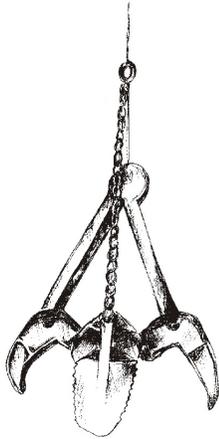


The U.S. Snagboat Montgomery

The Corps carries on a proud heritage that began in 1775 when the Continental Congress authorized the first Chief Engineer. His first task was to build fortifications near Boston at Bunker Hill. In 1802, a corps of engineers was stationed at West Point and constituted the nation's first military academy. The United States Military Academy was under the direction of the Corps of Engineers, until 1866. With the founding of West Point, the Corps began a tradition of military and civil works missions that continues to this day.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*

Today, the United States Army Corps of Engineers is made up of military and civilian engineers, scientists and other specialists. They work together on engineering and environmental matters. Their biologists, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, archaeologists, and other professionals provide engineering services to our nation. Corps' workers plan, design, build, and operate all types of water resource projects such as dams and hydroelectric facilities. They keep rivers clear for navigation. They design and construct military facilities and help with disaster response.

Around 1900, the Corps accepted responsibility for keeping our rivers open for navigation and flood control. During the 1800s, many states made attempts to clear

waterways and make them navigable. The Corps built a large fleet of vessels using the most modern designs available to help fulfill this goal. Snagboats and dredge boats were the Corps' main tool in keeping rivers navigable.

Henry Shreve designed the first steam-powered snagboat in 1829. The *Heliopolis* featured two hulls that were connected side by side. A derrick attached to the two hulls lifted the snags from the river bottom. This double-hull design continued to be used until the early twentieth century when high-strength steel hulls were developed.

The U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*

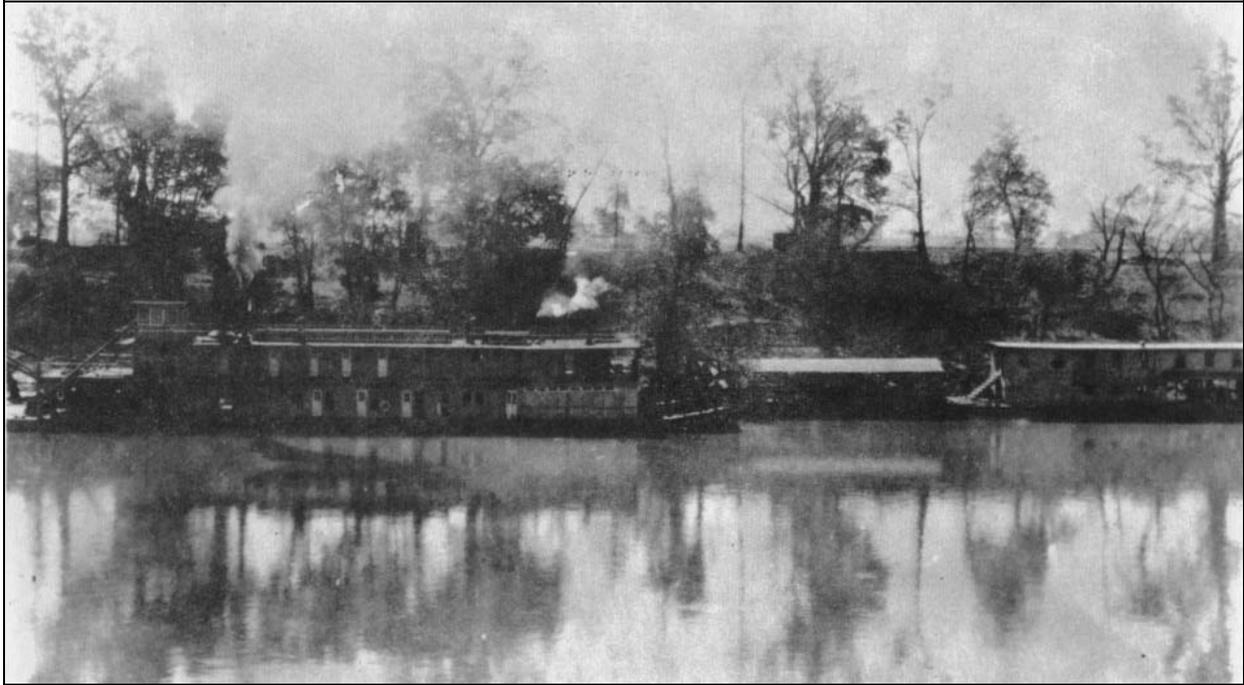
One of the hardest working snagboats in the Southeast was the U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*, which was commissioned by the Montgomery District Corps of Engineers and built in 1926 by the Charleston Dry Dock and Machine Company of Charleston, South Carolina. The boat was based in Montgomery until 1933, when the Montgomery District became part of the Mobile District, and the boat was moved to her new home port of Tuscaloosa. However, she continued to work the waters of the Coosa River system, adding the Black



Shreve's Heliopolis

Warrior-Tombigbee Rivers to her responsibilities. The *Montgomery* pulled snags from these river systems until 1959, when she was transferred to Panama City, Florida. She worked on the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint rivers from 1959 until the end of her career, though her home port was transferred from Panama City to White City, Florida in 1979.

