba's presence allows the chual to open any non-magical lock or door. The hero can open one lock a round, and the power lasts for a number of rounds equal to his *faith* Aptitude.

Blue: The loa boosts the chual's physical strength enormously. The hero's

Strength is increased by a number of die types equal to his *faith* Aptitude. This effect lasts for 10 rounds.

LOCO

3

Voodooists possessed by Loco display his customary cautiousness. They gain the *cautious* Hindrance while under his influence. Additionally, Loco prefers to heal wounds, not cause them, so the a voodooist filled with his presence becomes a 3-point *pacifist*.

White: The voodooist can pass through wilderness areas without leaving any trail. The hero is untrackable, plain and simple. This effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the voodooist's *faith: voodoo* Aptitude.

Red: By spending a red Fate Chip, the hero is able to heal a single wound level on herself or a comrade. Doing so requires the mounted voodooist to treat the wound for about 1 minute, but at the end of that period, the wound is reduced by -1 level—no roll required. This works on any level of wound up to critical.

This ability is usable as many times a day as desired (as long as the chual spends a red Fate Chip each time), but only once per patient.

Blue: Loco's power enables the voodooist to use the *conjure doctor* spell to heal





even maiming wounds. (Normally, the spell can't affect wound levels higher than critical.) The voodooist can even reattach severed limbs with the spell. The TN for this is still Incredible (11). This power lasts for 1 hour per level of the voodooist's *faith: voodoo* Aptitude.

O_{GU}

5

Ogu's presence in a voodooist is evident by his loud and profane language. Voodooists possessed by Ogu can swear a blue streak! For the length of the possession, the voodooist has a 2-point *habit: foul language* Hindrance.

Also, the warrior loa has never been one to turn down a good battle. The voodooist under his influence must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll to avoid rushing headlong into any—even potential—fight.

White: The chual can ignore 1 level of wound modifiers, in addition to any other similar Edges or abilities. For example, if the chual is already *thick-skinned*, he now ignores 2 levels of wound modifiers. This lasts for one minute per level of the chual's *faith*.

Red: Ogu grants the hero mastery of any one weapon. For the duration of the possession, the chual may raise a single *fightin', shootin',* or *bow* Aptitude to level 5—even one in which he currently

has no levels in at all! If the hero already has level 5 in the chosen Aptitude, he gets a +2 to all rolls to use it. This lasts for five rounds for every level of the chual's *faith*.

Blue: This works just like with a white chip, but the hero can also ignore 2 wound levels. The voodooist also gains +1 level of Armor. This Armor is cumulative with any other, including magic.

VOODOO SPELLS

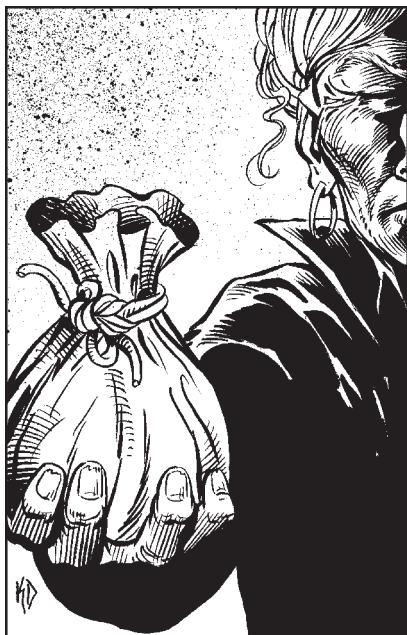
STARTING SPELLS

Each voodoo spell is considered its own Aptitude and must be bought as such. As with normal skills, a character may buy up to five levels in a voodoo spell during character creation.

Voodoo spell levels are increased just like other Aptitudes. That means to raise the spell Aptitude, you have to pay Bounty Points equal to the new level.

There is an additional limitation on voodoo spells. No character can ever have a higher level in a spell than his *faith: voodoo* Aptitude level. For example, if a voodooist has *faith: voodoo* at level 4, he can't have more than 4 levels in any spell either—at least until he raises that *faith* level.





LEARNING NEW SPELLS

After creation, a voodooist must seek out a teacher to learn new spells. This can be tough in areas outside of the West Indies or southern Louisiana. Voodoo just isn't that widespread!

Once she's found a teacher, she has to spend two weeks studying. At the end of this time, she makes an Onerous (7) *faith: voodoo* roll. If she's successful, she spends 1 Bounty Point, and she learns the new spell at level 1.

Otherwise, she's got to start the learning process all over again, but at least she's not out a Bounty Point.

CONJURE BAGS

Throughout the spell descriptions, we talk about conjure bags. Depending on the locale, conjure bags may go by gris-gris bags, mojo bags, or any number of other names. Regardless of the name, the function of the items are the same.

A conjure bag is a small pouch, often made of felt, no larger than the palm of the hand. Occasionally, small bottles may also serve as conjure "bags."

A voodooist uses a conjure bag to contain the various items required to make a chosen spell work. If the bag is destroyed or its contents emptied, the effect of the spell automatically ends.

A hero can determine the intended function of a conjure bag by emptying it and making an Onerous (7) *faith: voodoo* roll. This roll is based on the character's *Knowledge* Trait, and not the usual *Spirit*.

CASTING VODOO SPELLS

Like we said earlier, each voodoo spell is its own Aptitude. To cast the spell, the voodooist simply has to make the TN for the given spell. If it sounds like voodooists have it just a bit too easy, don't worry, there are a few other considerations.



Unlike the hexes of hucksters or blessed miracles, voodoo spells usually require fairly complicated rituals and preparations. It takes effort to set someone up for a proper voodoo curse, after all.

Anyone observing a voodooist casting a spell knows something is up—the rituals are pretty darn obvious. However, using a conjure bag once it's been prepared is fairly subtle. Most folks don't have any idea something's amiss.

HALLOWED GROUND

Voodoo spells work best when they're cast on the consecrated ground of a humfor or at a shrine. There, the voodooist has an easier time making the connection to the loas in the Hunting Grounds. As long as the spell is cast in a humfor or a shrine, the spell Aptitude roll is normal. However, if a voodooist tries to cast a spell outside those areas, he gets a -5 to his spell Aptitude roll!

INGREDIENTS

Most spells also require some pretty odd components or monetary outlay. Many need an object, hair, or similar items belonging to the target. Without these, the spell simply can't work, no matter what the TN. Each spell gives a description of what, if any, special ingredients are needed.

Even once the spell's been successfully cast, the voodooist might still have to do a little work to get it to take effect. For example, some spells require an item be hidden near the target to be effective. As with the ingredients, we tell you if that's the case in the spell's description.

GOING BUST

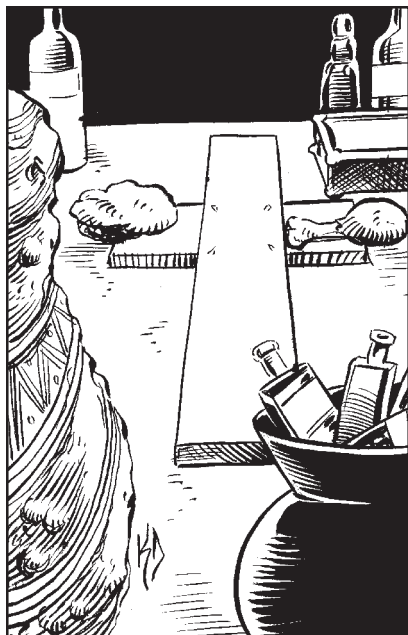
While voodoo magic is a good deal safer than a huckster's hexes, there are dangers. Whenever a voodooist goes bust on her spell-casting roll, a petro loa has managed to get its hands into the mix. The spell ends up backfiring and has exactly the opposite of the desired effect. We're leaving the exact details up to the Marshal here. He can decide on a case-by-case basis, but just remember, the effects are never pleasant!

BUILDING A SHRINE

Since there's such a penalty to casting a spell outside a shrine or humfor, most voodooists build small shrines at which to practice their magic. A shrine is a small, consecrated altar to the voodooist's patron loa.

It needn't be large. Most are built in one corner of a small room. However, the rituals necessary to consecrate it are somewhat time consuming.





The voodooist must spend a day preparing the area for use with rituals and offerings. This requires that the voodooist make offerings worth at least \$10. At the end of a full day, she must make a Hard (9) *faith: voodoo* roll.

If she's successful, the shrine becomes consecrated. Any voodooist who is aligned with the loa that the shrine is dedicated to treats the area of the shrine as hallowed ground. Otherwise, she has to repeat the process until she makes the TN.

The drawback to a shrine is a voodooist can only use a shrine consecrated to his

patron loa. Other shrines are useless to him for spell purposes.

A voodooist may only have a single shrine at a given time. Building another shrine removes the consecration of the first one.

BUILDING A HUMFOR

Humfors are a bit tougher to consecrate. They're also much larger and conspicuous—and with all the weird things going on lately, most folks look on voodoo as the work of the Devil. A voodooist shouldn't build a humfor in the local saloon unless he's fond of dancing on the end of a rope!

Building the humfor itself is a task. Even with the assistance of a full voodoo congregation, this takes a minimum of 2d4 weeks and an outlay of \$100.

Afterward, the humfor must be cleansed and consecrated just like a shrine. However, the process is more complex and lengthy. The voodooist must spend a week performing rituals and making offerings before attempting an Incredible (11) *faith: voodoo* roll. If she's successful, the humfor is consecrated. If she fails, she has to start all over again.

Unlike a shrine, the humfor is consecrated for all loas. Any voodooist can use a humfor to cast spells regardless of her patron loa.



VOODOO SPELLS

Now that we've told you the basics of voodoo, we've got a whole mojo bag full of spells for your voodooist to learn.

Spells have five entries:

Trait, TN, Speed, Duration, and Range.

Trait is the Trait used to cast the spell. Unlike normal Aptitudes, spells are tied to a specific Trait. Also, you can't make a default roll for a spell Aptitude. Either you know the spell or you don't. No guessing!

TN is the Target Number for the spell. These vary from spell to spell, and some spells may have more than one TN for different effects. If that's the case, we tell you about it in the description.

Speed tells you how long the spell takes to cast. Most of these entries are listed in minutes or hours, but a very few spells take less time. Certain spells let your voodooist prepare powders or other items for later use. These are detailed in the appropriate spells' descriptions.

Duration is the length of time the spell stays in effect. "Concentration" means the voodooist must actively concentrate on the spell and can only take simple actions while maintaining it.

Range is the distance at which the spell can take effect. Many voodoo spells enchant

either a specific item or bundle of ingredients (called a conjure bag). Sometimes the item must be kept on the voodooist's person, but other items may need to be placed elsewhere. Since the voodooist must assemble and enchant the item, the range for this type of spell is always "Touch." The spell's description details the actual range of the item's effects once created.

BARON SAMEDI'S PACT

Trait: Spirit

TN: 9

Speed: 4 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

When it's time to cash your chips, it's always nice to be on good terms with the banker. This spell lets the voodooist build up a little good favor with the lord of the dead, Baron Samedi.

To cast this spell, the voodooist creates a small conjure bag while making sacrifices to appease the Baron. The sacrifice consists of a bottle of whiskey—the good stuff, not rotgut—and the bag must contain some form of graveyard dirt. The whiskey is consumed regardless of whether or not the spell is successful. Samedi's a thirsty loa.

This conjure bag cannot be given to another. It only works for the voodooist.





