

Chehaw Hee Haw— Paddle Georgia 2013

June 16—Flint River

Distance: 15 miles

Starting Elevation: 210 feet Lat: 31.7251°N Lon: 84.019°W

Ending Elevation: 206 feet Lat: 31.6039°N Lon: 84.1163°W

Restroom Facilities:

- Mile 0** Ga. 32 Boat Ramp
- Mile 6** Private Boat Landing
- Mile 15** Cromartie Landing

Points of Interest:

Mile 1—Senah Plantation—On river right here is Senah Plantation, a 13,000-acre spread that stretches along the Flint’s west bank from Ga. 32 downstream to Lake Chehaw and is managed as a deer, quail and duck hunting preserve. Senah’s clients pay as much as \$10,000 for the privilege of harvesting trophy deer from the property and more than \$1000 daily for guided quail hunts. Albany, and the surrounding area, are often referred to as the “Quail Capital of the World” because of the abundance of bobwhite quail and preserves, like Senah, that cater to hunters from all over the world. There are an estimated 150 commercial preserves in the state, and visitors to these preserves pump millions into local economies. Quail hunting expeditions to the Flint River are a time-honored tradition for rubbing elbows with state legislators and business leaders. In fact, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce annually hosts the Georgia Quail Hunt where representatives from companies considering relocating or expanding their businesses in Georgia are smothered in southern hospitality and get face time with the Governor, Lt. Governor and other state leaders. The Chamber boasts that since 1994 attendees of the state-sponsored quail hunt have invested more than \$1.25 billion in Georgia and created more than 7,400 new jobs through corporate relocations or expansions. Never underestimate the power of a small bird to drive big business.

Mile 3—Abrams Creek & Shoals—Near the mouth of Abrams Creek (entering on river left) is a set of shoals that are typical of the Flint, and in 1880 became the focus of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ effort to “improve” the river and render a navigable channel during high water 80 miles up river from Albany to Montezuma. The effort proved daunting, and the steamboat traffic never materialized. By 1888, the Corps had identified nine “reefs” between Albany and Warwick and advised in a report to Congress that it was “not considered wise to do any work upon the shoals further than the removal of loose rock from the channel.” Problems with shoals below Albany made these upstream “improvements” moot as a river steamer that couldn’t reach Albany stood no chance of reaching Montezuma. Still, the Corps pressed on and Congress continued appropriations, but the futility of the effort did not go unnoticed. By 1914, government watchdogs were sniffing out the pork. An article in *Pearson’s Magazine*, a political tome of that era, noted that Congress had spent \$349,000 on the river and “there seems no commerce to justify it.” The article concluded by advising readers: “If there isn’t a river in your district, kick a bit, and you can get Congress to appropriate to build you an artificial one.”

Mile 5.8—Origins of “Up the Creek Without a Paddle”—On river left here is a dock and ramp that the owner’s have dubbed as “Up The Creek.” This is an odd name for a recreational retreat, for if someone is “up the creek” they are caught in a predicament for which there is no easy exit. If someone is up the creek, they are in real trouble. BUT, where does this odd turn of a phrase originate? Some suggest that the phrase originates with a British Royal Navy hospital in the mid-1700s which was located on Haslar Creek. To reach the hospital, injured seamen were transported up the creek from the coast. Many who were taken to the hospital never returned. Others claim the phrase has its origins in the U.S. It can be found in testimony at a trial concerning the murder of Solomon Dill, a South Carolina man who was killed because he supported Republican reconstruction policy following the Civil War. The account reads: “Our men put old Lincoln up ___it Creek, and we’ll put old Dill up.” The phrase also turns up in an American book that recounts the experiences of a World War I machine gun company in France, and during World War II, American soldiers used the phrase often.

Mile 9—Lee County—At this sharp bend in the river, is the Lee-Dougherty County line. The Flint River forms the entire eastern boundary of Lee County from Lake Blackshear to this location. More than 34,000 people call the county, and the seat of Leesburg home. The county achieved a measure of fame in the 1930s by being named by *Look* magazine as one of the country’s strongest Democratic areas. In the 1938 election, Franklin D. Roosevelt received 490 of the 491 votes cast in the county. The magazine also noted that, at the time, there were only 12 income tax payers in the county. Today, the political tables have turned. In the 2012 presidential race, Republican candidate Mitt Romney received 10,310 of 13,607 ballots. During recent years, native sons have achieved fame, bringing apolitical notoriety to the county. Buster Posey, the San Francisco Giants all-star catcher, was named a Major League Baseball Rookie of the Year in 2012; country music singer Luke Bryan has scored five number one hits since 2009 and in 2012 Phillip Phillips from Leesburg won the American Idol contest. If there’s something in the water here, drink it up. The Paddle Georgia No Talent Show takes place on Thursday night!

Mile 12.3—Giant Cutgrass—On river right here, you’ll find a stand of this aquatic grass, a perennial native that inhabits the fringes of the Flint from here to Lake Seminole--most commonly on the lakes and lake backwaters. Its aggressive growth creates dense stands that crowd out other aquatic plants and reduce habitat diversity and thus diversity of waterfowl and aquatic wildlife. It also reduces storage capacity in lakes and limits navigational channels. This, and its ability to inflict painful wounds with its sharp blades, have made it the target of lake managers who often consider it a nuisance plant. Others extol its virtues, suggesting that these dense stands could provide sustainable yields of biomass for energy production.

Mile 12.7—Turner Air Field & Miller-Coors—On river left here is boat ramp leading to the City of Albany’s Turner Landing Park, a day-use area and golf course (with porta-toilet). The land was once part of the U.S. Army’s Turner Air Base, constructed in 1941 and operated continuously by various branches of the U.S. military until 1974. In the late 1970s, Miller Brewing Co. purchased much of the property and today, the site houses the Miller-Coors brewery which converts the area’s vast groundwater sources into beer. Prior to the U.S. entering World War II, the Army trained only British pilots at the site, but by 1942 the base was transformed into a massive wartime training base. It even served as a POW camp, housing some 500 German soldiers, some of whom were conscripted into work at a local lumber mill to support the war effort. After the base’s closure, the property languished for several years until Miller stepped in. Today, the brewery employs some 600 people and brews 10 million barrels of beer each year. Of course, water is a key ingredient in the brewing process. From irrigating wheat and barley crops to cleaning equipment at the brewery, the average barrel of beer requires five barrels of water to produce. Miller-Coors has set a goal of reducing water use 30 percent by 2015.

Mile 14--Lake Chehaw & Lake Worth—The lake with two names: the confusion arises from the existence of two dams—one built in 1906 on Muckafoonee Creek and the other built on the mainstem of the Flint in 1921. The impoundment created by the 1906 dam was called Lake Worth, but with the completion of Georgia Power’s Flint River dam, the larger reservoir connected to Worth became known as Chehaw, a name that conjures up one of the saddest tales from frontier Georgia. In 1818, while its men were away aiding Gen. Andrew Jackson in war against Seminole Indians, the Creek Indian village of Chehaw was attacked and torched by Georgia militia who believed they were attacking hostile natives. The commander of the militia, Major Obediah Wright, was later arrested, but escaped and was never punished for his crimes. Chehaw was located several miles upstream on Muckalee Creek in Lee County.