The *Snagboat Montgomery* is a riveted steel sternwheel-propelled vessel with a steel hull and wood superstructure. The overall length, including the sternwheel is approximately 54 meters (178 feet), while the maximum width is approximately 10 meters (34 feet). The depth of the hull is 1.8



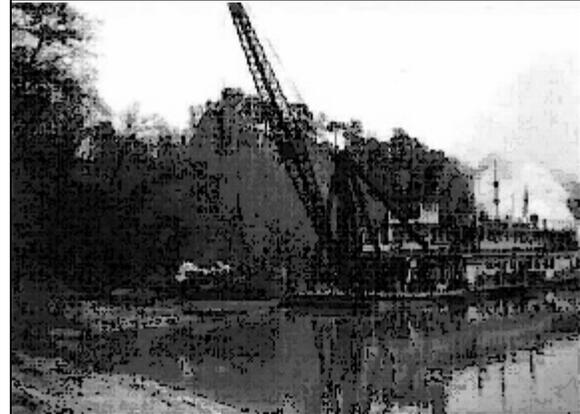
U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery* in 1929

meters (6 feet). The *Montgomery* has three decks. The propelling and snagging machinery, crew quarters, and the engine room are located on the main deck. The second deck contains the galley, officers' quarters, and an office; and the pilothouse at the top of the boat contains controls for the snagging boom and engine room. The boom is operated by two large steam winches; one turns the boom in an arc in front of the boat while the other lifts the snag. The *Montgomery* still has its original Scotch boiler, which created steam to power the boat. Water was heated inside a cylinder within the boiler. The steam produced by the boiler was extracted from the top of the boiler and passed through the main steam line overhead to the engine room in the

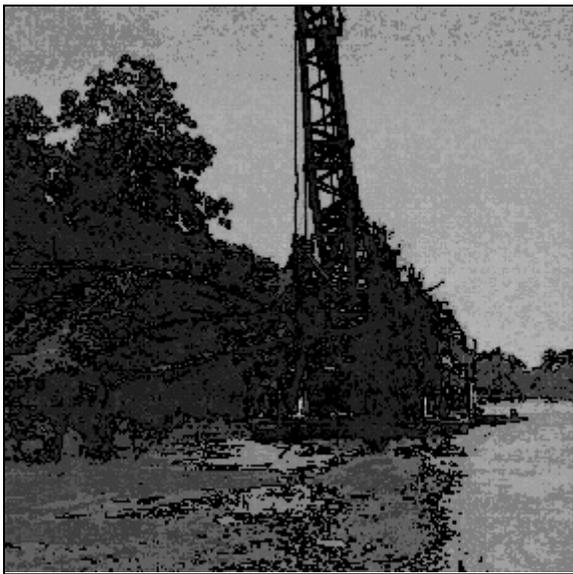
stern. The boiler originally burned coal, but was converted to burn diesel fuel after World War II. The engines are high-pressure, or non-condensing, joy valve engines; and the paddlewheel is constructed of steel and wood and is 5.5 meters (18 feet) in diameter and 6 meters (20 feet) long. One interesting feature of the *Montgomery* is the telegraph machine located in the engine room. The machine has a dial with a hand that points to different possible engine room actions and is the way the pilot originally communicated with the engineers; a similar telegraph is located in the pilot house.

Snagging operations usually began in May of each year. The crews continued

through the end of the year. This was the peak time for river traffic. Snagboats generally operated in tandem with barges and tug (or tow) boats. A barge would be tied to the snagboat. As the snags were lifted, the snagboat would drop them onto the barge. Once the barge was full, a tug boat would take the barge away and leave an empty barge in its place. From January through May of each year, the snagboat would go back to dry dock for repairs.



Montgomery lifting the Chattahoochee



Montgomery lifting a tree

Over the years, the *Montgomery* participated in a number of projects other than her usual snagging work. For example, in early November 1964, the *Montgomery* assisted in raising the remaining section of the Confederate Gunboat *Chattahoochee* from the channel of the Chattahoochee River. The activities are recorded in Master Fleming's daily log of 6 November. He

wrote, "Picking up stern section of Gunboat and Removing it from channel. While picking up Gunboat and trying to work it on the bank some of the upper sections of the boom were sprung." Today the Confederate Gunboat *Chattahoochee* can be seen at the Port Columbus National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus, Georgia.

Steam-powered boats, like the *Montgomery*, dominated transportation and commerce for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, river transportation began experiencing competition from railroads as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The continuing explosion of transportation technology in the twentieth century, including interstate highways, automobiles, trucks, and airplanes, eventually spelled the end of steam-powered boats. When the Corps of Engineers retired the *Montgomery* on 8 November 1982, she was one of only two

The U.S. Snagboat Montgomery



Montgomery being lifted into dry berth

Soon thereafter, the *Montgomery* was again lovingly restored. Today, this National Historic Landmark is one of two remaining steam-powered sternwheel snagboats in the United States.



The U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*

Things to research:

The Port Columbus National Civil War Naval Museum

The Confederate Gunboat *Chattahoochee*

The National Register of Historic Places

National Historic Landmarks Program