

## Natchez Trace

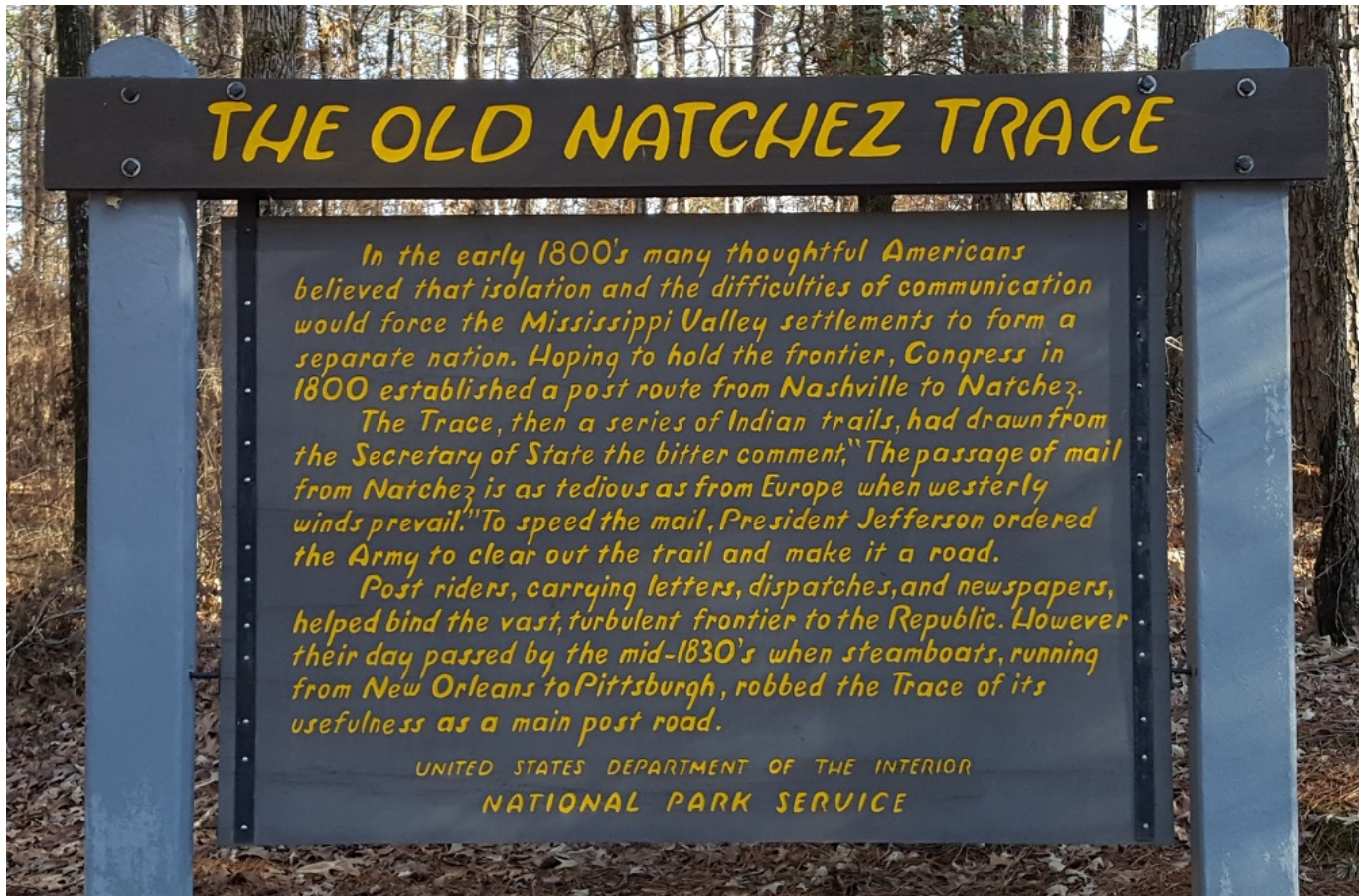
*Saturday, January 21st*

On Saturday, upon the advice of both my hosts and my RV'ing aunt and uncle, I headed down the Natchez Trace. I started at the very beginning and planned on following it to Jackson, Mississippi. Not quite the whole length but most of it.



*The Natchez Trace.*

Let's start with one of the last signs I saw:



*"In the early 1800's many thoughtful Americans believed that isolation and the difficulties of communication would force the Mississippi Valley settlements to form a separate nation. Hoping to hold the frontier, Congress in 1800 established a post route from Nashville to Natchez.*

*The Trace, then a series of Indian trails, had drawn from the Secretary of State the bitter comment, "the passage of mail from Natchez is as tedious as from Europe when westerly winds prevail." To speed the mail, President Jefferson ordered the Army to clear out the trail and make it a road.*

*Post riders, carrying letters, dispatches, and newspapers, helped bind the vast, turbulent frontier to the Republic. However their day passed by the mid-1830's when steamboats,*