Once the spell is cast, the voodooist must keep the conjure bag on her person for the spell to be effective. Should the bag ever leave her possession, the spell automatically ends. Otherwise, it lasts for one day per level of her spell Aptitude.

While the spell is in effect, the voodooist has a small bit of afterlife assistance from Baron Samedi. When drawing cards to determine if she returns from the dead as a Harrowed, she draws an extra card for every level she has in *Baron Samedi's pact*.

BITTER TONGUE

Trait: Smarts

TN: 5

Speed: 2 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

With this spell, a voodooist creates a conjure bag that puts a curse on the victim that sours his words and makes his smoothest speech sound like five miles of bad road. Just like with beneficial conjure bags, a *bitter tongue* bag is keyed to a specific person and is useless against anyone else.

Unless the target is the town idiot, he's probably not going to volunteer to carry the *bitter tongue* conjure bag. The voodooist must place it in the victim's home or living quarters. For those folks who don't have a spread to call

their own, the bag has to be hidden in their belongings to work. If the bag is removed from its hiding place, the curse is lifted.

The conjure bag gives the victim a negative modifier to all *Mien*-based rolls made, equal to the caster's level in *bitter tongue*. For example, a bag prepared by a voodooist with *bitter tongue* 3 provides its owner a -3 penalty to all the victim's *Mien* rolls.

The bag must contain some small personal belonging of the intended victim, which is related to social interactions. Good examples of such are a comb, a razor, aftershave or perfume, or an earring.

A victim can only suffer from the effect a single *bitter tongue* conjure bag at a time. After the first, any others are ineffective.

BURIED TREASURE

Trait: Cognition

TN: 5

Speed: 4 hours

Duration: Special

Range: Self

One thing about many practitioners of voodoo, they've got a really solid grasp on what's important. This spell is a prime example of that understanding. With the assistance of the loa that they venerate, voodooists have a talent for rooting out "found" money.



When successfully cast, the spell leads the voodooist to a lost or hidden treasure worth an amount of money. Very seldom does this spell turn up a chest of pirate gold or a lost ghost-rock mine. But while the value isn't earthshaking, everyone's heard the one about gift horses and looking in their mouths.

The treasure has a value equal to 1d10 dollars, plus one dollar for every level the voodooist has in the spell. For every raise the voodooist gains over the TN, the treasure's value goes up by an additional 1d10 dollars plus one dollar for each spell level.

Whether or not it's actually money or some other item of value is up to the Marshal. The caster has only a general idea of what type of valuables he might find, but he does know once he sees them. The voodooist knows the location of the treasure, which is always within a single day's journey.

A treasure located in this manner never belongs to anyone. However, there may be a few obstacles for the voodooist to overcome before he can claim his prize. Legends always warn of ghostly guardians watching buried treasure!

Attempts to use this spell more than once in a single week automatically fail.



CEMETERY GATES

Trait: Spirit

TN: 7

Speed: 10 minutes

Duration: Until the next sunrise

Range: Touch

Lately, it seems a lot of folks have been sneaking out of Boot Hill—folks that ought to have stayed put, if you get our drift. With this spell, a voodooist calls on Baron Samedi's influence to protect a portal against trespassing zombies.

Cemetery gates makes an opening impassable to the undead. The spell must be cast



on a door, window, or other opening. It can't be cast on open ground or even a hallway. It only works on a portal of some sort.

For the duration of the spell, all forms of the undead—including walkin' dead, Harrowed, and nosferatu—are unable to pass through the opening. Other abominations find the barrier unpleasant and are stopped by it for a single round. At the end of that time, the creature can pass freely through.

Each casting of the spell affects a single portal or opening. Remember, a zombie stopped at the door can still climb through the window!

As with all voodoo spells, if *cemetery gates* isn't cast in a humfor or shrine, the voodooist suffers a -5 to her spell roll.

CHARM O' SUCCESS

Trait: Smarts

TN: 7

Speed: 6 hours

Duration: 1 week/spell level

Range: Touch

With this spell, the voodooist creates a conjure bag that provides its owner with a supernatural edge in business. As with all conjure bags, each is tailored to a specific person and is useless to anyone else.

As long as the conjure bag is with its owner, he gains a

bonus to all rolls made in a specific *trade* or *professional* Aptitude. The bonus provided by the bag is equal to the voodooist's spell level in *charm o' success*. A bag prepared by a voodooist with *charm o' success* 3 provides its owner with a +3 bonus to the chosen Aptitude.

The *trade* or *professional* Aptitude to be affected is chosen at the time of the bag's creation and can't be changed. The contents of the bag must contain items related to the profession or trade selected. For example, a tailor's bag would contain a needle and thread, while a blacksmith's might hold horseshoe nails.

A person may benefit from a single *charm o' success* conjure bag at a time. Others, even for other Aptitudes, are useless.

CLOUD THE MIND

Trait: Knowledge

TN: 5

Speed: 2 hours

Duration: 1 hour/spell level

Range: Touch

This spell creates a packet of powder that confounds and confuses folks' thinking. People in an area affected by this magic just aren't as mentally aware as normal.

To be effective, the powder must be spread over an area no greater than 10 square feet per level of the voodooist's





spell Aptitude. For example, a voodooist with an Aptitude level of 3 in *cloud the mind* could affect an area up to 30 square feet. Once used in this fashion, the dust is effective for one hour per spell level.

With the exception of the caster, anyone entering the affected area suffers a -2 modifier to all *Cognition*-based Trait and Aptitude rolls per level of the voodooist's spell Aptitude. This effect ends when they leave the area.

Only the voodooist who created the dust can use it. Each packet keeps its potency until used or for one day per level of the voodooist's *cloud the mind* Aptitude, whichever comes first.

Coax

Trait: Smarts

TN: 7

Speed: 4 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

Sometimes a houngan needs someone to see things their way—whether she wants to or not. The power of the loas can be most persuasive.

Coax provides a voodooist with a supernatural ability to influence another individual. While this spell uses conjure bags like many other voodoo spells, it actually requires two such bags: one for the spell recipient and one for the target of the spell's effect. As usual,

each bag is tailored to a specific person and has no benefit or effect if given to another person.

The person seeking to gain the *persuasion* bonus must carry her conjure bag at all times. The voodooist must hide the other conjure bag in the home of the person to be influenced. If the victim's bag is removed from its hiding place or the recipient's bag lost, the spell ends.

The conjure bag gives the recipient a positive modifier to all *persuasion* rolls made against the victim. The bonus is equal to the voodooist's level in *coax*.

The bag for the recipient of the spell's bonus must contain some small personal belonging of the intended victim. The victim's bag must contain an item owned by the spell recipient, embedded in a ball of melted wax. The items must be related to social interaction in some way. Examples of such items can be found in the spell description for *bitter tongue* on page 18.

The voodooist may cast the spell for her own benefit or for someone else. A voodooist may have no more active coax spells at a time than her level in the spell, regardless of the recipients or targets.

Multiple castings for the same recipient and same target are not cumulative.





CONJURE DOCTOR

Trait: Smarts

TN: Special

Speed: 1 hour

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

A voodooist with this spell can heal wounds or cure a normal disease. Supernatural diseases cannot be affected by this spell.

Each casting of the spell affects a single hit location. The voodooist must make a *conjure doctor* spell roll against the TN for the wound level in the location to be affected. If he succeeds, all wounds in that location are completely healed at once.

The location for curing a disease is normally the guts, although certain ones may affect other areas of the body. Check with the Marshal for details.

The voodooist can only cast *conjure doctor* once a day for every level he has in the spell. Unsuccessful castings do count against this daily limit. Unlike many other kinds of spellslingers, a voodooist can heal himself with this spell.

This spell has no effect on abominations or Harrowed characters.

CONJURE DOCTOR

Wound Level	TN
Light	5
Heavy	7
Serious	9
Critical	11
Normal disease	13

CURSE O' FAILURE

Trait: Smarts

TN: 7

Speed: 6 hours

Duration: 1 week/spell level

Range: Touch

With this spell, the voodooist creates a *conjure* bag that puts a curse of failure on a victim's business. Just like with beneficial *conjure* bags, a *curse o' failure* gris-gris is tailored to a specific person and is totally harmless to anyone else.



It's not too likely the target is going to agree to carry a *cursed* bag around with him, so the voodooist must hide it in the victim's place of business. For a victim without a set place of business, it must be placed in his home. If the person doesn't have a permanent home, then the bag must be hidden among his personal belongings. If the conjure bag is removed, the curse is lifted.

The conjure bag gives the victim a negative modifier to all rolls made in a specific *trade* or *professional* Aptitude. This penalty lasts for one week per level of the caster's *curse o' failure* spell level.

The modifier suffered by the victim is equal to the voodooist's spell level in *curse o' failure*. For example, a bag prepared by a voodooist with *curse o' failure* 5 provides its owner with a -5 penalty to the chosen Aptitude.

The *trade* or *professional* Aptitude to be affected is chosen at the time of the bag's creation and can't be changed. The contents of the bag must contain damaged items related to the profession or trade to be affected.

A victim can only suffer from the effect a single *curse o' failure* conjure bag at a time. After the first, any others, even for other Aptitudes, are useless.

DREAM SEND

Trait: Cognition

TN: 5

Speed: 1 hour

Duration: 1 message

Range: 100 miles/spell level

The loa often communicate with the faithful via dreams. With the aid of their patron loa, a few voodooists are able to use a similar ability.

Dream send allows the voodooist to send a short message to another person. The image of the voodooist actually appears in the target's dreams and speaks to him.

The message is very brief—no more than one sentence (of around 10 words) per level of the voodooist's *dream send* Aptitude. The spell doesn't allow two-way communication of any sort.

The voodooist doesn't actually appear in the dream, only her image does. In fact, she has no way of knowing the message was even received—but since only death or powerful magic can stop it, it's usually a safe bet.

The spell can only be attempted once per target per night. The target doesn't need to be asleep at the time the spell is cast, the magic will delays until he eventually does bed down.

If the voodooist has an item belonging to the target or knows her personally, he gets a +2 bonus on his casting roll.





FORETELLIN'

Trait: Cognition

TN: 5

Speed: 30 minutes

Duration: Until the next sunset

Range: 3 feet

Some folks say the gift of foresight is as much a blessing as it is a curse. That may be true, particularly if a cowpoke can't do much about the future except hold on and ride it out. However, a skilled voodooist can sometimes call on favors from the loa to get Fate to swing a fellow's way.

A voodooist can do *foretellin'* on herself as well as others. However, she can only cast the spell on a willing subject.

Now, there's a whole heap of ways voodooists go about seeing the future. Some use tarot cards, some read tea leaves, and others use an odd collection of bones. Regardless of the effect, the *foretellin'* spell is always resolved as follows.

The voodooist rolls her *foretellin'* Aptitude against the spell's TN (5). If successful, she draws one card from the top of a deck of cards, plus one card for every raise. After she's drawn her cards, she chooses one—unless she draws a Black Joker. Black Jokers are automatically chosen. The voodooist has no say in the matter.

Until the next sunset, the person for whom she did the *foretellin'* receives the modifier listed on the table below. Red cards foretell good fortune for the recipient, while black cards speak of danger and trials. The value of the card determines the amount of good fortune or difficulty.

