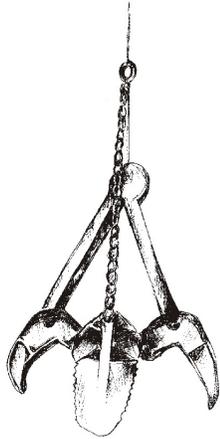


The U.S. Snagboat Montgomery

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.



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

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 20th century when high-strength steel hulls were developed.

The U.S. Snagboat Montgomery



Shreve's *Heliopolis*

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.

**The U.S. Snagboat
*Montgomery***

One of the hardest working snagboats in the Southeast was the U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*. The *Montgomery* was built for and commissioned by the Corps of Engineers. She was built in 1926 by the Charleston Dry Dock and Machine



U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery* in 1929

The U.S. Snagboat *Montgomery*

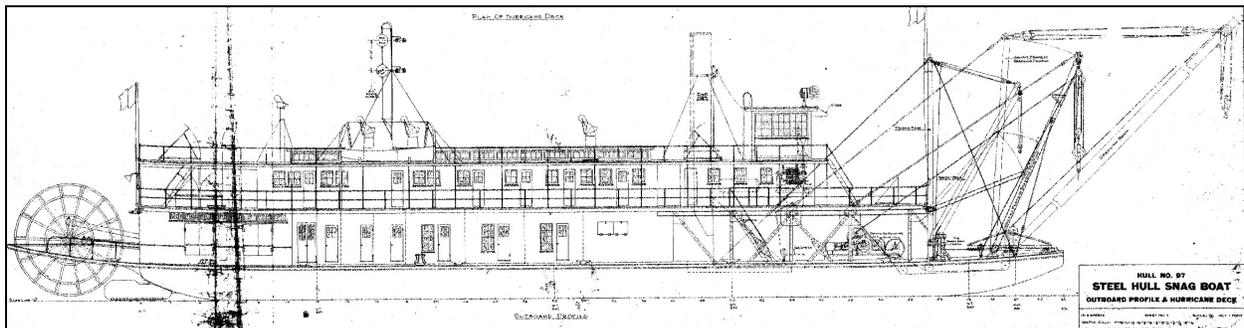
Company of Charleston, South Carolina. From 1926 until 1933, she worked on the Alabama and Coosa rivers. In 1933, the Black Warrior and Tombigbee rivers were added to her responsibilities. She continued pulling snags from these river systems until 1959, when she was transferred to Panama City, Florida. She worked on the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint rivers from 1959 to the end of her career.

The Snagboat *Montgomery* has a riveted steel hull and wood superstructure. Her overall length, including the paddlewheel is approximately 54 meters (177 feet). She is approximately 10 meters wide (about 33 feet). The *Montgomery* has three decks. The steam engine and snagging machinery, crew quarters, and the engine room are located on the main deck. This deck is also called the hurricane deck. The second deck contains the galley or kitchen, officers' quarters, and an office. 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. A winch is a large drum for winding a rope or chain used for hauling or

hoisting. One winch turns the boom in front of the boat while the other lifts the snag. The *Montgomery* still has its original scotch boiler. This boiler created steam to power the boat. Water was heated inside a cylinder within the boiler. The steam made in the boiler rises to the top and passes through steam lines to the engine room. The engine room is located in the stern or back of the boat

When it was first built, the boiler burned coal. After World War II, it was converted to burn fuel. The paddlewheel is made of steel and wood and is 5.5 meters in diameter (18 feet) and 6 meters wide (almost 20 feet). The *Montgomery* has a 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.

The *Mongomery's* crew consisted of officers and deck hands. Each of the officers had an important job. Each usually trained



Original profile drawing of the *Montgomery*

The U.S. Snagboat Montgomery



Telegraph in the engine room

for many years to learn to do his job safely and correctly. The captain of a snagboat was known as the master. He was responsible for making sure everyone did their job. He also took care of the crew. The pilot steered the boat. He had to be very familiar with each river the snagboat worked. The operator ran the snagging equipment. The chief engineer and his assistant operated the steam engines. Their skill kept the boat moving and working. The final officer was the oiler. His only job was keeping all of the machinery oiled properly. This was a very important job.

Deck hands did all sorts of jobs. They cleaned, helped run and repair equipment, and helped with snagging operations. The cook and his helper made three meals a day for the crew. They were two of the busiest people on board.

The Corps of Engineers retired the *Montgomery* on 8 November 1982. She was one of only two snagboats remaining in the United States. On her final day of service, the master wrote of the *Montgomery* in his log: “Men are very sad this day!! This boat has been a Work Horse of the tri-rivers.”

OPERATING LOG		OPERATORS		
POSITION		12 H. SHIFT	8 H. SHIFT	4 H. SHIFT
8 DAY Nov MONTH 82 W.				
TIME (Hours)	ENTRIES			
0600	LEAVE WATKINS RIDGE LOCK WITH DRYING BOAT & BOAT 923 IN TAIL			
1600	DARKER BOAT + EUG CAMPBELL ASSISTING IN TIE UP AT RESERVOIR RIVER BOAT BASIN.			
	CLOSE DOWN + MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR FINAL CLOSE DOWN OF THE SNAGBOAT MONTGOMERY. MEN ARE VERY SAD THIS DAY!! THIS BOAT HAS BEEN A WORK HORSE OF THE TRI-RIVERS.			
NOTE—Make all entries in ink. Line out and initial all errors.				
*The operations requiring small number daily entries can use sheet for several days and report later in this column.				
				REVIEWED (Signature of Supervisor in Charge)

Master's log book entry from 8 November 1982