

MISSISSIPPI GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

*e***BULLETIN**

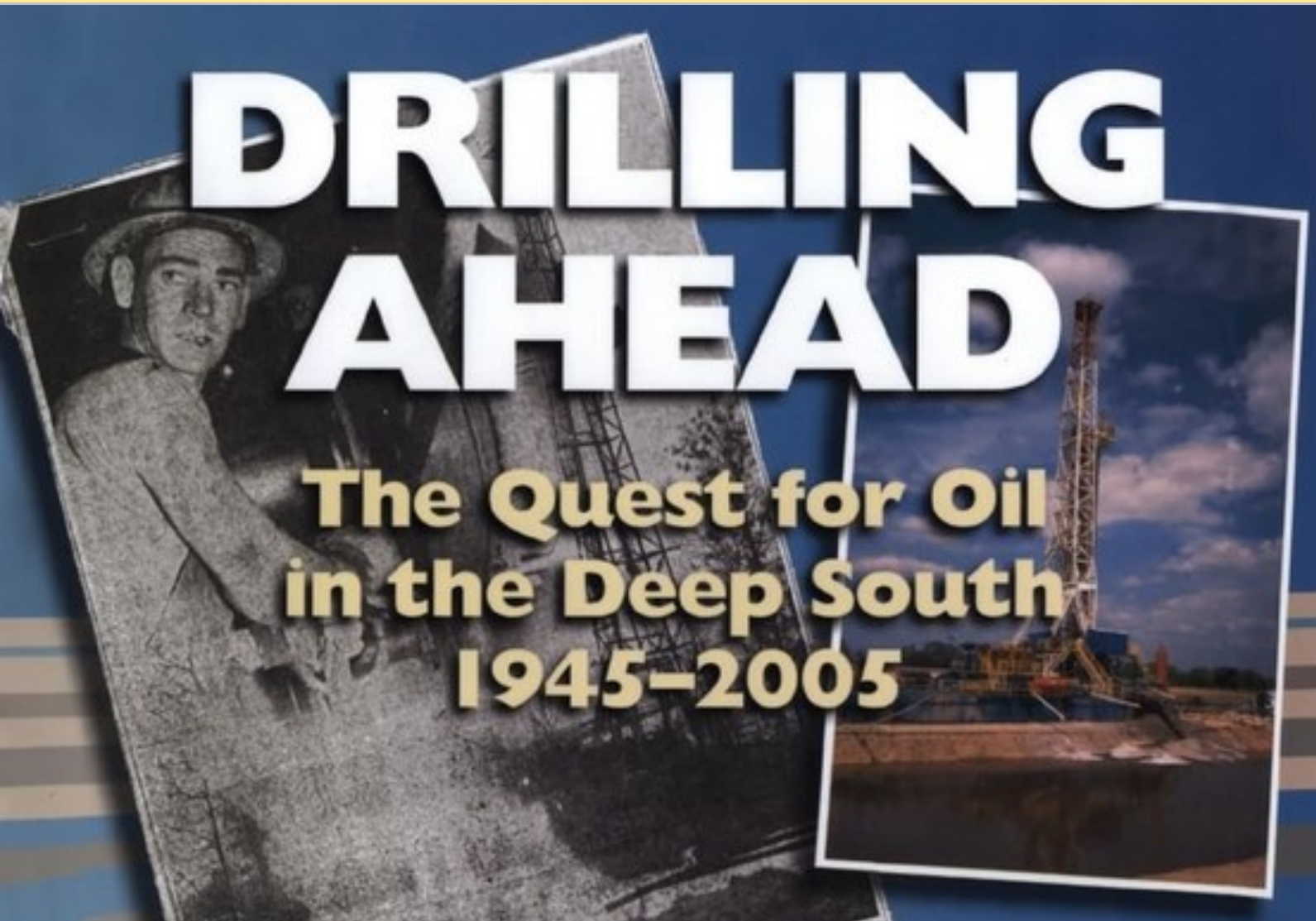
Volume 74

No. 7

March 2026

DRILLING AHEAD

**The Quest for Oil
in the Deep South
1945-2005**



DRILLING AHEAD: THE QUEST FOR OIL IN THE DEEP SOUTH 1945-2005

Alan Cockrell

MISSISSIPPI'S BRANDYWINE WALL

Dr. David Dockery III, RPG



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When	What/Who	Where
September 10	Howard Duhom - Viking Engineering	River Hills - 11:30am
October 8	Ashley Little - IperionX	River Hills - 11:30am
November 12	SPE Sporting Clay Shoot	Providence Hill Farm
December 10	Randy Seright - Polymer Flooding - SPE	River Hills - 11:30am
January 14	Reza Fard - NOV Tuboscope	River Hills - 11:30am
February 11	Natalia Usachenko - Fossil Whales in Mississippi	River Hills – 11:30am
March 11	Alan Cockrell - Drilling Ahead	River Hills – 11:30am
April 8		River Hills - 11:30am
May 13		River Hills - 11:30am
TBD	Spring Fling	TBD

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AAPG Certified Petroleum Geologist

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear MGS Members,

Boland season is officially underway, and I am pleased to report that the request for nominations has been sent out and received. Interviews with this year's nominees will be completed over the coming weeks, and we look forward to celebrating our honorees at the Boland Awards Luncheon on **April 8, 2026**. This annual recognition of excellence remains one of the most meaningful traditions of our Society, and I appreciate everyone who participates in the nomination and review process. If you are interested in serving on the committee, please let me know—expanding the diversity and perspective of the group strengthens the process and enriches our selections.

This week, **GSA** is underway, with Mississippi universities well represented through student and faculty research. Their participation highlights the strength of our academic community and the continued relevance of geoscience across the region.

We are also approaching a busy and energizing stretch for our scientific community. The **Mississippi Academy of Sciences** meeting is fast approaching, offering a valuable opportunity for interdisciplinary engagement and student involvement. **Society awards** Shortly thereafter, **GCAGS GeoGulf** will convene, bringing together geoscientists from across the Gulf Coast to share new research, strengthen collaborations, and advance our regional understanding of energy, resources, and the subsurface.