FORETELLIN'

Card	Effect
2-10	Red: Minor success ahead. The hero gains a +1 to all Aptitude rolls for the duration. Black: Minor difficulties to overcome. The hero suffers a -1 penalty to all Aptitude rolls for the duration.
Jack-Ace	Red: Moderate success in the next day. The hero gains a +2 modifier to all Aptitude rolls for the duration. Black: Difficulties ahead. The hero suffers a -2 to all Aptitude rolls for the duration.
Red Joker	Loa's Boon! The hero gains the bonus as for a red face card, plus a draw from the Fate Pot.





Black Joker Loa's Curse! The hero suffers the penalty for a black face card and loses his highest Fate Chip.

GAD

Trait: Smarts

TN: 7

Speed: 8 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

This spell creates a conjure bag that provides the owner with a potent protection against magical attacks. For the bag to be effective, the owner must keep it with her at all times. It doesn't do any good sitting home on the nightstand!

The *gad* protects the owner against evil mojo in a couple of ways.

First, any caster targeting the owner of a *gad* receives a negative modifier to his spell roll equal to the voodooist's level in the *gad* spell. This also applies to any opposed rolls resulting from the spell or hex effects.

Second, the voodooist's level in *gad* directly subtracts from any damage done by a spell or hex. Against spells which only cause Wind, it subtracts directly from the Wind instead. This is in addition to the first effect, so a damaging spell directed at the owner of the *gad* suffers both penalties.

The *gad* is effective against hexes, black magic, and voodoo spells. It provides no protection of any kind against favors or miracles.

The voodooist can only create as many *gads* as she has levels in the spell. Each *gad* is tailored to its owner, and no one else gains any benefit from it.

MALISON

Trait: Spirit

TN: 3

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Range: 5 feet/spell level

With this spell, the voodooist can put the "whammy" or "evil eye" on a person. Most voodoo spells are fairly complex affairs carefully shaping power granted by the loa. This isn't one of those. It's just about the only quick and dirty spell available to the voodooist at the spur of the moment.

With this spell, the voodooist unleashes a minor curse at her victim. There's not a lot of finesse to this spell, and its only effect is to temporarily stun the target.

To cast the spell, the voodooist must be able to see her target while she casts a short, verbal ritual. Don't forget, she still suffers the standard -5 penalty if she's casting the spell outside a shrine or humfor.





If she's successful, her target is stunned, just as if he'd failed a stun check from a wound. He can attempt to recover on each of his Actions by making a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll. The TN is increased by +2 for each raise the voodooist got on the Aptitude roll to cast the spell.

If the caster fails, the spell simply fizzles. However, if she goes bust, she is stunned and must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll to recover.

Malison is very taxing on the voodooist and costs her 1d6 Wind each time she casts the spell. If she loses consciousness as a result of this Wind loss, the *malison* fails.

OGU'S AURA

Trait: Smarts

TN: 9

Speed: 8 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

With this spell, the voodooist creates a conjure bag that provides its owner with magical protection against physical harm.

For *Ogu's aura* to be effective, the spell recipient must carry the conjure bag at all times. Should she lose it, the spell immediately ends. As with all conjure bags, the magic is tuned to one person and simply doesn't work for someone else.

The owner of the conjure bag gains limited defense against physical damage. For every level the voodooist who prepared the bag has in the spell, all damage done to the bag's owner is reduced by -1 point.

The spell does not provide any protection against magical weapons, effects, or spells. These do full damage, just like normal.

POISON POWDER

Trait: Knowledge

TN: 5

Speed: 4 hours

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch (Special)

Using this spell, the voodooist can create small packets of poison dust. The poison can be quite deadly when inhaled, so it's nothing to sneeze at!

A successful casting of this spell makes a single packet of a poison powder. Each packet contains just enough poison to affect a single person.

The poison does 1d6 damage to the victim's guts for every level the voodooist has in the spell. This damage is considered to be magical in nature. However, for the powder to be effective, the victim must breathe it in. It has no effect if it's eaten or injected. Obviously, targets that don't breathe, like walkin' dead and Harrowed, are completely immune.



VOODOO!

The most common method used to deliver the powder is for the user to simply blow it into the victim's face. This requires the user to be within five feet of the target and make a Fair (5) *Nimbleness* roll. If she's successful, the victim gets a snout full of the poison and takes the damage.

Most folks are caught off-guard by a puff of deadly dust and get a good dose before they realize the danger. Even if they hold their breath, the powder is still in their nostrils when they do inhale. Someone wearing a diving suit or similar sealed breathing device is unaffected by the powder.

Otherwise, armor—including magical armor and *Ogu's aura*—is completely useless against *poison powder*.

If the attack roll fails, the powder disperses before it gets to the target and has no effect. Finally, if the user goes bust on the *Nimbleness* roll, she inhales when she should have exhaled and she takes the *poison powder* damage herself!

Only the voodooist can use the packets. She can have no more packets prepared at any one time than her *Aptitude* level in the spell. The poison remains effective for one day per level of the creator's *poison powder* *Aptitude*.





RED-HANDED

Trait: Cognition

TN: 5

Speed: 3 hours

Duration: 1 hour/spell level

Range: 1 mile/spell level

This spell is a good reason for burglars and thieves to stay on a voodooist's good side. With it, the voodooist can track down stolen items and sometimes even identify the thief! Fortunately for the criminal element, few law dogs rely on voodoo for their investigations.

The voodooist must cast the spell at the location the item was stolen from. This usually means a -5 modifier unless the thief was gutsy enough to rob a humfor or shrine! Also, she receives an additional -1 modifier for every day since the theft occurred.

If she's successful, *red-handed* begins guiding her to the item's location, provided it is within the spell's range.

If she gets a raise on the spell roll, she can also identify the thief. However, to do so she must actually touch the stolen item before the end of the spell.

Before a civic-minded voodooist goes volunteering her services to the local sheriff, she'd better think twice. Most townsfolk forget about petty larceny pretty darn quick when confronted with "black magic"!

REVELATION DUST

Trait: Knowledge

TN: 5

Speed: 2 hours

Duration: 1 round/spell level

Range: Touch

This spell creates a small packet of powder which helps extract the truth and penetrate deceptions. The spell creates a single use of a *revelation dust*.

To use the dust, the voodooist must sprinkle it over the target. Then, for the duration of the spell, the target must roll an opposed test of his *Spirit* versus the voodooist's spell Aptitude any time he's asked a question. If he loses, he must answer truthfully. If he wins, he can choose not to answer, but he can't lie if he does. If the target gets a raise, he can lie.

The dust is also handy for uncovering disguises, whether magical or otherwise. When sprinkled on the target, the voodooist rolls her spell Aptitude versus the target's *disguise* or other Aptitude as appropriate. If she wins, she can see through any disguise. (Marshal, we advise you to roll dice even if the target isn't disguised—just to keep the hero guessing!)

Only the voodooist who created the dust can use it. Each packet keeps its potency for one day per level of the voodooist's *revelation dust* Aptitude.



SENDING O' THE DEAD

Trait: Spirit

TN: 11

Speed: 1 day

Duration: 1 week/spell level

Range: 1 mile/spell level

This is a potent curse that touches every aspect of the victim's life. Although it doesn't directly doom the target, many a soul has met his end thanks to this spell.

When successfully cast, *sendin' o' the dead* plagues the victim with malicious and mischievous ghosts that confound nearly every endeavor. For the duration of the spell, the target of the *sendin'* gains the *bad luck* Hindrance.

To cast the spell, the voodooist must have in her possession an item of value belonging to the intended victim. The range listed for the spell is how close the target must be when the spell is cast. Once the spell is in effect, the *bad luck* follows the target anywhere.

The spell is ended if the victim recovers the personal item used in the spell's casting. The spell also requires other costly ingredients and sacrifices totaling \$50 dollars in value.

Multiple castings of this spell on a single target have no additional effect.

SOUL TRAP

Trait: Spirit

TN: 9

Speed: 6 hours

Duration: Special

Range: Touch

This ritual allows a voodooist to create a powerful conjure bag capable of stealing the supernatural essence of powerful abominations.

When successfully cast, the conjure bag allows the voodooist to "count coup" on certain powerful abominations, absorbing a small bit of their power. He gains the same benefit as a Harrowed would. See *Deadlands: The Weird West* for details on counting coup.





When creating the conjure bag, the voodooist must specifically name the abomination from which he seeks to steal the essence. For example, "the hangin' judge outside Albuquerque" or "the night haunt prowling the Big Horn Mountains."

Additionally, if the creature has a specific weakness, a sample must be included in the bag's contents. A bag to capture the essence of a hangin' judge would contain a bit of a hangman's rope and a lawman's badge, for instance.

Once the bag has been filled and the ritual completed, the voodooist has one day to

count coup for each level he has in *soul trap*. After that time, the conjure bag loses its enchantment and is useless.

If the voodooist succeeds in counting coup during that period, the conjure bag traps the essence of the abomination. Should he lose the bag or if it is emptied, he also loses whatever coup power he gained.

A voodooist can only count coup on abominations that are powerful enough to grant it. The Marshal has the details on which ones do. Finally, a voodooist may not gain more coup powers than he has levels in the *soul trap* spell.



SPELL BREAKER

Trait: Spirit

TN: Opposed

Speed: 30 minutes

Duration: Instant

Range: 5 feet

This handy spell lets a voodooist try to dispel the effects of another magician's sorcery. It is only effective against hexes, voodoo, or black magic spells. It has no effect on miracles or favors.

To be effective, the voodooist must make an opposed test of her *spell breaker* Aptitude versus the other caster's Aptitude in the spell she's trying to dispel. If she wins the contest, the target spell ends immediately.

If she gets a raise on her opponent, the spell is warped back onto the original caster if possible. He now suffers the full effects of his own magic, just as if he'd cast it on himself. Of course, if the spell can't affect the caster, ignore this effect.

If the voodooist gets two raises, in addition to rebounding the spell, the caster of the original spell takes 3d6 damage to the guts! Even if the spell can't affect the caster, he still takes the damage in this case.

Now, that all seems pretty powerful, but be warned: Magic this potent is dangerous.

If the voodooist's opponent should get a raise in the

opposed contest, the voodooist suffers the effects of the original spell as well, if possible. If her opponent gets two raises, she gets the spell's effect and takes 3d6 damage to the guts. In either case, the original spell is unbroken.

VOODOO DOLL

Trait: Smarts

TN: 9

Speed: 2 days

Duration: Special

Range: Touch (special)

This spell creates the single item most familiar to those uninitiated with voodoo: a voodoo doll. These potent charms aren't as common among practitioners of voodoo as most folks believe. They're time consuming and difficult to make. However, in spite of the drawbacks, a properly enchanted doll is a still potent weapon.

Each doll can only affect a single person, who must be chosen by the voodooist at the time of creation. The spell requires a small part of the person be included in the doll, usually hair or nail clippings. Additionally, other ingredients and sacrifices totaling \$50 dollars must be used during the construction.

Once the doll is made, the voodooist can use it to cause the target excruciating pain, as long as the person is within one mile per spell level of the





doll. To do so, the voodooist must win an opposed roll of his spell Aptitude versus the target's *Vigor*.

The voodooist does not receive the usual -5 penalty for not being in a humfor or shrine on the opposed spell roll to use the doll. Voodooists who create a doll outside one of the above locations do receive the negative modifier to make the doll in the first place, however. Regardless of where it was created, once it's made the doll is effective no matter where it's used.

If the voodooist is successful, the victim receives a wound level to a hit location of the voodooist's choice. The magic of the doll can't cause a target more than a serious wound. Should the target already have a wound level that high or higher in the chosen location, no wound is inflicted.

