



**No childhood in any place has ever been as beguiling, as inspiring, as scary as Willie Morris' memories of growing up in Yazoo City.**

**Thank goodness he had the desire and the skills to share his escapades with us. And every now and then, when reading best-selling *My Dog Skip* and *Good Old Boy*, all of us can say—"Yeah! I did something like that when I was growing up!"**

**Yazoo has changed some since 1952 when Willie went off to college, but there's still enough left of those days to let you in on the adventures of Willie and Skip—and of Henjie, Peewee, Rivers Applewhite, Ralph, Bubba, Muttonhead, and many others who shared those good old days in Yazoo.**








*The sites on this tour, unless they are public buildings, are not open for touring, just for viewing from the street. Watch for traffic!*

## **1** LET'S START ON GRAND AVENUE . . .



where Willie grew up, where he and his friends spent a lot of time, where his dynamic, charming mother and his quiet, charming father provided inspiration but didn't try to quell his enthusiasm and imagination. **615 Grand Avenue.** The place where Willie and Skip became pals. The elm tree in the backyard was Skip's favorite play area, and Skip and the boys played football in the front yard to big crowds. Mrs. Morris taught piano in the parlor. Skip is buried in the back yard. His tombstone is in the historical museum at the Triangle.

## **2**

Across the street, back close to the railroad track, is where **Goodloe's Grocery** was for many, many years. Bozo, who worked there, helped Skip fulfill all his duties when the Morris father or son sent him to fetch bologna and the newspaper.

## **3**

Going on out Grand, just before you drive around Goose Egg Park, peer through and around the branches of her ginkgo tree and you'll be able to see the **home of Mrs. Parker**, legendary English teacher at the high school who opened Willie's and his friends' eyes to the world. Ralph, one of Willie's friends who for a while was editor of the Yazoo Herald which is right across the street, said he felt gratitude to Mrs. Omie Parker every time he looked out his front office window.

## **4**

Make the circle around Goose Egg Park and drive back downtown, the area where all the buddies spent a lot of time. **Willie and Skip walked to school every day from his house along this very route on Grand Avenue.** Before you turn right by the canal, you'll see the **high school** where the ever-pleasant Mrs. Parker greeted an interrupting Skip with "Welcome, Skip! Can you spell?" Could that also be where one of Peewee Baskin's daddy's cows was helped to enter during the night?



**5** Turning left unto Main Street opens up the way to many of Willie's memories. The **Main Street School**—now the Triangle Cultural Center—and the **Ricks Memorial Library** were two places Willie and friends were very familiar with and often inspired by. And didn't historic **Trinity Episcopal** and **St. Mary's Catholic** on up the street, inspire some of their pranks?

**6** **TRY TO FIND A PLACE TO PARK** near the **dramatic corner of Broadway and Main**. When Willie went off to England, the Post Office was still on the right corner of North Main, and Garrett's service station was on the left, not these dramatic bank buildings. But **Gregory Funeral Home** was right where it is now. Across Broadway, the building on the left was the **Dixie Theatre** where they all spent many happy hours, sometimes on stage but usually eating Moonpies or GooGoo Clusters while watching the movies. **Skip often attracted attention by driving the Morris' car down this and other streets in town.**

**7** While you're parked, take a look or walk up Broadway. Halfway up the hill on the left, at the top of the 500 block, is the **Lear Home**, the one Willie credits with saving his life when his car brakes failed. And feast your eyes on that big handsome **Courthouse**. It's been there since right after the Yankees burned the first one.

**8** Back to your car and on across Broadway, all the blocks of South Main have had changes since Willie and Skip roamed. At the end of the 200 block, on the right, is the **Wise Brothers** corner where the **Great 1904 Fire** started. On the left in the 300 block, the **Palace Theatre** is now Smith Park, where local groups perform.

**9** The empty lot at the end of the 300 block did hold the building that withstood that Great Fire. The loss of it and its neighbor in the next block, the **Blue Front Café**, reveals how the town was planned, lots auctioned off, and built—right on top of a bayou or stream of water coming down from the hills!



**10** On down at the end of Main, on the left, is the building where **Henjie's** folks had a business for many years. Across the street, over the railroad tracks, is where the great Yazoo River used to come right up to the hills and make a sharp turn to go back. Turn left and you're facing the abrupt change from delta to hills. Another left and you're on Washington, home of City Hall, the Elks Club, and First United Methodist Church where Mrs. Morris was organist for many years.

At the end of Washington turn right. Drive to Webster, turn left and then right as soon as you cross over the canal. You're headed for Glenwood Cemetery, which provided so many of Willie's colorful memories, some of his scariest and some of his most poignant moments.

**11** Turn right into **Glenwood Cemetery** or you'll be heading up Brickyard Hill. Pass under the wrought iron arch, and enter a cemetery that serves all Yazooans. Park to the right of the fountain and just look around. Willie and Skip covered every inch of this part of the cemetery. From the right of the fountain, facing into the cemetery, find the way that will take you right to the grave of **The Witch of Yazoo**. She's the old woman who broke the chains and burned Yazoo to the ground on May 25, 1904, according to legend and to Willie Morris. A monument on the plot lets the many visitors know they have found the witch's grave! And thirteen steps to the right will take you to the gravesite of beloved author, Willie Morris, who died on August 2, 1999.

**12** As you walk back to your vehicle and the fountain, you'll be facing "a gloomy glade not far from the witch's grave, with moldy nineteenth century crypts and tombstones." As Willie wrote, "It was the spookiest moment Skip and I ever lived through."

And this seems like a great place to end the **My Dog Skip** tour—at their spookiest place! You can leave the same way you came in. Hope you make it out before dark!





## **BOOKS BY WILLIE MORRIS**

North Toward Home

Yazoo

The Last of the Southern Girls

James Jones: A Friendship

The Courting of Marcus Dupree

Terrains of the Heart

Always Stand in Against the Curve

Homecomings

Faulkner's Mississippi

After All, It's Only a Game

New York Days

Good Old Boy

Prayer for the Opening of the

Little League Season

My Dog Skip

The Ghosts of Medgar Evers

My Cat Spit McGee

My Mississippi

Taps

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