Lastly, I would like to welcome **Alan Cockrell**, our speaker for this month's meeting to be held on **March 11, 2026**. Alan is a petroleum geologist, Air Force Reserve Lieutenant Colonel (retired), and longtime United Airlines captain whose diverse career has given him a rare, multidimensional perspective on energy, exploration, and the people who shaped the Gulf Coast's resource history. He is the author of *Drilling Ahead: The Quest for Oil in the Deep South, 1945–2005*, a richly detailed account of the post-war oil boom that transformed Mississippi and the broader Gulf Coast. His work blends technical insight with historical narrative, tracing how geology, technology, politics, and personality intersected to drive exploration across our region.

Alan's background—spanning military aviation, commercial flight, and hands-on exploration—makes him uniquely equipped to speak to the evolution of our industry and the human stories behind it. We are fortunate to have him with us this month, and I look forward to the perspective he will bring to our membership.

As always, please pay your dues and consider contributing to the Boland Scholarship Fund. Your support directly strengthens our society and the next generation of geoscientists.

Respectfully,
Tim Palmer, President, Mississippi Geological Society.



FEBRUARY SPEAKER



Mississippi Section

Drilling Ahead: The Quest for Oil in the Deep South, 1945-2005

Alan Cockrell

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

The River Hill Country Club

11:30am



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☀ OPEN

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\$ **85.84**

▼ -8.93 -9.42%

SETTLEMENT PRICE 03/09/2026

\$94.77



Natural Gas Continuous Contract

[+ Watchlist](#)

☀ OPEN

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\$ **3.067**

▼ -0.053 -1.70%

SETTLEMENT PRICE 03/09/2026

\$3.120





MISSISSIPPI OFFICE OF GEOLOGY

New Publications

The Mississippi Office of Geology is pleased to announce the publication of the following maps for the month of December

[OF-356 Geologic Map of the Bovina Quadrangle Hinds and Warren Counties, Mississippi](#)

[Native Lithic Materials of Mississippi](#)

[OF-349 Geologic Map of the Sharon Southeast Quadrangle Rankin, Madison, and Scott Counties, Mississippi](#)

[OF-348 Geologic Map of the Shoccoe Quadrangle Madison and Rankin Counties, Mississippi](#)

[OF-347 Geologic Map of the Canton Quadrangle Madison County, Mississippi](#)





MONTHLY POST

Dr. David Dockery III RPG

MISSISSIPPI'S BRANDYWINE WALL

David T. Dockery III, RPG

Mississippi's Brandywine Wall was first recognized in the early 1800s. State Geologist Eugene Hilgard addressed the so-called structure in his *1860 Report on the Geology and Agriculture of the State of Mississippi*. On page 152 of that book, he stated that weathered sandstones of the Grand Gulf Group [in this case, of the Catahoula Formation] showed "a tendency to cleave at right angles to the plane of stratification; hence such blocks frequently appear in the shape of short angular prisms, often of great regularity." He also noted that this led "to the belief that these forms were the result of human activity."