If the voodooist fails the contest, there is no effect. If he goes bust, the spell is broken, and the doll is useless.

Each doll can cause 1 wound per spell level the caster has in *voodoo doll* at the time of creation, and a voodooist can have only a single doll at a time. Only the creator can use the voodoo doll.

Even though they normally feel no pain, this spell affects Harrowed. It has no effect on abominations.

WANGA

Trait: Smarts

TN: 9

Speed: 12 hours

Duration: 1 day/spell level

Range: Touch

Even houngans need a little muscle from time to time. This spell makes a normal weapon much more potent for the voodooist. In effect, *wanga* turns a weapon into a special kind of conjure bag.

The spell enchants a single weapon of any type, providing it with a bonus to all damage it causes. When using the *wanga*, the voodooist adds his level in the spell to the damage done. So, a Colt Peacemaker under the effect of a level 5 *wanga* spell would do 3d6+5 damage whenever the voodooist fired it.

The damage inflicted by the weapon does cause Wind damage to Harrowed or other forms of undead, but it's otherwise not considered magical in nature.

In addition to the weapon to be enchanted, the spell requires an additional \$20 dollars worth of ingredients and sacrifices to be expended during the casting.

Only the creator gains the benefits of the *wanga*. In the hands of anyone else, even another voodooist, it has no special abilities. A voodooist may have only a single *wanga* at a time.



DEAD LIMBS



— THE WEIRD WEST —
Trouble A-Brewin'



TROUBLE A-BREWIN

AN ADVENTURE IN THE CRESCENT CITY



This adventure leads the posse on a hunt for a sinister opponent in New Orleans, who leads them to a final confrontation in the Louisiana bayous. You can use this tale to introduce your posse to the Mississippi, or you can sneak it into an ongoing campaign.

THE STORY SO FAR

Lucien Crepin arrived in New Orleans from Haiti in the summer of 1866. He'd been drawn to New Orleans by LaCroix's influence there—not that he had any intention of working for the rail baron.

Crepin had heard rumors of LaCroix's dark practices and figured any city that would

allow someone like LaCroix to hold such a prominent position would probably turn a blind eye to him as well. You see, like LaCroix, he was a bokkor, a practitioner of evil voodoo magic.

He'd been forced to flee Haiti when the extent of his evil came to light. While the island has more than its share of black magicians, few were as open or extreme about their practices as Crepin. Zombies and sendings of the dead were trivial evils for him.

For years he'd been practicing blood magic—rituals that require human blood to work. However, Crepin took it another step and began using human sacrifice as part of his magics.



TROUBLE

While such rites gave him tremendous power, they certainly didn't endear him to the average Haitian. Finally, the local inhabitants had enough of his twisted practices. Just ahead of an angry lynch mob, Crepin boarded a ship to New Orleans.

SETTING UP SHOP

Crepin restarted his rituals in New Orleans less than a week after his arrival. As he'd hoped, the first murder didn't draw much attention. The citizens of New Orleans were still shaken from the recent, unexplained mass death of the Union garrison, so most folks

didn't dig too deep into the unknown unless it jumped up and smacked them in the face.

About that time, the city was in the middle of a power struggle between LaCroix's bokkor and the followers of Marie Laveau. Lots of strange things were happening at that time anyway, so initially many of Crepin's acts were blamed on LaCroix's minions.

Crepin was so successful early on that he began to set his sights on overthrowing LaCroix and claiming his empire. However, to do so, he knew he needed much more power.

And more power meant more rituals.

LA CROIX'S WRATH

Pretty soon, folks couldn't ignore the murders. The odd ritual artifacts and drawings found at the scene of each crime quickly drew unwanted attention for Baron LaCroix.

Now, the Baron wasn't above such crimes, not by a long shot. But LaCroix had the sense to keep his dirty laundry out of the public eye and was quite perturbed that people were tying him to the crimes. The last thing he wanted was for enough ruckus to be raised to get the attention of the Texas Rangers.

Using his considerable resources, it didn't take him too long to find out Crepin's



identity. However, LaCroix knew he couldn't simply make Crepin disappear. If he did, fingers would still point at the Baron. Folks would just say he'd gone to ground and would start up again when things cooled off.

Instead, the Baron had Crepin followed. The next time he performed one of his rituals, a group of New Orleans policemen just "happened to be in the neighborhood" and barged in right at the culmination of the rite.

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Crepin was locked up to await a "fair" trial, to be followed immediately by a quick execution, but the bokkor had a few tricks left to play. Within hours of his arrest, he made his move.

No one's sure exactly what happened that night, but the next day when the shift changed, Crepin's cell was empty, and everyone else in the jail was dead. Rumor has it that snakes, spiders, and scorpions were crawling from the mouths of the guards' corpses, but the police put a lid on that quicker than a fellow could spit and say "Howdy!"

Almost as soon as his escape was discovered, a number of businessmen got together and put a sizeable bounty for Crepin's capture—

dead or alive. Just about every kind of gutter scum imaginable strapped on a gun, saddled up, and lit out after Crepin.

It's said that LaCroix lent a hand in finding the escaped murderer, especially since Crepin was caught again by nightfall. Even with him having several hours' head start, a band of vigilantes ran him down in the swamps a few miles northwest of the city.

There the mob skipped the usual legal formalities and strung him up on an old oak on a small island. The vigilantes stayed until he stopped kicking, then left his hanging corpse to rot.

AMBROSIA

The blood magic Crepin had been practicing made him a fair bit harder to put down than a normal cowpoke. With a nudge from the Reckoners, the bokkor's power and corrupt soul seeped into the tree as his life drained from his own dying body.

The oak was soon as twisted as Crepin's black soul, but in the depths of the swamp it had no outlet for its malevolence. There in the bayous, the bokkor's spirit waited for the day he could properly repay the citizens of New Orleans for their "hospitality."

Nine years later, Crepin got his chance.



TROUBLE



A SECRET INGREDIENT

A few months ago, Henri Laborde, a local brewer in New Orleans, was wandering the swamp, searching for a few herbs. He wanted to use them to spice up a new ale he was planning to sell.

Laborde knew nothing of Crepin's lynching nearly 10 years ago, so when he happened on the small island with the oddly twisted oak tree, he had no idea of the history behind it. The spirit of the bokkor subtly influenced Laborde through its magic and drew the man to the tree.

There the brewer found a thick, almost crimson sap flowing from the tree's trunk. The sap was sweet to the taste, and Laborde decided to try mixing it into his own beer.

He has no way of knowing the sap contains the essence of Crepin's evil. Anyone drinking the brew is eventually warped into a tool of the magician's revenge.

Worse yet, the brew is highly addictive, and only a few glasses of it are necessary to bend the will of all but the strongest spirits.

CRIMSON AMBROSIA

Laborde was the first to succumb to the sap, and he devoted himself to spreading the supernatural liquid throughout the region. A side-effect of drinking the tainted

beer causes the victim to eventually transform into a form of human plant life. The process is slow, but Laborde has long lost his humanity.

Laborde realized a few weeks ago that anyone viewing his horrible form would like as not run screaming to the nearest Texas Ranger. Not quite the reaction you want from folks you were trying to sell a drink to! Fortunately for him, there is always scum willing to work for anyone for the right price.

Now, Laborde stays hidden from sight in his brewery, using his lackeys to run his business. He only leaves the brewery one night a week to journey to the tree and fill a few buckets with the sap.

Crimson Ambrosia went into production in New Orleans about a month ago. It's becoming quite popular with the locals, and several have consumed enough to begin feeling its twisted effects. A series of grisly reenactments of Crepin's murders have begun in New Orleans' French Quarter, with four dead so far.

BIG TROUBLE IN N'AWLINS

Two days ago, before the adventure begins, Nathan Parish murdered a French Quarter prostitute named Isabelle. The murder took place in a Gallatin Street brothel called the Gilded Lily.

Possessed by Crepin's spirit, Parish killed Isabelle in the same grisly, ritualistic manner Crepin used 10 years ago. After committing the foul murder, Parish regained control and was sickened by what he saw. He fled the brothel, still spattered in the blood from the murder. Not long after Parish left the Lily, Isabelle's body was found.

Several witnesses saw Parish leave, and a couple even claim to have seen the blood on his clothing. A city-wide manhunt began immediately, and Nathan Parish has been named as the suspect in all four of the murders. So far no one has found Parish.

THE SETUP

The posse may have heard of the murders in a variety of ways. It's big news in the *New Orleans Times*, so anyone with an eye on current events knows Nathan Parish is a suspect in a number of murders in the French Quarter. If a posse member belongs to the Pinkertons or Rangers, his organization may have assigned him to look into the occult nature of the killings.

Regardless of the heroes' backgrounds, the posse is contacted by Sophie Parish, Nathan's older sister. She's certain her brother is innocent, and she fears for his life. One

of her servants brought word of a group of folks who hadn't jumped on the vigilante bandwagon yet: the heroes.

Through a retainer, she invites them to the Parish mansion in the Garden District that afternoon to discuss a business proposition.

They are met by a house servant and led to a lavish sitting room. There, they meet Sophie. She's only 25 herself, and the picture of a Southern belle. There, over a late afternoon tea, she tells them the following:

"Since our parents died of yellow fever three years ago, I have run this house. Nathan, my dear younger brother, is my only living relative. Like every one else in town, I know what the police are saying.

"Let me assure you, I know Nathan, and these accusations against him are false! Nathan would cry when Father whipped the dog. He could never have murdered anyone!

"Nathan is the only family I have left in this world. I cannot bear to suffer his loss.

"Our family is not as wealthy as it once was, but I am prepared to offer you the sum of \$500 if you can find my brother and prove his innocence.

Now, if the posse is a bunch of scoundrels willing to take advantage of a lady in distress, have one of the rogues roll a *persuasion* roll against a Fair (5) TN. If he's successful, he squeezes an extra \$50 dollars out of Sophie's dwindling resources, plus an additional \$50 for each raise.

Sophie fears time is running out for Nathan, and she's desperate for the posse's aid. She's not above begging, pleading, or playing up the "helpless damsel" act to convince the heroes to accept.

CHAPTER ONE: DIGGING UP DIRT

While the posse is downstairs discussing the deal with Sophie, Nathan creeps into his upstairs room. He feels like he's trapped. Everyone in town is looking for him, and the police are calling him a monster. Worse yet, Nathan is pretty certain he *did* kill Isabelle.

Shortly after the posse hears Sophie's plea for help, the meeting is interrupted by the sound of a single pistol shot from upstairs. Sophie and the servants rush to the second floor to see what's going on. There, they find Nathan in his room, dead from a single, close-range shot to the head, a smoking pistol

hanging limply in his lifeless hand. It seems the strain of what he had done had finally become too much for the young man's mind.

Sophie faints dead away, and the servants are unsure of what to do. The posse has a good opportunity to examine the body before the police arrive. Any character who makes a Fair (5) *medicine: any* roll can tell for certain that Nathan's wound was self-inflicted.

Have any hero examining the body make either a *search* or *medicine: any* roll against an Onerous (7) TN. If he succeeds, he finds one of Parish's fingernails is missing. In its place is a dark, scab-like growth. If he examines Parish thoroughly, he finds a similar two inch by two inch patch on his lower back. An Onerous (7) *science: biology* or *survival* roll tells the hero the scab is similar to plant bark! Neither the servants nor Sophie (when she regains consciousness) has any explanation for the strange growths.

