connections, the need to move goods cross river diminished and blamed on the bridge existed). The Hagins family operated it as a toll bridge, but in 1893 a suspicious fire destroyed the span. The fire was ultimately led to weather under trying to rescue him. Finally gathered an incident in 1882 in which four drowning men were saved by a Civil War veteran. Although they are the same river. Sometime during the 1900s, the river lost of strips of bark do not, however, always kill the trees, nor do they always create fires. The most common evidence of a tree struck by lightning is the loss of strips of bark—the result of the moist cells of the tree literally exploding as they are superheated by the bolts. Tall trees in open fields and along water are more susceptible to lightning strikes. Georgia ranks 13th in number of cloud-to-ground strikes with 13.5 strikes per square mile annually. Florida tops the list at 24.1 strikes per square mile followed by Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Trees and Lightning—On river left here is a hollowed out and burned cypress tree which appears to have been struck by lightning. Researchers estimate that 20 million lightning strikes occur in the U.S. each year, and they often strike trees. They do not, however, always kill the trees, nor do they always create fires. The most common evidence of a tree struck by lightning is the loss of strips of bark—the result of the moist cells of the tree literally exploding as they are superheated by the bolts. Tall trees in open fields and along water are more susceptible to lightning strikes. Georgia ranks 13th in number of cloud-to-ground strikes with 13.5 strikes per square mile annually. Florida tops the list at 24.1 strikes per square mile followed by Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Mile 4.8—Trees and Lightning—On river left here is a hollowed out and burned cypress tree which appears to have been struck by lightning. Researchers estimate that 20 million lightning strikes occur in the U.S. each year, and they often strike trees. They do not, however, always kill the trees, nor do they always create fires. The most common evidence of a tree struck by lightning is the loss of strips of bark—the result of the moist cells of the tree literally exploding as they are superheated by the bolts. Tall trees in open fields and along water are more susceptible to lightning strikes. Georgia ranks 13th in number of cloud-to-ground strikes with 13.5 strikes per square mile annually. Florida tops the list at 24.1 strikes per square mile followed by Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Mile 6.1—Dows Landing & the “Great Ogeechee”—The boat ramp and shack on river left mark the site of Dows Landing, one of many river landings that bear the names of families who settled the area when the Ogeechee was referred to as the “Great Ogeechee River.” Early maps refer to the lower Ogeechee as the Great Ogeechee, and the upper Ogeechee as the “Little Ogeechee” though they are the same river. Sometime during the 1900s, the river apparently became not so great and the adjective was dropped from the property name. That early period of Georgia called it “Great” seems odd when this diminutive river is sandwiched between two of the state’s largest rivers—the Savannah on the north and the Altamaha on the south. Ogeechee is said to be derived from the Muskogean name “Okeechee,” which means “River of the Uchees,” a sub-tribe of the Creek Indians.

Mile 7.1—Spatterdock Slough—The mouth of the clear-flowing creek on river right is filled with spatterdock (Nuphar polysepala) The plant has large, heart-shaped leaves that float on the surface of the water and bright yellow, ball-like flowers. A native species, it provides important habitat for aquatic insects (and the fish that feed on them). Its seeds are eaten by waterfowl and its roots are eaten by beaver and muskrats. Humans have also put the plant to good use. Native Americans ate the roots in stews or dried and ground into flour. The seeds were also gathered and popped like popcorn.

Mile 7.5—Williams Landing—the bridge popped just up river from this boat ramp (our pit stop for the day) mark the site of an incident in 1882 in which four drowning men were saved by a Civil War veteran. At that time, it was common for residents to gather to maintain public roads. On this particular day, a group of men worked along the road leading to Williams Landing, and after building up a sweat, one crew member jumped in the river, only to find the water too deep. He went under and then three others went under trying to rescue him. Finally Capt. W.N. Hall pulled the drowning men to safety. One of the survivors of that scare, Andrew Lanier, told the “black book” tales in a 1939 story about the incident: “Yes, I was dead, but Capt. Hall brought me back to life. And, I thank him for that.” Capt. Hall led a cavalry unit from Bulloch County in the later part of the Civil War.

Mile 8.9—Cut Through—The right channel here cuts off a quarter-mile oxbow (the left channel).

Mile 11.5—Shoals—Yes, shoals on the sandy Ogeechee! Though visible only in low water, portions of the Ogeechee’s bed are “rock solid.” Given appropriate water levels, an extensive shoal can be found in this bend of the river and over the next mile, you may encounter additional shoals and rock outcroppings. However, the fall on the Ogeechee was not sufficient to justify the construction of a dam at all. Perhaps this lack of hydraulic power that led William Hagins to establish the area’s first steam-powered grist mill near here in 1876. When droughts struck, hampering the operation of water-powered mills, Hagins’ steam mill kept running…the and attracting farmers from all over the region.

Mile 14—Hagins Bridge—This location marks the site of an antebellum ferry and later, Hagins Bridge, which operated in the late 1800s. The bridge was built using a pile driver loaned from the Central of Georgia Railroad (on the north side of the river) which saw the new bridge as a means to capture and ship farm goods produced in Bulloch County (where no railroad connections yet existed). The Spaniards struck a gold vein in it in 1893 a suspicious fire extinguished the vein. The fire was ultimately blamed on the bridge’s former toll collector, Henry Archer, who reportedly confessed to the arson shortly before he was hanged for murder in Screven County in 1895. The bridge was later rebuilt, but 1930s road maps show no bridge here. As Statesboro gained rail connections, the need to move goods cross river diminished and the numerous bridges spanning the Ogeechee fell into disuse.