Though Hilgard addressed the natural causes of these stone structures, like recycled conspiracy theories, the belief that jointing in the Catahoula sandstone was of human origin continued. Figure 1 is the front part of an article from *The New York Times* in 1900, which cites *The Jackson News* and *The New Orleans Picayune* in stating that "One of the scientific puzzles of the State of Mississippi is the 'Brandywine Stone Wall.'" As for the stones of the wall, the Times said, "No man knows how they came there. They may have been there for thousands of years. The builders, *The Jackson News* thinks, were some prehistoric race—it could not be otherwise."

Figure 1

The New York Times

Published: November 7, 1900

MISSISSIPPI'S GREAT WALL.

A Mysterious Structure Whose Builder No One Now Knows.

From The New Orleans Picayune.

One of the scientific puzzles of the State of Mississippi is the "Brandywine Stone Wall." It has long been a problem that is yet unsolved. Some time ago Mr. Thomas Watson of Hazlehurst sent Gov. Longino a pencil drawing of an immense pile of stone in the southeastern portion of Claiborne County, suggesting that the stone might be utilized in building the new Capitol. In a letter which accompanied the drawing Mr. Watson stated that these stones, piled high on each other, cover an area four miles square. Each stone is 6 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 2 feet thick, and they are joined together with an excellent quality of cement. No man knows how they came there. They may have been there for thousands of years. The builders, *The Jackson News* thinks, were some prehistoric race—it could not be otherwise. This



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The *Times* added that: "This structure is supposed to be a continuation of the great 'Chinese wall,' which seems to begin below Raymond, in the southern part of Hinds County, and which is traceable through Copiah. It is broad enough to accommodate two or three wagons abreast, and is one of the wonders of the world." The *Times* cited *The Hazlehurst Courier*, which credited a Mr. Watson with the following account: "He (Mr. Watson) calls it the 'Brandywine Stone Wall,' and says this wonderful and massive structure or parts of the structure of masonry done in stone, which has withstood the ravages of time for perhaps many thousands of years, still stands an enduring relic of a prehistoric civilization and a knowledge of the art of building not inferior in many respects to the present day. These stone buildings lie, for the most part, buried in the earth in the southeastern portion of Claiborne County, and lying against the Copiah County line, on the slopes overlooking the valley of the Brandywine Creek from the west side."

Charles Peabody, curator of European archaeology at the Peabody Museum at Harvard, visited and photographed the Brandywine Wall on July 2, 1901, during his exploration of Indian mounds in Coahoma County, Mississippi. He published two pictures (Figure 2) of the wall in: Peabody, C., 1904, *Exploration of Mounds, Coahoma County, Mississippi* (Appendix II; plates 21-22); *Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University*, volume III, number 2, 63 pages, plates 6-22.



THE "COPIAH COUNTY WALL" OUTCROP NEAR BRANDYWINE, MISSISSIPPI. FROM THE SOUTH.



THE "COPIAH COUNTY WALL" OUTCROP NEAR BRANDYWINE, MISSISSIPPI. LOOKING WEST.

Figure 2. The "Copiah County Wall" photographed on July 2, 1901, in plates 21 and 22 of: Charles Peabody, 1904, *Exploration of Mounds, Coahoma County, Mississippi*, 63 p., 22 pl.: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Appendix 2, plates 21-22.



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The following is his account in Appendix II:

“After the conclusion of the work in Coahoma County in 1901, the writer, in company with Mr. C. W. Clark, of Clarksdale, made an excursion to Brandywine, Claiborne County, Mississippi, for the purpose of looking at the so-called prehistoric wall of that district. July second was spent in examining and photographing the ‘wall.’ As far as can be asserted from such a brief study, the ‘wall’ is a perpendicular stratum of white sandstone of natural formation which presents several outcrops near Brandywine. At the surface the stone is broken by natural cleavage with blocks of a general size of, say 5’5” x 2’6” x 2’ ½”. Between these is a soft deposit of so-called “Cement,” found upon examination at the Mineralogical Museum of Harvard University by Dr. Palache, to consist of decomposed sandstone, produced by weathering possibly, with perhaps some admixture of iron. Other outcrops of a similar formation occur not far distant.”