The police arrive shortly and are actually fairly satisfied when they learn Nathan killed himself. They all but declare the latest murders solved on the spot! Their investigation is cursory at best, and Nathan's corpse is quickly sent to a local undertaker's.

If the heroes question the

police, this is a good time for them to meet Deputy Abbot (see *Law Dogs*, below).

After the police depart, Sophie tells the heroes she would like them to finish the job she offered. She still believes him innocent and feels shame drove him to take his own life. Although it's too late to save Nathan's life, she asks them to save his name, and her family's.

DOIN' LEGWORK

At this point, the heroes are pretty free to pursue the investigation in whatever manner they desire. In the following sections, we've detailed the clues they can find in their search.

NATHAN PARISH

Asking around, any investigator who makes an Onerous (7) *streetwise* roll learns Nathan Parish was a known alcoholic. However, most folks remember him as a peaceful drunk who'd never raise a hand in anger.

A Hard (9) *streetwise* roll reveals to the posse that Parish frequented a French Quarter bar named Marcel's.

ISABELLE

The victim was known only by her first name: Isabelle. Much like the other victims before her, little is known

about Isabelle, other than she was a working girl at the Gilded Lily, a brothel on Gallatin Street.

The Lily was also the site of her murder. She'd been there for several years, and Nathan Parish had been both her first and last customer the evening of her death.

LAW DOGS

The New Orleans police have an office in the French Quarter. Any posse member who questions the local police officers about the murders finds them uncooperative. After all, they don't need the help of a bunch of vigilantes





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to solve this one! They provide the posse with a minimum of information, nothing the heroes couldn't have found out on their own.

However, shortly after leaving the local office, the posse is approached by Deputy David Abbot, a fat, greasy-looking policeman. Deputy Abbot offers to exchange information for monetary consideration, and Deputy Abbot doesn't come cheap! For each \$5 the posse uses to bribe him, the deputy reveals the following, in order.



Prior to Isabelle's murder, Parish was not under suspicion for the crimes.



At every murder scene, there are signs of some strange inscriptions. Another police officer identified them as related to voodoo, but he didn't know the meanings.



The murders didn't seem to follow any pattern except evidence of rituals was found at every scene. (If the posse presses for dates, feel free to make up dates to fit your campaign timeline. They should all fall

within the past month however.)



Abbot overheard a rumor that some folks are saying the marks on the victims match those used by a voodoo priest, Lucien Crepin—who escaped from jail and disappeared years ago. Parish was too young to have been involved with Crepin, even if his crimes are similar. Abbot knows nothing about Crepin's story.

THE GILDED LILY

At some point, the heroes are likely to visit the Gilded Lily to try to find a few more clues. They are met by Madame Camile, the owner of the Lily. The madame is quite disturbed by the events, but she would like nothing better than a quick solution to the events of the evening. Murders tend to put a damper on business.

When questioned about Nathan Parish, Madame Camile tells the posse:

"Nathan was a frequent visitor. He was always polite and, how shall we say—generous. Nathan was such a gentleman, all the girls adored him. That's why this is such a shock."

I knew Nathan had been drinking when he arrived, but he's always been even more docile when drunk. I never expected he was the man responsible for the murders."

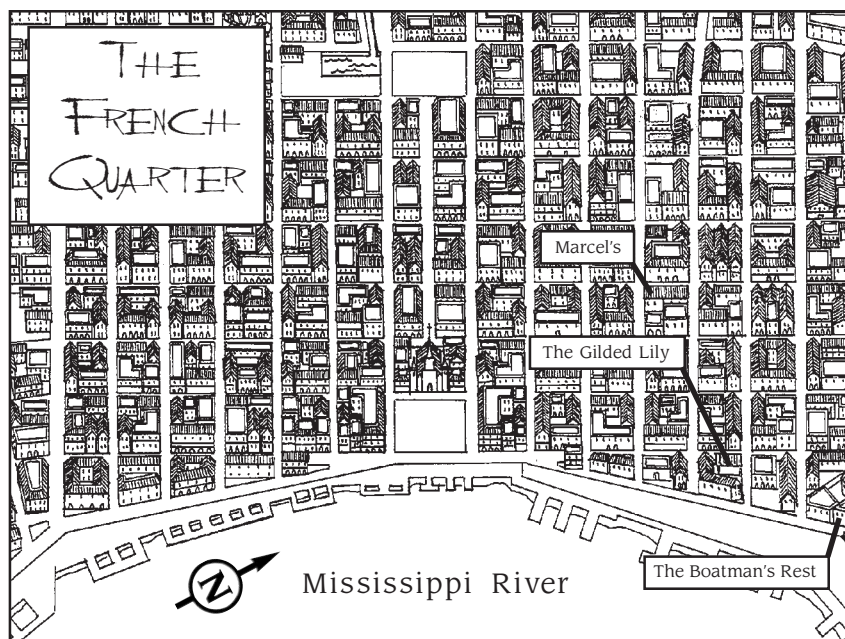
Madame Camile is unsure of Nathan's whereabouts prior to the murder, but she does know he frequently favored a saloon called Marcel's. (Details on Marcel's can be found on page 10.)

If the heroes press her on Nathan's prior visits, they learn he frequently spent the entire night at the Lily and all the girls spoke very highly of him. Should the heroes ask for

dates of his all-night visits, Madame Camile can provide them. (She keeps excellent records. You never know when it might be advantageous to know when an influential politician or wealthy businessman last dropped by!)

If the heroes have the dates of the murders from Patrolman Abbot, they notice several of the dates match, indicating it's highly unlikely Parish committed all the murders!

As long as the posse remains courteous and polite, Madame Camile is very helpful. On the other hand, if the posse is disrespectful or uncouth, Madame Camile requests, in no



uncertain terms, that the group leave. Only a Hard (9) *persuasion* roll can win back her good will at this point.

Madame Camile allows the heroes to view the murder scene. However, the room has been well cleaned, and there are no other clues to be found.

MARCEL'S

This rundown two-story saloon is located on Bourbon Street about a block west of Gallatin. From the fixtures, the posse can tell Marcel's was once a spit-and-polish establishment, but it's obviously changed clientele in the past few years. Most of the patrons are dock workers, riverboat men, and other working-class types.

The owner is a balding man with an ample, middle-aged spread threatening to overflow his belted pants. His name is Ogden Hanks, and he also tends bar most nights—and days for that matter.

Hanks bought the place a few years back, and is finding it's a lot harder to make a profit than he'd first thought. He wanted to change the name, but he couldn't come up with a catchy one, so he left it Marcel's. Any cowpoke who calls Hanks "Marcel" finds the barkeep has a poorly developed sense of humor—and a sore spot about his name, to boot.

He's not really talkative unless the heroes are drinking. If anyone asks for Hank's recommendation on a drink, he offers Crimson Ambrosia at a quarter a glass.

If asked about Parish, Hanks tells the posse:

"Don't know much about the feller—except from what I've seen hereabouts. Parish was pretty much a peaceful drunk. If he got too many under his belt, he'd pass out, like as not.

Seemed decent enough at first, but I guess he just put on a good show, 'cause he was downright prickly after he'd had a few drinks under his belt."

Should the posse ask about changes in Parish's behavior, Hanks looks thoughtful and then says *"None that I can think of."* If questioned on them, he's not sure of Parish's drinking habits either, although he might hazard a guess that he drank Crimson Ambrosia.

THE TIMES

Researching the archives at the *New Orleans Times* is a long and tedious process. However, a patient reader who spends a day at the office and makes an Onerous (7) *search/Knowledge* roll finds all the details on the murders, Crepin's capture, and escape.

The actions of the vigilante mob are also written up—but those didn't get quite the coverage of the rest of the affair. The businessmen involved in the lynching applied a good deal of pressure on the *Times* to suppress the details of the story. Finding this story takes a Hard (9) *search/Knowledge* roll.

The bounty is listed, along with the fact that Crepin died during the chase, somewhere in the bayou to the northwest. Although the lynching isn't mentioned, a reader certainly gets the impression that the mob may have taken matters into its own hands.

Early in the reporting of the murders, there is considerable implication of LaCroix as the responsible party. But after Crepin's capture, the paper retracts its accusations.

The hero can also find a few details on the recent murders as well. This takes Foolproof (3) *search/Knowledge* roll, and about two hours of searching.

The paper lists the names, dates, and locations of the other murders. The information does match with any the posse obtained from Patrolman Abbot, but little else of value is contained in the articles.

If the heroes investigate these other murders, they find little of importance. Nobody knows much about the crimes, nor can they finger a suspect.



WHO DO VODOO?

As the investigation progresses, the voodoo element of the crimes is likely to arise. A Fair (5) *streetwise* roll and an inquiry about voodoo points the posse to the conjure doctor, Doctor John.

Doctor John has one of the best networks of informants in the city. Just about anything the heroes could want to know about anyone, Doctor John could find out for them—for the right price.

For a mere \$25 dollars (or some special service if you want to inject another side adventure here, Marshal), the conjure doctor tells the posse



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about the whole Crepin affair, from his departure from Haiti up to his lynching in the swamp. He also passes on the rumors about LaCroix's involvement, but Doctor John makes sure the posse understands the Baron was innocent of the crime.

If asked about Parish, Doctor John tells them:

"Sure 'nough, that young man did the deed—that pretty young Isabelle, that is. That boy, though, he only did that one. Other folks, they did the others.

"But, you'd better know one t'ing: None of these folks is themselves when they did the killin'. They's mojo a-workin'—bad mojo.

"Crepin, he done come back to pick up where he left off. Somet'ing still binds him to the world o' the living. You want to end this mojo, you find that and sever his ties.

"How do I know this? Why, the spirits they tell me! They also tell me it gonna get worse."

Doctor John finishes his story with a short laugh, and says, *"That one was free. Anyt'ing else is gonna cost."*

You can use Doctor John to point the posse toward any clues they missed, but his knowledge isn't cheap!

BARON LACROIX

The posse may be drawn by the murders to dig into LaCroix's affairs. Anyone asking about LaCroix's involvement is directed to Doctor John, on a Fair (5) *streetwise* roll as above.

The Baron's minions have been watching the heroes' progress closely, ever since they were approached by Sophie Parish. LaCroix wants the murders stopped as badly as anyone. They're drawing attention to his city, and to voodoo in particular. With the success he's enjoying with his railroad, LaCroix doesn't need any distractions—particularly when it's one of the few times he's truly innocent.

Nonetheless, LaCroix is trapped in the same dilemma he faced when Crepin first came to New Orleans. If he or his henchmen take direct action, folks are going to start yelling "Cover up!" and he'll still end up with the blame.

The Baron sees a prime opportunity in the heroes' investigation. If they solve the mystery, his hands stay clean.

BAUNTY

The posse learns of Crepin's story: 1 red chip. The posse determines that Parish couldn't have committed all the murders: 1 white chip.

CHAPTER TWO: DEALIN' WITH THE DEVIL

Give the posse a couple of days or so to wander the city and dig for clues. Then, as they start to wind down, Baron LaCroix makes his move.

After the heroes had a couple of days to investigate the murders, they're contacted by a well-dressed black man with a heavy Caribbean accent. The man approaches them during dinner and introduces himself as Damien Brionne. Brionne tells them he represents a "party interested in their current endeavor," and he asks to speak with them privately.

Have the heroes make *Cognition* checks against a Fair (5) TN. Those that succeed see a large Bayou Vermillion signet ring on Brionne's right hand. The man makes no effort to disguise this from the heroes. In fact, he actually wants them to see the ring.