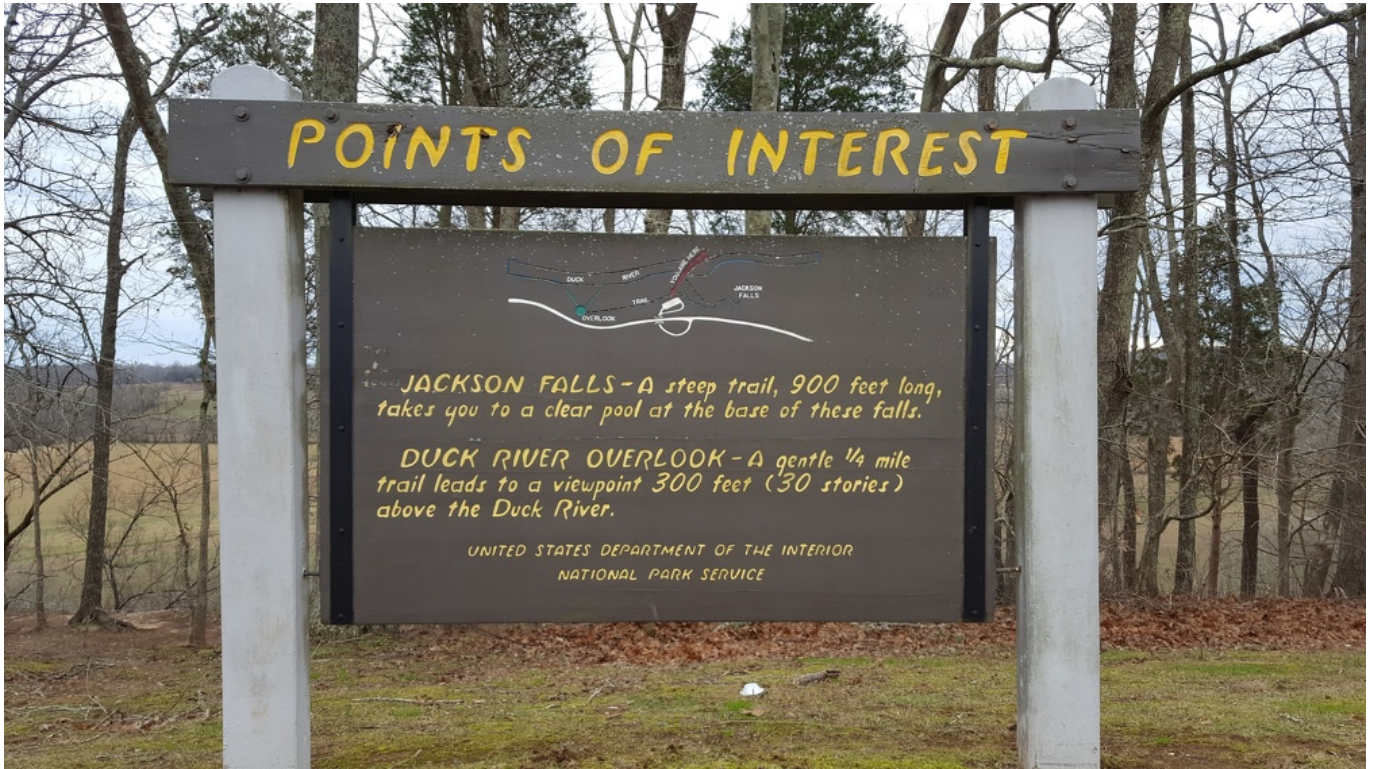
*running from New Orleans to Pittsburgh, robbed the Trace of its usefulness as a main post road."*

These days the Trace is mostly a two lane, limited access and scenic road maintained by the National Park Service. Mrs. Dillon (Anne Elisabeth's mother) had advised me that the Tennessee part was the best, and she was totally right. It's the more scenic, with rolling hills, has most of the best stops (the southern part is often historical signs advertising what used to be there) and is far better maintained. It's a beautiful smooth road, which takes a decided more pockmarked turn in more southern states.

Early in the trip I took a short, very muddy hike from the overlook down to Jackson falls.



*Jackson Falls.*



*"The hill you just hiked down was 30 stories tall and made entirely of mud and wet leaves. Your scooter is on the other side."*



*Litter makes houses angry!*



*Scooter Overlooking.*



*“Sheboss Stand’ The widow Cranfield operated an inn here with her Indian second husband, who spoke little English. According to legend, when travelers approached with questions about accommodations, he would only point to his wife and say, “She boss.””*

Indeed.

Natchez Trace



*Natchez Trace.*





*Bridge.*



*Guess who just turned 19,000?*



*Pharr Mounds.*

There are several Indian Burial Mounds along the trail. The Pharr Mounds were my favorite, but they're all great.



*“Witch Dance — the very name conjures visions of eerie midnights, swirling black capes, and brooms stacked against a nearby tree! The old folks say the witches once gathered here to dance, and that wherever their feet touched the ground the grass withered and died, never to grow again. Impossible? — maybe so, but look around, look for a hidden spot where no grass grows.”*

I can't remember if we're still in Alabama by this point or in Mississippi but clearly pickin's are slim.



*Burial Mounds are way cooler than broomstick stacking witches.*

Eventually I made it to Jackson, as darkness arrived and moments ahead of the rain. Definitely worth taking the Trace down and spending some time exploring the many side trips. If I'm back in the area, I'll totally check out some of the others.