

In the summer of 1870 a race was scheduled between the Robt. E.

Lee and the Natchez—the fastest steamboats on the Mississippi River

Interest in the race was so great that large sums of money

were bet over the country and as far away as

England and France. The race, however, was more than a

contest to decide which of these two swift boats would become

champion of the river. Captain Thomas P. Leathers, master of the

Natchez, and Captain John W. Cannon, master of the Lee, had been

rivals on the river long before the start of the Civil War.