After making sure the discussion is confidential, Brionne says:

"My employer is very interested in seeing your present investigation succeed. He wishes to assure you he and his organization are innocent

in this matter—as you will no doubt discover.

"However, as a result of certain unfortunate associations between his own religious beliefs and the recent crimes, he feels he is being unjustly linked to the villainy. As he is a man of high standing and profile, such... rumors... are potentially quite damaging to his reputation.

"These whispered lies also prevent my employer from taking an active role in the affair, as his contributions would be considered suspect by all his false accusers.

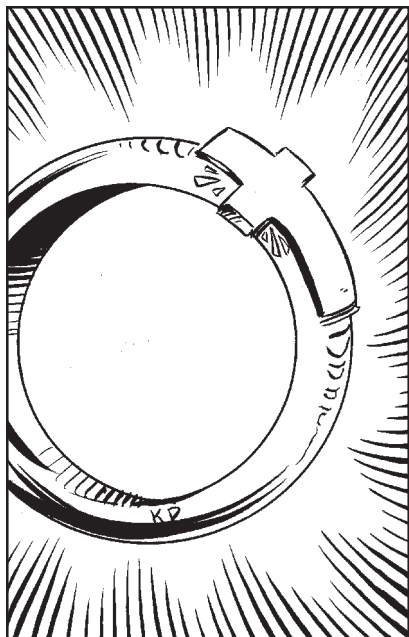
"Since you are already on retainer to the lovely Miss Parish, it would seem your interests in this matter parallel those of my employer.

"As a gesture of good faith and well wishes, he has seen fit to offer you an additional \$250 each to see this through to its conclusion, on top of whatever recompense Miss Parish was able to provide.

"Of course, you may not discuss this arrangement with anyone, as doing so would make your own findings suspect."

Brionne is authorized to go as high as \$500 a person, should the posse haggle.

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Should the heroes accept, Brionne explains his employer can't provide them with too much assistance—for obvious reasons. However, Brionne does give the heroes a slip of paper with the name of a seedy hotel, the Boatman's Rest, written on it.

He tells them another murder occurred less than three hours ago at that address. The police aren't yet aware of it, so the heroes have a chance at a firsthand look at the scene if they hurry. However, the authorities should receive word of the crime in another two hours, so the posse must hurry.

If asked how he knows about the murder, Brionne tells the posse his employer has had eyes watching for the next murder, and he leaves it at that.

Understandably, some of the heroes may have their doubts about Brionne's offer. If they refuse to accept it, Brionne thanks them for their time and leaves.

On his way out, Brionne gives the address slip and information about the murder to the posse as above. LaCroix wants the murders ended, and if the posse does it free of charge, so much the better!

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

It's possible the heroes refuse to follow up on Brionne's lead. Maybe they don't trust LaCroix's motives, or perhaps they're too ethical to work for an evil, voodoo-practicing rail baron. Or maybe they're just being contrary!

Well, if they don't take up the lead at the Boatman's Rest all is not lost. It's going to be a whole Hell of a lot harder, but it's not impossible.

The word hits the streets about the murder the next morning. Bribing the police gets the heroes a single piece of information found at the site for every \$10 dollars spent.

Combing the streets is a little tougher. For every *streetwise* roll that makes an Onerous (7) TN, the heroes

garner one item from the murder scene. Once a hero fails such a roll, he's tapped out his contacts and can gain no further information from *streetwise*. Other posse members can continue to try the roll until they fail as well.

Finally, the undertaker isn't above a little incentive pay either. He lets the cowpokes have a gander at the bodies for a mere \$20. He also fills them in on the details of the deaths if they pad that bribe with an additional \$10.

If all else fails, you can always use a character like Doctor John to put the heroes back on track.

THE BOATMAN'S REST

The hotel Brionne directed the posse to is a ramshackle building near the riverfront west of the French Quarter. As to quality, well, let's just say calling this flophouse a dive is an insult to dives everywhere.

A weasel of a man named Milton Strebeck sits at the front desk. He looks up nervously as the posse enters. Strebeck, although he talks tough, is obviously quite shaken—and with good reason. He's caught between the police and LaCroix. The desk clerk hesitates for a moment, and then says:

"You must be the ones for 2B. Well, go on up, but be quick about it. I'm gettin' the law in an hour, whether you're outta here or not—and I don't care who you're workin' for!"

Strebeck gives the heroes a key to the room, his hands shaking so badly he actually drops them once. He asks them to hurry.

THE MURDER

Jeremiah Monroe, under the influence of Crimson Ambrosia, lured Mark Bird, an old friend to his room. There, he ambushed him and carried out the rituals.

After doing so, his mind cleared, and he was greeted with the horrible scene. Monroe staggered back away from Bird's corpse, tripped and fell out the window to the alley below. The fall broke his neck, killing him immediately. As yet, his body is undiscovered.

AT THE SCENE

Monroe's room is on the second floor, at the end of the hall. An occasional oil lamp provides minimal light in the hallway. It's obvious folks don't choose the Boatman's Rest for its five-star rooms!

The key lets the posse into a tiny room that stinks of blood and death. The room is



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sparsely furnished, containing only a bed and a night stand. Other than the door, a single open window lets out into a back alley two stories down.

Laid out on the single, filthy mattress is the body of a man. The man is tied down and has obviously been used as a sacrifice in some horrible ritual. Strange symbols have been carved into his chest and forehead and herbs, candles, and cups of blood surround the mattress.

All heroes viewing this scene must make a Fair (5) *guts* check.

Provided they're looking in the right places and make the required rolls, the heroes uncover the following clues:

 Faith: voodoo: Any hero with this Aptitude recognizes the trappings of evil voodoo at work. She doesn't even have to make a roll. However, it's unlike any she's seen before.

 Academia: occult: Fair (5). See *faith*: voodoo, above.

 Medicine: general or surgery: Fair (5). The man's death was caused by deep cuts to his throat and wrists.

 Medicine: (any): Hard (9). The symbols carved into the victim's chest were administered while he was still alive and kicking.

 Search: Fair (5). Any hero searching the room finds a nearly empty bucket of a reddish liquid next to the open window. Inspection reveals it to be some type of beer. If the heroes have tasted Crimson Ambrosia at Marcel's, they recognize it immediately.

 Search: Onerous (7). In a bundle of bags underneath the bed, the hero finds a Bible. Inside the front page is a gift inscription noting the Bible was presented to Jeremiah Monroe on June 15, 1871. The book is dog-eared and well worn. With the exception of his drinking habit, Monroe was a religious man.

 Search: Fair (5). Any cowpoke searching the murder victim finds a wallet containing seaman's papers identifying him as Mark Bird.

OUT THE WINDOW

Any hero looking out the window sees a fall of a good 20 to 25 feet to a cobblestone alley. She also sees yet another shocking sight: the body of a man laying in a heap on the ground directly beneath the window.

If the heroes go to investigate, they find Jeremiah Monroe. He is quite dead. The cause of death is obvious: a broken neck, caused by the fall from the hotel window.

Any hero who gets within a few feet of Monroe's body should make a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll. Those who succeed get a strong whiff of beer rolling off him.

The posse also finds the man's hands and arms are covered in blood—and not his own. The carving knife he used to commit the horrible deed lies nearby, also covered in blood.

A quick search of the man's clothes turns up his own seaman's papers, naming him as Jeremiah Monroe.

If a hero examines Monroe's body before it's carted off to the undertakers, have her make an Onerous (7) *Cognition* roll or a Fair (5) *medicine* check—whichever favors the hero. Should she succeed, she notices Monroe has a bark-like growth on his left forearm, similar to the patches on Parish.



BACK TO STREBECK

Should the heroes question the desk clerk, they find him evasive. It's just his nature. Plus, New Orleans is not the place to be giving out information to the first sobduster that asks a probing question. If prompted, however, he can provide the following information on the chart below with a successful *persuasion* roll. After he's answered a few questions, Strebeck all but begs the posse to get out so he can fetch the authorities. If they don't, he says he'll get them anyway and let the heroes explain why they're here!



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STREBECK

- TN Information
- 3 Jeremiah Monroe was a sailor or boatman of some sort. He had rented rooms in the Boatman's Rest before. He'd never been violent, and he'd definitely never killed anyone!
- 5 Strebeck had seen Monroe and Mark Bird together before. He was under the impression they knew each other well.
- 7 Strebeck saw Monroe return to his room in the hotel a few hours ago carrying a pail of beer. He doesn't know the name of the bar he came from, but he's sure it was nearby.

ON THE STREETS

Some legwork turns up other information. Have any hero who asks around about Monroe make a *streetwise* or *persuasion* roll, then compare the result with the clues on the Legwork Table. Other than this information, the posse learns little else about either man. Both were drifters without many ties to folks in New Orleans.

LEGWORK

- TN Information
- 3 Jeremiah Monroe and Mark Bird were good friends from years back. They were both sailors and got their start on the Mississippi.
- 5 Monroe arrived in New Orleans about one week ago. Before then, he'd been out of town for almost four months on a voyage.
- 7 Monroe was a Baptist and pretty devout, too. He carried his Bible with him everywhere he went. His only major failing was his drinking habit.
- 9 Monroe was seen coming out of Marcel's a couple of hours before the murder. He was carrying a metal pail with some sort of beer in it.

BOUNTY

Posse learns that Monroe was at Marcel's prior to the murder: 1 white chip. Posse finds evidence of Crimson Ambrosia at the crime scene: 1 white chip.

CHAPTER THREE: BAR-HOPPING

Hopefully, by this time the heroes have a clue there's something rotten in Marcel's saloon. If they don't, you may need to nudge them in the right direction.

Doctor John is a good way to do this. If they haven't made contact with him, a shadowy informant from LaCroix can help them out.

HEY, BARTENDER!

Hanks confirms Monroe recently picked up a pail of beer from him. If asked the type, the bartender answers immediately Crimson Ambrosia. He tells the posse Monroe picked up a taste for the brew his first night back in town and was good for a pail a day since then—and more at night.

Should the heroes question him about Monroe's behavior, his reply is remarkably similar to the one he gave about Nathan Parish: a good man, but a bit surly when he started drinking.

At this point, he asks the heroes what they're having (if they've not already ordered.) If they don't have a drink, Hanks makes it pretty clear he's only has time to talk to *paying* customers!

CRIMSON AMBROSIA

If the course of the conversation turns to Crimson Ambrosia, Hanks seems to cheer up a little. He tells the heroes it's quickly becoming his best seller.

"Right now, the brewery is only selling to me to see how the beer does. But, this stuff is doin' so well, I expects Laborde's to start distributing it across the city—if not the state!"

"I tell you, the kegs are moving so fast I'm getting deliveries about every two days now. In fact, I'm about out already. Good thing I'm due one tomorrow."

If the heroes ask, Hanks says he doesn't know the location of Laborde's brewery—only that it's on the river.

Looking around, the posse can see a number of patrons downing glasses of Crimson Ambrosia. None of the drinkers look threatening, but have anyone watching closely make an Hard (9) *Cognition* roll to catch sight of a patch of scaly, bark-like scab on the back of one of the customer's necks.

Hanks talks to the posse a little longer before moving on. Should the heroes hint at suspicions about Crimson Ambrosia, the bartender looks at them like they're crazy, tells them as much, and moves to serve someone else.

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BOUNCERS

Any hero that gets rowdy in Marcel's finds himself faced with Hanks' two bouncers, Hannibal and Caesar Otis.

