

# Cherokee Cha Cha

June 25

**Distance:** 16 miles

**Starting Elevation/Coordinates:** 976 feet/N34 18.546 W84 13.272

**Ending Elevation/Coordinates:** 900 feet/N34 17.944 W84 23.798

**Obstacles/Rapids:** Review the advice on strainers from yesterday. There's more to come today.

**Mile 1** Hightower Strainer—Just when you thought you were out of the “woods” they’ve come back to greet you. Best course is down the middle or on the far right.

**Mile 2** County Line Strainer—Yet another tree that wants to float to Canton.

**Mile 5** Goldmine Rapid—The remains of an old dam associated with a goldmine near this site creates a two ledge rapid at a sharp bend in the river. During normal to low water, the best course is to the far right through the first ledge and then straight down river over the second ledge to the right of the island. In high flows the left side is passable. You can scout this rapid by getting out on the bank at a small wooden dock located in the eddy behind the sunken steel bridge above the rapid.

## **Restroom Facilities:**

**Mile 0** Garmon Farm

**Mile 5** Woodhaven Bend—Note: The landowners request that you not loiter on this property. Do your business and then leave (you can take a look at the historic markers) and tread lightly on the river bank here, utilizing only the developed boat launch. The stream buffer here is part of a mitigation bank and is to be left in its natural state.

**Mile 10** Long Swamp Creek

**Mile 16** Goldkist Rendering Plant

## **Points of Interest:**

**Mile 0—Old Federal Road**—You’d hardly suspect it now, but this two-lane road was once the major thoroughfare by which early settlers entered the Cherokee Nation of North Georgia. A trading path as early as 1731, by 1819 the old path became known as the Federal Road when Gen. Andrew Jackson’s men improved it. Like today’s interstates, this road was dotted with inns and taverns servicing travelers and was a major economic engine for the region in its heyday. However, by the 1840s, with the arrival of railroads and the construction of other roads, its importance faded. Can we imagine a similar fate for our beloved I-75?

**Mile 5—Gold and other Historic Nuggets**—The property now known as Woodhaven Bend is rich in history and tragedy—being the site of a former mining operation. The remains of the iron bridge above Goldmine Rapid mark this former route of Yellow Creek Road (you’ll pass under the new Yellow Creek Road below the rapid). The bridge was in operation from around the turn of the century until about 1960. Even as late as 1960, the road was not much more than a trail. Before the bridge was built, a ferry known as “Moore’s Ferry” operated about 1,000 yards upriver from this bridge. In July 1888, Edward Axson, the manager of the Creighton Gold Mine, and his wife and daughter were headed for the Ferry en route to a picnic. Along the way, the horses became startled and bolted with buggy and passengers to the river where they collided with the Ferry. The horses along with Axson and his family plunged into the river and drowned. Such a tragedy may very well have been the impetus for the construction of this bridge a few years later.

Other tragedies occurred at this site as well. A goldmine, established by John Pascoe around 1830, operated at this site until 1913. In 1936, Pascoe started building a home for his bride to be and finished it in 1840, but sadly at the age of 46, a few weeks before his wedding Pascoe died of mercuric poisoning. The illness was caused by the use of mercury in the gold ore processing operation. Even today, fish caught from the Etowah River have been found to contain unhealthy levels of mercury and some of it is believed to be the result of mercury’s extensive use at mining operations during the 1800s.

Another tragedy finally shut down the mining operation here. Many mine shafts at this site ran beneath the river. Reportedly, during a workers’ lunch break one afternoon in 1913, the riverbed collapsed into one of these mine shafts and water filled the mines. It was said that this caused the Etowah to flow upstream for a time. It is unclear whether anyone lost their life in the catastrophe, but it did shut down the mine. The collapsed shaft was located about 1500 yards downstream from the bridge at Yellow Creek Road.

Interestingly, one of Cherokee County’s most successful gold mines was established by a woman, Mrs. Mary G. Franklin, who drew a forty-acre lot in the northeast corner of the county in the 1932 Land Lottery. Within a week, she had received over a dozen offers for her holding. With her curiosity piqued, Mrs. Franklin decided she should look at her new holding. When she arrived, she found a score of men at work on the lot, shoveling dirt and panning gold. Mrs. Franklin had the men removed and began working the lot, along with her family.

**Mile 7—McGraw Ford Wildlife Management Area**—A state wildlife management area encompassing some 2400 acres, including some of the most picturesque paddling to be found on the Etowah. The WMA keeps the development at bay and keeps the river banks green and dense.

**Mile 9—Fish Weir**—Perhaps the first distinct Native American fish weir you’ll see on this 7-day journey. These V-shaped structures were built by the area’s original inhabitants 500 to 1000 years ago. They worked simply. At the top of the V, a long line of “fisherman” would wade downstream spooking the fish to the point of the V. At the point, other fishermen would be waiting with a basket to capture the frightened fish. Keep your eyes peeled and you may very well see others that I have failed to identify on these maps. There are literally dozens between here in Rome. Step out on one, and know that where you stand, another man or woman or child stood some 1000 years ago, seeking out their sustenance.

**Mile 9.5—Cow Pasture**—Isn’t your first, won’t be your last, but this site, along with dozens of other like it, where cows have access to the river, is one reason why many sections of the Etowah and its tributaries have high bacteria levels.

**Mile 10—Long Swamp Creek/Battle of Taliwa**—Around 1755, where Long Swamp and the Etowah meet, the Battle of Taliwa was fought. Some 500 Cherokee Indians under the direction of Oconostota defeated a larger band of Creeks. Among the Cherokee warriors, there was at least one heroine, Nancy Ward or “Nan’yehi”—the 18-year-old wife of the Cherokee known as “Kingfisher” When Kingfisher was slain in the battle, she took up his gun and singing a war song, led the Cherokee in a rout of the enemy. So complete was the defeat that the Creeks retreated permanently south of the Chattahoochee River, and Nancy Ward earned the title of honor: “Beloved Woman.”

**Mile 14—Cherokee County Water & Sewer Intake**—This large structure on river left is the intake facility for the Cherokee Water and Sewerage Authority. CCWSA supplies about nine million gallons a day to the people of Cherokee County from the Etowah River. Upstream, the recently completed Yellow Creek Reservoir (you passed Yellow Creek on Saturday), helps ensure that there is enough water in the river for CCWSA during low flow conditions. While ensuring water supplies, these reservoirs can also destroy habitat for the Etowah’s imperiled fish and other aquatic species.

**Mile 16—Goldkist Rendering Plant**—Goldkist uses about 14 million gallons of the Etowah each week at this plant to turn 7 million pounds of chicken parts—feet, head, entrails and such—into the makings of chicken feed and pet food. A sponsor of this year’s trip, Goldkist employees helped remove trash and debris from today’s take out site and will be on hand at the plant to answer questions about the operation.