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# State *of the* Art



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# Scott Hocking

Michigan

As the story goes, Colonel Sanford Faulkner—from a slave-owning family in Chicot County, in the southern Arkansas Delta just west of the Mississippi—is the original Arkansas Traveler.<sup>1</sup> Faulkner was born in 1803, the same year that the Louisiana Purchase made land west of the Mississippi part of the United States. This westward expansion included the government-mandated evacuation of the Indigenous population and the decimation of the

1 "Sandford C. 'Sandy' Faulkner," CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed December 20, 2019, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sandford-c-sandy-faulkner-2408>.

bison population. Bison were a significant resource for many indigenous populations in the West, and this painful history still resonates today. In 1840, ten years after President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act that led to the Trail of Tears, Colonel Faulkner was said to have been lost in Arkansas, and turned his experience of asking for directions into a performance called the "Traveler."<sup>2</sup> While there are conflicting historical accounts

2 "Arkansas Traveler," CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed December 20, 2019, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/arkansas-traveler-505>.

3 *Ibid.*



as to which came first, Faulkner's *Traveler* or the Arkansas *Traveler* tune, the term Arkansas *Traveler* has a certain ubiquity in the state.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in the nineteenth century, Michigan Carbon Works, in Detroit, Michigan—Hocking's hometown—begin producing an industrial pigment and fertilizer from ground bison bones.<sup>4</sup> In 1947, Arkansas-based Southwest Mfg. Co. applied for the trademark for alumi-

num fiberglass Arkansas *Traveler* Boats, modest-sized vessels that were manufactured in Little Rock.<sup>5</sup> Hocking's *Arkansas Traveler* includes windmills and boat hulls to suggest the relationship between the Bone Black pigment, homesteading and farming in Arkansas, the bison population, and Detroit. For Hocking, these materials ask us to consider how the weight of these histories extends indefinitely. —AG

4 "Bone Black Pigments," Ebonex, accessed December 20, 2019, <http://www.ebonex.com/history.html>.

5 "Arkansas Traveler," FiberGlassics, accessed December 20, 2019, [http://www.fiberglassics.com/library/index.php?title=Arkansas\\_traveler](http://www.fiberglassics.com/library/index.php?title=Arkansas_traveler).

*Arkansas Traveler*, 2019–20  
Steel, iron, aluminum, wood,  
fiberglass, rope, bone char/Bone  
Black pigment, various hardware, and  
other mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and David Klein  
Gallery, Detroit