These walking twin mountains don't say much, it distracts them from their one true joy in life: busting the heads of smaller folks. And given their size, that's just about everyone.

Neither bouncer carries a gun, but Hanks keeps a sawed-off shotgun underneath the bar. If a fight starts getting out of hand, he fires one barrel in the air as a warning shot and the next as a lesson—to the friends of the dead troublemaker, that is!

HANNIBAL & CAESAR

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:2d8, S:3d12, Q:2d8, V:2d12

Fightin': brawlin' 5d8,

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d4, M:4d10, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d8

Guts 3d8, overawe 4d10

Edges: Brawny, sand 2, thick skinned, tough as nails 3

Hindrances: Illiterate, mean as a rattler

Pace: 8

Wind: 20

Size: 7

Gear: Brass knuckles (STR+1d4) and really big fists!

Description: The twin brothers are mountains of muscle with shaved heads and dull stares.

A FACE IN THE CROWD

While the posse is talking to Hanks, have the heroes make an Incredible (11) *Cognition* roll. The cowpoke who succeeds (or who gets the highest result, if more than one makes the roll) notices a shady looking man paying an unusual amount of attention to the posse's questions.

The man is dressed in a well-worn jacket and a battered hat. He's sitting near the posse, sipping a glass of Crimson Ambrosia.

Laborde has caught wind of the posse's interest in his scheme, and he's sent one of his thugs, Luther Pierce, to keep an eye on them. The man is addicted to Laborde's beer and under Crepin's influence.

If the heroes approach him, he simply says he thought he recognized one of them, but he was mistaken. Luther reveals nothing else, and he doesn't allow the posse to provoke him into a fight in a public place.

Have the heroes make a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll if they confront him. Those who succeed can make out the telltale bark-like scabs on his left wrist and right ear.

If the posse follows Luther, he wanders deep into the darker parts of the French Quarter. Have the heroes make an Onerous (7) *sneak* roll.

If they fail, he leads them down a darkened back alley.

There, more of Laborde's henchman have set up an ambush for the posse—see A Alleyway Ambush, below. If they succeed, he wanders around and eventually ends up at Laborde's Brewery (see page 24).

Should Pierce escape the posse's notice, he leaves after the posse talks to Hanks.

ALLEYWAY AMBUSH

If Luther leads the heroes into the ambush, they're in for a tough fight.

Luther stumbles haphazardly down a dark, cobblestoned alleyway. Crates and garbage line the sides of the street. He staggers forward a few steps, loses his balance and flops to the ground.

Actually he's not the least bit intoxicated. His staggering fall is the cue for the ambush. The darkness around the posse erupts with shotgun blasts!

Have the heroes make surprise checks—normally that's an Incredible (II) *Cognition* check, but if they've mentioned they're watching for trouble, you can reduce that to a Fair (5) TN. Those who succeed notice a movement in the shadows and can *dodge* or make another maneuver which requires a single action to perform. Those who fail just have to tough it out and hope they're bulletproof!



After the initial shots, the thugs continue to reload and use their shotguns unless they're engaged in *fightin'* combat, in which case they use the shotguns as clubs instead. Luther draws a .32 from inside his belt and begins plinking at the heroes.

The gunmen are under the influence of Crimson Ambrosia. They automatically succeed at all *guts* rolls and fight to the death.

Luther is also influenced, but he's got a special assignment to gather as much information on the posse as he can and report back to Laborde. He spends a single



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round slinging lead at the group before hightailing it out of the alley. If a hero chases him, though, Luther fights to the death. He refuses to reveal anything about his boss or Crimson Ambrosia.

There is one bushwacker in the ambush for every member of the posse, plus Luther

LUTHER PIERCE

A down-on-his-luck boatman, alcohol had long been his refuge from the world. Luther was one of Laborde's first "converts." Most of his torso and upper arms are completely covered in bark, but his exposed flesh is still clear. Laborde uses him to spy on the outside world.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, S:3d6,
Q:2d8, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 2d6, shootin':
pistol 3d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d6, M:2d6,
Sm:2d6, Sp:2d4

Scrutinize 2d8, trade: flat
boatman 3d6

Edges: Thick skinned

Hindrances: None

Pace: 6

Wind: NA

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1. The thick bark on his chest gives Luther 1 level of Armor for all hits to the guts and gizzards.

Terror: 5 (when his torso is exposed)

Thick-Skinned: Luther's pain nerve endings are completely dulled. He suffers no modifiers for two levels of wounds.

Gear: .32 pistol and 12 bullets

Description: Pierce is a thin, weasely man with a narrow, black mustache.

BUSHWACKERS

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, S:3d6,
Q:2d8, V:4d8

Fightin': brawlin' 2d6, shootin':
shotgun 3d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d6, M:2d6,
Sm:2d6, Sp:2d4

Edges: None

Hindrances: None

Pace: 6

Wind: NA

Gear: Shotgun and 10 shells

WHO ARE THESE GUNS?

If the posse defeats the bushwackers, they find nothing on the bodies except the guns, ammunition, and clothing.

However, have any cowpoke checking the bodies make a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll. If she succeeds, she finds a Crimson Ambrosia label stuck to the sole of one of the bushwackers' shoes. It is actually glued to the sole. He stepped on it in the brewery while the glue was fresh.

Also, any hero examining the dead men should roll an Onerous (7) *medicine* or *Cognition* check. If he makes it, he notices every one of the

bushwackers, as well as Luther, have large patches of the bark-like growths on their bodies.

The ambush takes place in one of the worst parts of the Quarter, so the posse has a good 30 minutes before the police arrive.

BOUNTY

The posse learns the name of Laborde's Brewery: 1 white chip.

The posse notices Pierce: 1 white chip.

The posse defeats the ambush and stops Pierce: 1 red chip.

The posse defeats the ambush, but Pierce escapes: 1 white chip.

CHAPTER FOUR: STRANGE BREW

By this time, the posse should have pieced together enough clues to lead them to Laborde's brewery. A clever or posse may even head here based on clues they picked up in Chapter One. That's fine.

The brewery is located at Celeste Street, near St. Mary, on the riverfront. The building is a slaughterhouse Laborde purchased and converted to a brewery. Even though a few operational slaughterhouses are nearby, for the most part the brewery is surrounded by

empty and decaying buildings.

The front has a loading dock with kegs and crates on it. A pair of double doors allow large shipments to be moved in and out of the building, and a small office door also opens on to the dock. It has a small door out back as well.

DAYTIME VISITS

If the heroes drop by the brewery during the working day, they have absolutely no luck at getting in to look around. The guards and workmen have very strict orders about allowing no one into the building.

No matter what approach the heroes try, they can't talk their way into the brewery. Of course, if you feel they had a really clever idea, you can still award them a Fate Chip!

The warping influence of the hanging tree sap protects the thugs against even magical attempts to persuade them.

Short of a raid by the police or Texas Rangers, nobody gets into the brewery without a fight. Should the heroes convince one of those agencies to conduct a search of the premises, Laborde scoops up the incriminating evidence in Storeroom A and drops through the trap door. The heroes are left with explaining to a group of angry lawmen why they conducted the raid in the first place!

AFTER DARK

At night, it's a different story. The brewery is still guarded, but there are a whole lot fewer eyes watching the place.

The front of the building is lit by gas lamps, but the sides and dock are completely unlit.

Although the doors are locked, the locks themselves are rather simple, and an Onerous (7) *lockpickin'* roll springs the mechanism.

There are three large windows on each side of the building. All are locked, but a long, thin wire and a Hard (9) *Deftness* roll opens the catch. The window to Storeroom A is securely boarded up.

If Laborde isn't expecting the heroes, the guards are playing cards in the business office when they show up. If Luther warned him about the meddling heroes, his men are hidden around the inside of the brewery waiting from the posse to arrive (see Guards on page 27).

DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

The inside of the brewery reeks of fermenting hops and barley. The floor is covered in puddles of spilled beer. The humidity is oppressive and the temperature inside the building is a good 10° higher than that outside. In general, it's just plain uncomfortable inside the brewery building.

Have any cowpoke entering the building make a Hard (9) *Cognition* check. All that succeed catch a trace of rot underneath the pungent smell of fermentation. The odor is not unlike that of moist, decaying wood.

THE BREWERY

The main room is large and open to the ceiling two stories up. A catwalk runs around the inside of the building and is reached by climbing a set of stairs in the southern corner. Along the ceiling are numerous tracks and pulley assemblies left over from when the building served as a warehouse.

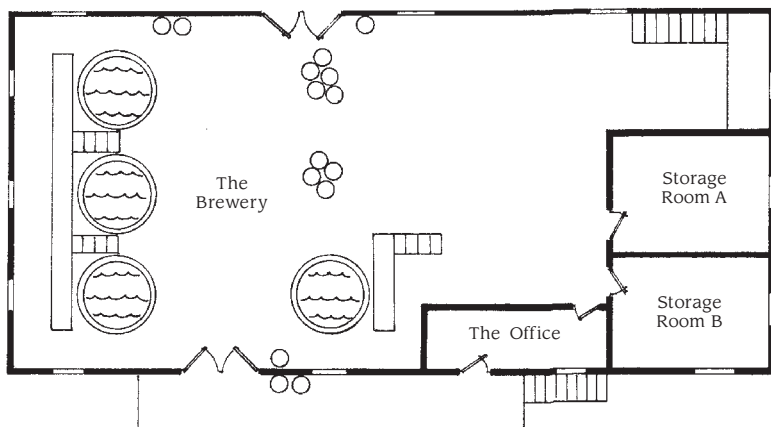
The brewing vats are nearly seven feet tall, and a small walkway runs alongside the tops of them to allow workmen to add the ingredients. On the walkway beside each vat is a small cask of liquid. If a hero opens the cask, she finds a thick, red syrup that looks like a mix of blood and tree sap. This is what Laborde drains from the tree on each of his visits.

Twenty-gallon kegs of finished product are stacked along the walls and in the middle of the room.

During the night, Brutus (see below) is in this room. Laborde positions two of the guards on the walkway if he expects trouble.

LABORDE'S BREWERY

1 inch = 20 feet



THE OFFICE

The office is the only place Laborde's men ever allow a prospective client. A desk and a few chairs sit in the middle of the room, while a couple of file cabinets rest on the eastern wall. While the stench of fermentation hangs in the room, it's nowhere near as bad as in the brewery proper.

Any hero searching the desk should roll an Onerous (7) *search* roll. If he succeeds, he finds a fairly detailed map showing a route to an unnamed location deep in a bayou several miles to the northwest of the city. The cruise drawing of a tree and

the arcane symbols drawn around it should catch the heroes interest.

A review of the records in the filing cabinet tells the posse the brewery belongs to Henri Laborde. It also reveals a complete list of all the bars in the city to which Laborde had sold or was planning to sell Crimson Ambrosia. Also listed are the dates of the transactions. Although over a dozen bars now carry the beer, only Marcel's has had it for longer than a week.

There's also a petty cash box containing \$75 dollars in various bills—if the posse's into petty larceny.



STOREROOM A

The storeroom has been converted into living quarters for Laborde. When the heroes open the door to this room, the stench of rotten vegetation is almost overpowering.

The only light in the room comes from a group of candles on a small voodoo shrine. The window is boarded shut, and cloth has been tacked over the inside of the boards to block all light from the outside. Except for the shrine, the only other thing in the room is a pile of dirt in the corner.