Field work by the Mississippi Office of Geology has yet to find Mr. Watson’s “immense pile” of stone in Claiborne County or evidence of the Brandywine Stone Wall. In 1988, Ed Luper of the Office of Geology led a fieldtrip to find the Brandywine Wall. The trip started with a visit to Brandywine Methodist Church, established in 1846 (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Chuck Peel (left) and Ed Luper (right) at Brandywine Methodist Church, established in 1846, near the site of the “Brandywine Wall” in southeastern Claiborne County along the west valley wall of Brandywine Creek. Picture (negative 320-12b; Image 1734) taken on June 24, 1988.



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Dr. David Dockery III RPG

The best rock outcrop near the church was found at Rock Falls, a waterfall over Catahoula sandstone on the Little Bayou Pierre. Figure 4 shows Ed Luper standing at the lip of Rock Falls. The rock above the falls contains deep potholes.



Figure 4. Ed Luper standing on Rock Falls on Little Bayou Pierre in the SE/4, SE/4, Section 28, T. 11 N., R. 4 E. in Claiborne County near Brandywine Church. Picture (negative 320-25b; Image 1735) taken on June 24, 1988.

In Figure 5, I am standing in a pothole so deep that only my head can be seen above the surface, buried in Mississippi's Brandywine Wall.



Figure 5. David Dockery standing in a pothole in the Catahoula sandstone at Rock Falls on Little Bayou Pierre in Claiborne County. The pothole is so deep that only his head is visible. Picture (negative 320-42b; Image 1736) taken on June 24, 1988.



GEOLOGY POST

ARTICLES, PAPERS or NEWS?

ATTENTION!!!!!! Industry, Professors and Students:

I am looking for more content from the industry and our schools.

Submissions can include anything from professional papers, thesis abstracts, job opportunities to pictures. Anything!!!!

If you have any information or news you would like to share with the Society **PLEASE** email them to the MGS Editor at:

mcaton13@yahoo.com

Thanks & Regards,

Matt Caton
Editor

GEO LINK POST

USGS TAPESTRY OF TIME AND TERRAIN <http://tapestry.usgs.gov> The CCGS is donating to all of the 5th and 6th grade schools in the Coastal Bend. Check it out—it is a spectacular map. You might want a framed one for your own office. The one in my office has glass and a metal frame, and it cost \$400 and it does not look as good as the ones we are giving to the schools. Call Owen 510-6224 if you want one for your office for \$150. Duncan, Mike, Chris, Dave, Bob Randy, Seb., Kevin, Ken, Craig, Patrick, Robert.

FREE TEXAS TOPO'S <http://www.tnris.state.tx.us/digital.htm> these are TIFF files from your state government that can be downloaded and printed. You can add them to SMT by converting them first in Globalmapper. Other digital data as well.

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<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html> Astronomy picture of the day — awesome. I click this page everyday.

<http://www.spacimaging.com/gallery/ioweek/iow.htm> Amazing satellite images. Check out the gallery.

<http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/seg/topo/globegal.shtml> More great maps to share with kids and students.

www.geo.org Don't forget we have our own web page.

<http://micro.magneet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceoptiscu/owersofl0/>

<http://asterweb.jpl.nasa.gov/galery/default.htm> Great satellite images of volcanoes

<http://terra.nasa.gov/gallery/> More here

www.ermapper.com They have a great free downloadable viewer for TIFF and other graphic files called ER Viewer.

www.drillinginfo.com This is an incredible (subscription) well and completion data service for independents. Can be demo'ed for free.

<http://terraserver.com/> Go here to download free aerial photo images that can be plotted under your digital land and well data. Images down to 1 meter resolution, searchable by Lat Long coordinate. Useful for resolving well location questions.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnmf/volcanocams/msh/> This is a live cam of Mt. St. Helens refreshed every 5 minutes. At the bottom are old videos of past eruptions in this cycle. It is worth a watch especially now.



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