

Allatoona Amble

June 27

Distance: 12 miles

Starting Elevation/Coordinates: 864 feet/N34 14.414 W84 29.653

Ending Elevation/Coordinates: 861 feet/N34 11.799 W84 34.437

Obstacles/Rapids: None to speak of, unless you run into some skiers. Turn the nose of the boat into the wake created by these motorboats to avoid capsizing. If you are parked on the river or lake bank take precautions to make sure your boat does not take on water or flip as a result of these boat wakes.

Restroom Facilities: Due to the lack of suitable access points between Canton and Lake Allatoona, the only Pit Stop will be located at Knox Bridge. If nature calls, please use a camp trowel and cover all human waste appropriately or carry a sealable plastic bag to remove your waste with you.

Mile 0 Heritage Park

Mile 10 Knox Bridge

Mile 13 Sweetwater Campground

Points of Interest:

Mile 1—Canton Creek—Though not much to look at near its confluence with the Etowah, Canton Creek is home to the endangered Cherokee darter. Land development is a serious threat to this creek and the darter. A recently planned 98-acre commercial development upstream would fill more than 5,000 linear feet of perennial streams that feed Canton Creek. The darter depends on clean, sediment-free water, but land development in the undulating Piedmont often requires mass grading and the filling of headwaters streams that destroy the fish's habitat.

Mile 1.5—City of Canton Wastewater Treatment Plant—Just below the Ga. 5 Bridge, you'll paddle past the City of Canton's wastewater treatment plant. This facility can treat 2.35 million gallons of sewage a day (by comparison, Paddle Georgia 2005 participants remember Atlanta's 200 MGD plant on the Chattahoochee) A biological phosphorus removal process along with a chemical addition and filtration allow effluent from this plant to meet requirements of reuse water systems. All water use at the plant itself is from this reuse water.

Mile 2—Crescent Farm—Today, you'll paddle past Canton's Boling Park on river right here, but 100 years ago, river travelers would have been floating past the extensive holdings of Gus Coggins' Crescent Farm—so named because the Etowah encircled the farm in a crescent shape. Coggins and his family lived in a home on a high promontory overlooking the river (we passed this spot between the Waleska Street Bridge and Canton Creek) known as Mount Etowah. Coggins was a successful farmer, horsebreeder and businessman caught up in the unique social fabric of the post-Civil War south. Because former slaves could be employed cheaper than comparable white laborers, Coggins, like many businessmen, hired blacks instead of whites. This practice drew the ire of unemployed whites who began forming vigilante groups whose sole purpose was to punish white businessmen who hired blacks. The vigilante groups routinely burned his barns and stables. Historians believe that in response, Coggins constructed a massive stone barn adjacent to his home in 1906 to house his best horses. Today what came to be known as the "Rock Barn" still stands and has been renovated into the home of the Cherokee County Historical Society—a visible reminder of the South's culture of violence and fear in the years following the Civil War.

Mile 9—Blankenship Sand Company--You first saw the Blankenship Sand Company just downstream from East Cherokee Drive, but the company also dredges on the upper end of Lake Allatoona—a process owner, Milton Blankenship describes as "river cleaning." The company dredges at this site and then moves its product down river on barges to the company's main facility which you will see downstream from Knox Bridge. Each year, Mr. Blankenship and his crew remove about 100,000 tons of sand from the river—enough to fill 4,000 tractor trailers. Though a messy operation, it does help prevent Lake Allatoona from filling with sand and sediment. That 100,000 tons of sand represents 15 million gallons of storage capacity on the lake.

Mile 10—Knox Bridge/Lake Allatoona—The Ga. 20 Bridge over the Etowah marks our "official" beginning of Lake Allatoona, though we've already been feeling the impacts of Allatoona Dam, some 20 miles downstream from Knox Bridge. Completed in 1950 at a cost of \$31.5 million, Allatoona Dam saves the city of Rome from routine flooding and impounds a reservoir that spreads over 12,000 acres and includes 270 miles of shoreline. The powerhouse at the dam produces enough electricity to power 17,000 homes each year and the recreation/tourism industry connected to the lake generates an estimated \$250 million annually for the region. More than 6 million people visit the lake each year.

It also enables one of the biggest controversies in Georgia's water management policy—an interbasin water transfer from the Etowah to the Chattahoochee basin. Each day, the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority withdraws about 50 million gallons from Lake Allatoona and pumps about half of it to water users in the Chattahoochee basin. Without Allatoona Dam spreading the Etowah's water south into Cobb County, this water transfer would have been much more difficult and cost prohibitive.

Lake Allatoona has long suffered from poor water quality as a result of land development and stormwater runoff within the lake's 1,110-square mile watershed.

In 1999, the Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority was formed by an act of the General Assembly to restore, preserve and protect water quality and uses beneficial for present and future generations. The Authority identifies and addresses issues impacting the lake and is the repository of the latest information, technology and conditions of the watershed. LAPA works to assess water quality in the lake and works on projects that restore eroding shoreline—a problem that will be evident as you paddle the upper reaches of the lake. Wakes from motorboats are the primary erosion force. We'll be hearing from LAPA tonight after dinner.

Mile 32—The lost town of Etowah—Yes, mile 43. You'll paddle 12 and ride about 20 to get below Allatoona Dam where, on the banks of the river opposite our campsite sits all that remains of the town of Etowah—a iron furnace of the Cooper Iron Works. The iron works formed the heart of the town of Etowah—a thriving, backwoods industrial complex from the early 1840s until the 1864 when the town was destroyed by Union forces during the Civil War. Etowah's founders utilized water power from the Etowah and the locally abundant iron ore deposits to create a mining and manufacturing center. At its heyday in the late 1850s, the town had a workforce of 600 which was serviced by a school, church, boarding house, bordello, bank, post office and brewery. The town produced railroad tracks from the iron ore extracted from nearby hills and the flour mill produced up to 300 barrels of flour a day. After the Civil War, the town was never rebuilt. Mark Anthony Cooper, the primary driving force behind the town, sold it to investors in 1862 and turned a tidy profit which he then invested in the Confederacy, ultimately losing his entire fortune by the War's end. Today, the town's remains, with the exception of the furnace across the river, rests beneath the water of Lake Allatoona.

With the exception of Canton's brief flirtation with name of "Etowah" this is the only settlement to ever bear the name of the river. The Indian word "Etowah" has never been successfully translated, thus historians do not know what, if any significance or meaning, is attached to the name.