A hero examining the shrine finds a group of clippings from the *New Orleans Times*

detailing each of the recent murders. Also near the shrine is a scrap of dirty and crumpled paper with neat handwriting detailing the ingredients of Crimson Ambrosia. The usual hops, barley, water, yeast, and so on are on the list, along with the words "scarlet sap."

A Hard (9) *faith: voodoo* or Incredible (11) *academia: occult* roll identifies the shrine as belonging to Bakulah-Baka, a fearsome petro loa.

This loa is usually depicted as a horrible ogre dragging chains behind him, inhabiting only the deepest woods. The hero also recalls the loa supposedly had no worshippers because its aspect was so terrifying. Until now, anyway.

Searching the pile of dirt reveals nothing. Laborde was using it as a bed, and an Onerous (7) *trackin'* roll tells a hero just that.

Have each member of the posse make a *search* roll. Whoever cowpoke rolls the highest finds the outline of a trapdoor in the southeastern corner of the room. It leads to a small, hand-dug tunnel underneath the brewery that ends beneath the riverfront docks to the south.

There the posse finds footprints and marks in the river mud where a boat was dragged into the water. A hero

making a successful *trackin'* roll against a Fair (5) TN knows the tracks were made within the last hour or so. Actually, warned by his magic, Laborde left the building just as the posse arrived.

STOREROOM B

This is a genuine storeroom. The nonperishable supplies for brewing are kept here. The heroes could scrounge up all the pipes and rope they need in here, but that's really about it.

GUARDS

Laborde knows folks would string him up faster than decorations at Mardi Gras if they knew what he was up to with his beer, so he always keeps a couple of guards around the brewery. Whether or not he has extra thugs around depends on how much warning Laborde has that the heroes are on his tail.

If the heroes kept their heads down and Laborde isn't expecting them, there are only two armed guards and Brutus at the brewery at any given time during the night.

On the other hand, if Luther observed the posse in Marcel's and escaped to report back to Laborde, then he has beefed up his guards at the brewery. In this case, there are the normal guards, plus one additional guard for every posse member.

BREWERY GUARDS

These particular specimens are in worse shape than the other victims of Crimson Ambrosia. That's why Laborde keeps them at the brewery. The men have large areas of their skin covered by bark, and a couple have hands or feet more like tree limbs or roots than human appendages.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d8, N:2d8, S:3d6,
Q:2d8, V:2d10

Fightin': *brawlin'* 3d8, shootin':
shotgun 3d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d6,
Sm:2d6, Sp:2d4

Edges: None

Hindrances: None

Pace: 8

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1. The thick bark on their torsos gives these fellows 1 level of armor for all hits to the guts, arms and gizzards.

Terror: 7

Thick-Skinned: The guards suffer no modifiers for 2 levels of wounds.

Gear: Double-barrel shotgun and 20 shells.

BRUTUS

The guard dog, known affectionately as "Brutus," is a vicious and bloodthirsty abomination. Brutus was an unpleasant mongrel to begin

with, but once Laborde's men took to feeding him corrupted tree sap, the animal became homicidal. The pure sap has begun to warp the dog's body as well. His teeth and claws are dark brown and snarled, and his hair is slowly being choked out by the thick bark replacing his skin.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:2d8,
Q:2d8, V:4d8

Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak
2d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:2d6, M:2d6,
Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Overawe 2d6, scrutinize 3d4,
search 3d4, trackin' 6d4

Pace: 8

Size: 4

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Claw (STR+1d4),
teeth (STR+1d6)

Thick-Skinned: Brutus
ignores 2 levels of wound
modifiers.

BAUNTY

The heroes defeat the
brewery guards and
Brutus: 1 white chip.

The posse discovers the
"secret ingredient" of
Crimson Ambrosia: 1 white
chip.

The posse discovers the
map to Crepin's tree in
the bayou: 1 red chip.

CHAPTER FIVE: SHAKING THE TREE

When the posse raided his brewery, Laborde lit out of New Orleans. However, his appearance is now so horrific there's no way he could pass as human in any society, the abomination has gone to the last place of refuge left to him: Crepin's hanging tree deep in the bayous.

Hopefully, the posse found the map in the brewery office. With it, they have a clue and a rough guide into the bayous. A little research tells the posse the area marked on the map is in the same region as Crepin's lynching. (If the heroes didn't find the map, you can always fall back on someone like Dr. John to put them on the right track.)

Unless the heroes are set on slogging through mud and water, they have to buy or rent a boat of some sort to follow the map. Even getting to the starting point of the route into the bayous requires them to travel over five miles upriver. Once they're into the backwaters, well, then the fun really begins!

HIRING A GUIDE

Going off half-cocked into the Louisiana bayous isn't the wisest course of action. If the heroes have no skill in this

sort of wilderness, they face a whole boat full of problems.

Luckily, there's no shortage of river rats willing to sign on as guide for a measly \$10. If the heroes need a boat as well, they can get one for another \$5. Should one of the heroes mention who—or rather what—they're after, that price immediately triples!

The guide is fairly competent, with 3d8 in both *trade: boatman* and *survival: swamps*. However, as soon as the first *guts* check is needed, the river rat takes the old Heel-Toe Express outta there!

INTO THE SWAMPS

Fear Level 2

The bayous are dark, even in daylight. Heavy, drooping tree limbs screen out all but a fraction of the sunlight. Spanish moss dangles like cobwebs from gnarled cypress and oak trees.

The brackish water makes it impossible to see more than a few inches beneath its surface. Anything could be hiding less than a foot under the water.

Occasionally, a large water snake glides across the surface of the water and slides between the roots of an ancient cypress. Off in the distance, the sound of a heavy splashing tells the heroes there are larger denizens in the swamp as well.



This trip through the deep bayous should put your posse's nerves on edge, Marshal, so play it up!

NAVIGATING THE BAYOUS

The map the heroes found is only a very rough guide. Actually getting a boat back to the marked destination is pretty tough.

Once the heroes leave the river, the trip takes four hours by boat. Every hour, the person steering the boat has to make an *Onerous (7) trade: boatman* roll or ground the boat. Once grounded, it takes 10-60 minutes to free it and find a clear route.



TROUBLE



If the steersman goes bust on the roll, she's holed the boat, and the heroes have to hoof it.

On foot, the trip's much worse. If the heroes are forced to walk to the site, the trip takes twice as long. The muddy ground makes walking a chore, and the heroes are forced to weave in and around large expanses of open water.

And then there's always quicksand to worry about.

QUICKSAND

Every hour, each cowpoke member on foot must make a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll or find himself up to his knees in the stuff and sinking fast. Getting out takes a Fair (5) *Strength* roll, but the hero has to have something solid to grab onto.

If a hero goes bust on the *Cognition* roll, he gets into the deep stuff before he realizes his danger. The TN for the *Strength* roll is now Hard (9).

CRITTERS

The swamps are teeming with life. It's just not the type of life most people prefer. Cottonmouth snakes, alligators, and biting insects hide in the depths of the bayous. How tough the heroes have it is entirely up to you. They have a big fight on their hands at the end of their little nature walk, so try not to go too rough on them.

AT THE TREE

Fear Level 4

Muddy, sweaty, and tired, the heroes arrive at the location marked on the map. There they find a small rise of land topped by a large, twisted oak tree.

Any hero examining the base of the tree finds a particularly gruesome voodoo shrine. Numerous animals have been sacrificed there: songbirds, small deer, even a young alligator. Laborde always makes an offering when he visits the hanging tree.

Also at the base of the tree opposite the shrine is a syrup tap and pail to drain tree sap from the oak. If a hero opens the tap, a thick, crimson sap begins to pour into the pail. The sap is identical to that in the kegs at the brewery.

Have any cowpoke looking up into the branches of the oak make a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll. Those who succeed see the rotting remnants of a hangman's noose dangling from a lower branch. This is where Crepin was hung. There is no sign of his body at all.

As soon as the posse makes any move to disturb the offerings at the shrine or the noose, Laborde drops from the branches and attacks. Because of his altered form, he's able to hide invisibly against the tree trunk.



After three combat rounds, or as soon as Laborde is killed, whichever comes first, the ground on the island begins to tremble. The tree branches shake violently, and one round later, the hanging tree, animated by the spirit of Crepin, rips itself free from the muddy ground and attacks!

HENRI LABORDE

The man known as Henri Laborde no longer exists. The effects of the corrupted tree sap have altered him into an abomination that is as much plant as human.

His skin is entirely covered by a dark and scabrous bark-

like growth. The bark is cracked and pinkish around his joints, so he can move fairly well.

Laborde's fingers have grown long and pointed, resembling small tree branches, while his feet are gnarled like roots. His face still retains a few features, although they're now distorted. His mouth has become a jagged scar, and his nose is merely a pair of knotholes.

Laborde's power isn't limited to mere freakishness. He's also gained arcane abilities from Crepin's influence.

Laborde was aware of the heroes' approach and has prepared a little surprise. Five



TROUBLE



alligators lurk in the waters around the island and attack when he does. See the main *River o' Blood* sourcebook for the 'gator's stats.

If the posse defeats the abomination formerly known as Laborde, a search of his tattered clothes turns up a silver pocket watch engraved simply "Henri Laborde, 1851."

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:2d10,
Q:2d8, V:4d10

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak 2d8

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d8, M:2d6,
Sm:2d8, Sp:2d10

Faith: black magic (petro
voodoo) 4d10

Pace: 8

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Claws (STR+1d6)

Black Magic: Animal
mastery 4 (glowing eyes),
forewarnin' 3 (animal
entrails), stun 3 (splinters)

Immunity: Laborde is
immune to Wind loss and
wound modifiers.

THE TREE

Crepin has gathered enough power from the rituals conducted in the city to animate the tree he was hung from. The only way to stop the tree and send Crepin's spirit to Hell is to cut the noose from it or destroy the tree itself—which is no easy task!

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8,
S:4d12+6, Q:2d8, V:4d12+4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:2d6, M:2d6,
Sm:4d8, Sp:2d12

Faith: black magic (petro
voodoo) 5d12

Pace: 8

Size: 20

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3

Damage: Branch swat
(STR+2d8)

Immunity: The tree takes
no Wind loss from normal
attacks. It can only be
destroyed by removing the
noose or just plain
turning it into kindling.

AFTERMATH

Assuming the heroes survive, they've still got to get out of the bayou. Once they do, a little investigation finds the effects of Crimson Ambrosia on its victims rapidly fading.

LaCroix honors his word and pays the heroes—but he may be the only one. It takes some pretty fast talking to convince anyone else—even Sophie Parish—that their story is true.

BOUNTY

The posse defeats Laborde:
1 red chip.

The posse destroys Crepin's
hanging tree: 1 blue chip.

Downtown New Orleans, Louisiana, CSA

Places of Interest

1. Confederate Mint
2. Congo Square
3. The French Market
4. Gallatin Street
5. Giannetto's Toys
6. Jackson Square
7. LaLaurie House
8. St. Louis Cathedral
9. St. Louis Hotel
10. Full House
11. The Old Absinthe House
12. Spanish Garrison
13. Sullivan's Retreat
14. Ursuline Convent
15. Banks' Arcade
16. Bayou Vermillion Railyard
17. The Icehouse Skating Rink
18. Johnson's Perfume Factory
19. Leeds' Foundry
20. New Orleans Times
21. Slaughterhouse Row
22. St. Louis No. 1 Cemetery

1 inch = 400 feet

