

and Oceanography Command and other agencies. Hands-on activities are fun and educational for both children and adults, ranging from a mock test control center to a real space shuttle main engine.

Also at StenniSphere is the 1960s cafe, the RockeTeria, where visitors may dine for lunch. Souvenirs or gifts may be purchased at the Space Odyssey Gift Shop.

StenniSphere offers free tours to the public from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and charter tours may be scheduled Monday through Saturday, with

the exception of Christmas Day and New Year's Day when StenniSphere is closed. Tours originate from the Launch Pad tour stop at the Hancock County Welcome Center at Interstate 10, just 45 miles east of New Orleans, and 32 miles west of Gulfport and Mississippi State Highway 49. (*Visitors 18 and older must present a valid identification with photograph, such as a driver's license or passport.*)

For more information, please call 1-800/237-1821 or 1-228/688-2370 or visit www1.ssc.nasa.gov/public/visitors

The Steamboat Iron Mountain

continued from page 16

There are several versions as to what happened on that voyage. Fifty-five passengers and crew were onboard, and two hours out of Vicksburg another steamer, the Iroquois Chief, came close to meeting her own end when she almost collided with the four barges that the Iron Mountain had been towing. They were drifting with the current, clearly a hazard to other ships, clearly an indication that some accident had befallen the Iron Mountain for her barges to be running loose on the river this way.

Some say she struck an obstruction in the river and sank quickly, taking all on board down with her. Others claim that the lines holding the barges had been deliberately cut, a sure sign of a problem. Yet another account has her starting to sink, and passengers and crew seeking safety on the barges she was towing. In some stories, the vessel disappeared completely, swallowed up by the mighty river. Other reports of minor pieces of wreckage having turned up on the Louisiana side of the river are common. River pirates also come into play—it is speculated that they boarded the steamer and killed everyone aboard. A current theory blames the boat's disappearance on a "time slip," a rent in the fabric of space-time. Sounds more like a rent in the fabric of logic!

Almost one hundred years later in 1977,

the Army Corps of Engineers published a booklet entitled "Historic Names and Places on the Lower Mississippi River." The Iron Mountain accident is included and the fact that this occurrence generated several of the above mentioned legends is discussed. According to the booklet, the steamer did run upon a snag and passengers and crew made it to safety as the boat started to sink. When a group of the boat's officers went to check on the wreck the following day, they could not find it. The Iron Mountain had indeed vanished! But not for any arcane or mysterious reasons—the boat had simply floated downriver. This loss was reported and the officers and crew found themselves positions on other steamboats.

A couple of months later, the Iron Mountain was located. Apparently, as a result of the 1882 flood, the wreck of the Iron Mountain had been carried through a break in a levee on the Louisiana side of the river near present-day Omega Landing and deposited in the middle of a field by the receding flood waters!

This explanation certainly clears up the mystery of the disappearance of the Iron Mountain. But it also brings another one to mind . . . how is it possible that, for several months, no one spotted a one hundred and eighty foot long Mississippi River steam boat sitting in the middle of a flat field?!

"Forest Loggers" in Forest

continued from page 17

and their environment for inspiration.

Thirteen months after his first visit to Forest, Binford returned to supervise the hanging of the mural. On May 1, 1941, the *Scott County Times* devoted only a few more lines to the artist and his work. "The woods scene was designed to illustrate both the name of Forest and the lumber industry of the surrounding county." No mention was made of the black workers in the painting, a subject for which Binford would soon become famous.

Given the time, it was inevitable that the subject of race would enter into both the artist's creation and the viewers' perceptions of the murals. Binford re-

ported to the Section of Fine Arts that local lumber company officials were pleased with his work....

Whatever the citizens of Forest might have thought about their new public art, it received high marks from other sources. When it was displayed temporarily in Charlotte, North Carolina, the *Charlotte Observer* praised it enthusiastically. An even warmer endorsement came from an editor of the *Progressive Farmer*, who called it the best painting he had ever seen in a public building.

The Forest mural was the only one that Binford did for the Fine Arts Section, but his work received attention in *Time*, *News-*

Webventuring[®]

by Bill Pitts

I recently watched a show called *Naked Science* on the **National Geographic** channel. This particular episode was called *Death of the Sun*—it explored the origin and future of the star at the center of our solar system. Some of the imagery was astonishing, so I'd like to share three websites with you that show our Sun in a light that some of you may not have seen before.

All addresses current as of post time.

www.nineplanets.org/sol.html

I like the name of this site! It ignores the fact that a few misguided individuals have chosen to demote Pluto to the status of a *dwarf* planet. But that's not why we're here. This website offers basic information about our star.

www.thesurfaceofthesun.com

The science is beyond me, but this site claims that there is a "rocky, calcium ferrite transitional layer" 3,000 miles or 4,800 km below the visible photosphere of our sun! Our sun has a surface? Then, there's "solar moss," two million degrees Fahrenheit gas seen above the sun's photosphere.

<http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/eclipse.html>

During the 1980s, I experienced a partial solar eclipse here in Jackson. It was amazing—on a hot sunny day, when the moon's shadow swept over us, it was like walking into an air-conditioned room! This is a NASA website that catalogues and maps eclipses around the world. By the way, the next total solar eclipse to cross the continental United States is about ten years off—on August 21, 2017. And for those of you with the longevity, Mississippi will experience a total solar eclipse on August 12, 2045. I'll be there—at the Rainwater Observatory in French Camp for this one!

coming Summer 2007:

Webventuring[®] ARCHIVES

week, and *Life* during 1942. The November issue of *Life* reproduced his most famous mural, a 12 foot x 12 foot painting of the Jordan River done for the Shiloh Baptist Church, a black congregation near his Virginia home. At Binford's suggestion, the congregation paid him in produce—two pick-up truck loads of chickens, corn, potatoes, and beets.

A realistic style and local subject matter characterized most of the paintings done by Binford and the other Depression-era muralists. Today, after a recent refurbishing, the Forest mural remains an excellent example of both his work and that of the Fine Arts Section artists as a group.